Thursday, September, 12th 2019

Symposium: Science and the City,
Exploring Paris through the achievements of early scientists and inventors
Organized by Peggy Mason and Nadine Moeller

Paris has been the home of groundbreaking discoveries and scientific research in the 19th and early 20th century. With the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power, interest in research and science reached new heights, and led to Napoleon embarking in a campaign to Egypt with 150 of the most prominent Parisian scientists, engineers and scholars. The upshot of Napoleon’s expedition was two-fold: 1) it was the dawn of the western world’s fascination with ancient Egypt; and 2) it was the launching pad for many scientists who went on to establish Paris as an academic and intellectual center. Now, four scholars examine the scientific, cultural and historical legacies of Napoleon's militaristically audacious and scientifically innovative venture.

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Bonaparte before the Sphinx*, Oil on Canvas, 1868.
AGENDA

9:30 Peggy Mason – **What role did Egypt play in the differences between Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier?**

Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Georges Cuvier both practiced comparative anatomy in the first century of the discipline. Cuvier made enormous contributions such as establishing the concept of species extinction and pioneering the inference of a species’ classification from a single bone, a method still practiced today. Yet Cuvier rated all non-human animal species in relation to humans, who he deemed the most perfect species whereas Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire saw the multitude of animal species as simply variations on the same unity of plan. A second point of disagreement between the two scientists involved the nature of species across time. Cuvier believed that each species had a fixed and God-given form. In contrast, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire thought that animals evolved through time, through the occurrence of developmental anomalies, then called monstrosities, that formed the foundation for novel species. It is interesting to consider the role that Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire’s experiences in Egypt had in forming his mature philosophy which so fundamentally differed from that of his contemporary, colleague, and one-time good friend Cuvier.

10:15 Jean-François Brunet - **Evolution of the autonomic nervous system (and echoes of Geoffroy)**

The autonomic nervous system controls the "internal affairs" of the body, the maintenance of its balance and survival through the regulation of breathing, blood circulation and digestion. The way it forms in the embryo is strikingly conserved throughout the animal kingdom, in yet another vindication of Geoffroy Saint-Hillaire’s visionary "Unité de Plan".

[Image: Waterman, Photograph, 1894 Description: Students surround a partially-dissected cadaver at the Chicago College of Dental Surgery.]
11:00 Peter Hicks - The Invasion of Egypt/The expedition to Egypt – two sides of the same coin?
The reasons for the French intervention in Egypt in 1798 have stimulated debate ever since. The internal French political context, the external diplomatic European context, the intellectual/religious context within France at the end of the 18th century all have a part to play in this extraordinary enterprise. In 1797, there had been: a failed French attempt at invasion of the British isles and diplomatic negotiations between the two countries had been abandoned; there had been an extraordinarily successful French campaign in northern Italy but which had resulted in the general there taking liberties with his new-found power, both diplomatically and politically; there was thriving amongst the French elite a vague quasi-religious appreciation of Egypt as a mystical land of esoteric wisdom, taking root in a newly aggressively anti-Christian French Republic. Add to this the imponderable weight of personality – that of Foreign Minister Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, that of the director of the Polytechnique (and ex-Navy Minister), Gaspard Monge, those of the Directors (Barras, Reubell, La Réveilliére-Lépeaux, Merline de Douai and de Neufchâteau), and of course that of the military star of the day, the new Alexander the Great, the new Hannibal, Napoleon Bonaparte. This presentation is an attempt to give an overview of the complex of issues that led to the defeat and capitulation of the French military invasion, but at the same time, the ultimately glorious reputation of the French scientific expedition and the publication of the Encyclopédie.

11:45 Nadine Moeller - The French legacy of archaeology in Egypt after Napoleon
This lecture focuses on the legacy and aftermath of Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt providing an overview of the continued involved by French researchers and administrators who have been involved in Egypt in the 19th and 20th century until today. From the foundation of the first official antiquities service in Cairo to the construction of the Egyptian Museum, the French have been at the forefront of archaeological fieldwork in Egypt for a long time. Over the years, the nature and collaboration between the French and Egyptian researchers has also significantly evolved. These various developments and the ongoing fascination by the general public with ancient Egypt will be discussed in detail.
Eugene Grasset, *Napoleon in Egypt*, Lithograph, 1895