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Art Nouveau and Bank Architecture in Nancy: Negotiating the Re-Emergence of a Regional Identity

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French bank architecture crystallized as a distinct typology by 1900. Its tenets emanated directly from the training that most of the nation's architects had received at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, then the foremost school of design in the world. The uniformity imposed by such a disciplinary order reflected in no small part the grip that Paris, as the centralized node of French culture, politics, and society, exercised over the rest of the country and had enlarged over the course of the nineteenth century, often draining the provinces of human and material resources for its own profit.¹ But following the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870–71, a challenge to Paris' absolute dominance arose as Nancy emerged as the most important city on the redrawn eastern frontier with a new influx of capital, industrial prowess, and artistic talent, one which could draw on a long legacy of regional pride in order to fashion a modern cityscape for an assertive metropolis, reinforced by the enthusiastic adoption of Art Nouveau by the city's bevy of decorative artists and industrialists as their aesthetic emblem. The collision between the standards erected by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in architectural design and what many Parisians regarded as a maverick style became most prominent in the new architecture of banks in Nancy in the opening decade of the twentieth century. There, the typology witnessed a complex development as both Parisian and Nancy-based institutions sought to carve out their niche within a highly competitive artistic and economic environment. But while they have always been recognized for their contribution to the city's identity as a centre of Art Nouveau, Nancy's bank buildings of this era did not simply trumpet a regionalist character

rebellious against the dictates of the capital. Instead, they reflected a calculated program set in place by each institution, its architects, and decorative artists to use the style for specific and sometimes very different communicative ends, revealing how the establishment of Art Nouveau architecture in the city was in many ways a highly negotiated process. Three key examples of banks in Nancy examined here trace the progressive manifestation of this phenomenon: the central branch of the Crédit Lyonnais (1901–02); the Société Générale's metropolitan offices (1903–04); and finally, the new headquarters of the Banque Renault (1907–10).

The Development of Nancy's Business District after 1871

Nancy clung to a proud regional identity that stretched back to the late Middle Ages, when it was the capital of the independent Duchy of Lorraine, whose last duke Stanisław Leszczyński (1677–1766), had made Nancy one of the most architecturally distinguished in Europe when he commissioned Emmanuel Héré de Corny and Jean Lamour to construct its great Rococo square, the Place Stanislas, between 1752–55 (**Fig. 1**).² The city received an infusion of population and capital after the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War, which concluded with the transfer of the provinces of Alsace and the northern third of Lorraine to Germany, driving many residents to the southern part of the region in order to retain their French citizenship. Nancy's new arrivals included numerous heads of prominent commercial and industrial enterprises along with a substantial contingent of artists and craftsmen, all of whom soon took an active role in the city's expansion. The erection of impressive new institutional structures, such as the massive, locally-based department store the Magasins Réunis (1894–1907), a new central post office (1901), the municipal concert hall and art

gallery called the Salle et Galeries Poirel (1890), and a new Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1905–08 and 1913) symbolised Nancy's citizens' determination to modernise the city centre and build on Stanislas' legacy.³ The city's financial district was—and still is—located just east of the train station and the flagship location of the Magasins Réunis, centred along the commercial artery of the rue St-Jean, which becomes the rue St-Georges east of the junction with the rue St-Dizier called Point Central (**Fig. 2**).

The rejuvenation of Nancy's central business district after 1880 focused around a desperate need to enliven the streetscapes, characterized by a swath of drab, faceless three- or four-story mixed-use buildings covered in beige limestone or stucco. This had become a major concern of local architects and critics by the turn of the century, who rejoiced at the new construction of any picturesque or unusual storefront in the city centre.⁴ The emergence in the 1890s of Art Nouveau in Nancy in the applied arts offered great promise as a means to achieve such a vibrant built environment suitable for a modern city. While Art Nouveau nearly everywhere else in Europe would soon meet its demise, in Lorraine the year 1901 marked the coalescence of the style's dominance there with the formation of the collective of designers and manufacturers known as the Ecole de Nancy, under the leadership of the outspoken glassmaker and furniture designer Emile Gallé. By then Art Nouveau had begun to embellish Nancy's built environment with the erection of Lucien Weissenburger's Royer Printing House (1899–1900), and the new Vaxelaire Department Store designed by Charles and Emile André with Eugène Vallin (1899–1901) (**Fig. 3**).⁵

Acutely aware of Nancy's rapidly-growing political, economic, and cultural importance to the nation, the city's leaders in business and industry viewed Art Nouveau as an emblem of this renaissance of their region, and saw the members of the Ecole de Nancy,

whose work spanned the entire breadth of artistic production, from furniture and glass to ironwork, painting, sculpture, leatherwork, embroidery, ceramics, architecture, graphic arts, and publishing, as the means to challenge Paris' artistic hegemony. In the first decade of the twentieth century, architects in Nancy—regardless of their formal affiliation with the Ecole de Nancy—began to make the style the dominant visual language of the city's modern built environment, challenging many both at home and in Paris who were initially less convinced of its tectonic applications.⁶ The erection of new banks in the city centre to serve an expanding economic base constituted an integral piece of this development, which was crowned at the end of the decade by Nancy's hosting of the Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France in 1909, the most important event for the city during the *belle époque*, whose critical and economic success signalled that Nancy had fully emerged as a robust rival to Paris in the decorative and constructive arts.⁷ The vitality of Art Nouveau in the city continued uninterrupted until the outbreak of war in 1914.

French Bank Architecture

The nineteenth century was an age of banking. Like other corporate bodies, banks grew steadily in number concomitant with the larger exchange of capital required by the growth of the Industrial Revolution and the availability of cheap goods, aided by a steady monetary supply. In Western countries, the first savings banks that catered to the bourgeois citizen emerged between 1810 and 1840, and in France specifically with the creation in Paris of the aptly-named Caisse d'Epargne in 1818.⁸ Emperor Napoléon III had gambled on the continual expansion of employment opportunities in railroads and related manufacturing and mechanical industries that naturally required extended credit and capital and a robust banking sector of the economy, but only after his regime fell did French

banks began to assume a truly national presence with numerous branch locations both in Paris and in the provinces, a process commenced by the Société Générale's impressive construction of such a network in just three years between 1871–74. In nineteenth-century France as elsewhere, the operations of banks to extend consumer credit and underwrite the operations of large corporations relied on monetary reserves gathered from an expanding base of depositors and investors in such companies or holders of government bonds, whose accounts holding physical specie could be drained temporarily and reimbursed on demand.⁹ As the primary visual and physical representation of the company, and by extension the nation's financial structure, architecture thus came to play a vital role in banks' ability to portray themselves as robust institutions and attract customers in a competitive and loosely-regulated capitalist society. The financial strength that enabled banks to construct their own buildings of artistic merit thus also conferred upon them a measure of cultural capital; and with a wide geographic presence, they became key players in a program of national tastemaking—a charge of which their chosen architects were acutely aware.¹⁰

The growth of the organization of banks themselves also was representative of the new industrial scale of their activities, especially in the period before 1914, when few banking activities were aided by mechanical processes. Banks employed armies of workers needed for the constant stream of accounting work, recording transactions and transfers of funds between different stocks of reserves and client accounts in physical log books; they were complemented by staffers at ticket windows, in the vaults, and the banking hall who provided surveillance and assistance. In the securities hall, where investors purchased company stocks and government bonds, employees performed all manner of duties, from stamping and issuing certificates to calculating dividends. All of this came with a vertical

integration of finery and order, as salaried workers, particularly those who interacted with the public, were dressed in uniformed clothing whose fabric exhibited a sheen and crispness echoing that of the calculated interiors.¹¹ This regimentation of presentation and diversity of employee tasks meant that French bank design developed specific programmatic requirements over the late nineteenth century. Banks and financial institutions were used as subjects for the Prix de Rome competitions at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts beginning in 1748, most famously for the 1866 contest won by Jean-Louis Pascal and the 1899 competition, for a grand modern state bank, won by Tony Garnier.¹² They constituted prime examples of the administrative structural types outlined by Julien Guadet, the Ecole's Professor of Design in the foundational compilation of his lectures, *Eléments et Théorie d'Architecture*, (1901–04), whose text included detailed illustrations of plans for both the premises of Edouard-Jules Corroyer's Caisse d'Escompte and William Bouwens de Boujain's Parisian headquarters of the Crédit Lyonnais (1880–83), later to be expanded by Victor Laloux (**Figs. 4 and 5**). The tenets of French bank architecture were well-known in Nancy, where discussions of them in local architectural journals emphasised the necessity of expanding upon such principles in line with modern institutional needs.¹³

Unlike banks in Britain and other countries not influenced by the Beaux-Arts system, where design preferences could vary widely, French bank architecture came to be governed by a presentation of luxury, order, and efficiency, filtered through an inveterate classical language unofficially promoted at the Ecole.¹⁴ The façade had to exude a sense of both strength and power. It was often balanced in volume, if not symmetrical in elevation, with a centralised pavilion containing the well-defined entrance that drew customers inside, though its decorative program might not crassly project forward from the façade plane with

a fanciful iron or glass canopy (like that of a department store) to welcome the customer off the street. Instead, it usually incorporated a variation of a three-bay triumphal arch and heavy doors that emphasized the structure's monumentality and air of security. These qualities were complemented by the high degree of organizational order, beginning in the basement, which was accessed by a single staircase and contained the vaults protected by a massive metal door secured by heavy locks, holding bullion, coinage, and paper money; customers kept other valuables like stock and bond certificates in polished metal safe-deposit boxes arranged in a regular grid against the walls, themselves faced in a fireproof material like stone, terracotta, or eventually reinforced concrete. At ground level, the entrance opened into the main banking hall, a large atrium whose modern character could be detected in its construction around an iron or steel framework visible as the exposed rectilinear cage that framed its glazed skylit ceiling, an element borrowed from exhibition halls and department stores that practically facilitated a sense of honesty through the optimum illumination of the transactions taking place below. This flood of natural light was intended also to be serene and calming, qualities enhanced by the maintenance of a comfortable temperature in the hall as mandated by Guadet's instructions. To regulate this and prevent condensation and overheating, most glass ceilings were insulated by a layer of air that was topped by a final sealed glazed roof. Teller windows serving most corporate and elite clients were arranged on opposite sides of the hall perpendicular to the axis of entry. In a prominent location near both the main entrance and the staircase to the vaults stood the cashier that served the bulk of individual customers, which reminded them of their importance to the bank's business through its sumptuous décor, including intricately-carved rare woods, fine polished metal fittings, and coloured glass panels inserted around

the wickets. The outfitting of the main banking hall was likewise mirrored in the largest banks by a separate securities hall equipped with additional furniture. Another subtle emphasis on security was detectable in the location of accounting, publishing and other departments in secondary locations, on the ground floor or level above and away from the main entrance and banking hall, much as the mechanical engines that drove the visible functions of a great industrial factory were tucked away from the main workshop floor space. Nonetheless, the internal arrangements of these departments were not neglected: employee work stations, for example, were to be placed at right angles to large exterior windows to maximize natural light and minimize the need for electricity. On the floors above the banking hall, usually surrounded by a mezzanine gallery, were located conference rooms and the offices of senior management, including the bank director—the latter often hidden from direct view from below—thus not only disclosing their elevated positions among the staff but also the institution's dedication to discretion of its operations at the highest levels.

The locations of French banks within an urban context were no less important than the buildings' internal organization. General placement within a central business district was essentially a given, but by no means the end of such considerations, which also evolved over time. Originally, one prestigious location would have been near the *préfecture*, the seat of the *départemental* government, no doubt enhancing the bank's image of authority. More popular, however, was a site near the local branch of the *Banque de France*, the government institution responsible for printing and distributing the nation's banknotes. Eventually, the most desirable properties developed near markets, railway stations, stock exchanges, department stores, and hotels—places both adjacent to most commercial activity and best

served by transit connections for employees and clients alike. In Paris, the Boulevard Haussmann, home to the *grands magasins* like the Printemps and Galeries Lafayette, and the districts near the Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est in the tenth arrondissement came to epitomize the favoured locales for the headquarters of the country's major banks.¹⁵ Nancy followed this trend, as most financial institutions in 1900 were clustered, as they still are today, either around the sober and unassuming office of the Banque de France at the corner of the rue Gambetta and rue Chanzy, or nearby, along the main east–west commercial artery through the city centre, the rue St-Jean/rue St-Georges (see Fig. 2).¹⁶

The Crédit Lyonnais and the Introduction of Art Nouveau

The initial employment of Art Nouveau in the architecture of Nancy's banks was at the new branch of the Crédit Lyonnais, built in 1901–02 in the rue St-Georges just east of Point Central (Fig. 6). Founded in 1863 and one of the most powerful global financial institutions by 1900, between 1873 and 1880 the Crédit Lyonnais became the second bank in France to establish a provincial network, and with it a broad measure of architectural distinction. The title of 'Crédit' had become popular among French banks in the decades before 1900—witness the Crédit Lyonnais' current parent company, Crédit Agricole, along with Crédit du Nord, Crédit Commercial Français (CCF), and Crédit Industriel et Commercial (CIC). It was more popular than the title 'Banque,' which, despite its association with the Banque de France, also still recalled the Banque Générale, infamous for its mismanagement and collapse in the midst of the international fiscal crisis called the South Sea Bubble between 1717–21. The name Crédit, by contrast, reflected the purpose of modern banks to extend credit to individuals and businesses responsibly, and most literally,

recalled the faith of the consumer in the company's strength.¹⁷

The Crédit Lyonnais did not institute a policy for the construction of its network of provincial branches, nor did it employ a house architect until André-Félix Narjoux (1867–1934) was hired as such in 1902.¹⁸ It left the design for these buildings to its local agents, who in Nancy picked the father-and-son team of Félicien (1849–1930) and Fernand César (1879–1969), the former a Belgian-born engineer and the latter a candidate for the architecture section of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts admitted the year of the Nancy branch's completion. Fernand entered the atelier of Edmond Paulin (1848–1915), architect of the Château d'Eau at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, whose favour for an ornate yet conventional classicism that both characterized the gaggle of white overwrought façades of the fair's pavilions and exhibits a certain harmony with the Césars' bank (**Fig. 7**).¹⁹ One wonders if Paulin's work for the fair, attended by nearly fifty million visitors, was not influential for both the Césars and Fernand's choice of studio.²⁰ Nancy's Crédit Lyonnais typifies the design traditions of French banks as practiced before 1914, but scaled for a provincial city, a common practice in French institutional architecture which here helps link the structure visually to the Parisian headquarters.²¹ Its façade employs a familiar Second-Empire classicism, with elements ultimately derived from the Italian Renaissance, long viewed as a 'golden age' in the history of banking, both in an economic sense as a fundamental period for the origins of capitalism as well as in an architectural capacity.²² The banded stone enveloping the lower two registers on Nancy's Crédit Lyonnais echoes the ground floors of great Florentine palaces like Michelozzo's Palazzo Medici-Riccardi (1444–60), the inner rooms of which the Italian families used to conduct their banking activities, many of which had an international scope, not unlike the Crédit Lyonnais' expanding

foreign network of the late nineteenth century (Fig. 8). When the epicentre of banking in Italy shifted elsewhere in the Cinquecento, this tectonic strategy was extended in the designs of other financial structures like Jacopo Sansovino's Venetian Zecca (1536–45) and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger's Papal Mint (1513–21), later the Banco di Santo Spirito, located in the aptly-named Quartiere de' Banchi along the so-called 'Wall Street of Rome.' The fortress-like appearance of the Crédit Lyonnais's stone banding is no accident, as in the Renaissance such construction evinced an image of impregnability, accentuated in Sansovino's Zecca by the metal grilles over its windows, testament to the prized nature of Venetian money.²³

The Second-Empire style of the Crédit Lyonnais is revealed by the high mansard roof, which provides a picturesqueness that helps the flat façade plane stand out along one of the few streets in central Nancy notable for its plethora of lively structures. To enhance the details to the naked eye, the façade's richly-carved surface deepens in plasticity as it rises: above the doorway twin lion faces, symbols of the institution, peer out at us with bountiful garlands of fruit dangling from their mouths to emphasize the fecundity of the bank's resources; while above them at the roofline sit a pair of protruding escutcheons bearing the monogram 'CL.'²⁴ All of this is topped in the segmental pediment fronting the mansard roof by the coat of arms of Nancy, identifiable by its central thistle and surmounted crown, referencing the city's proud former independent status as the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine. Thus while the bank's reputation rests on its role as a secure repository of funds, its ultimate goal is to serve the Nancy's citizens by fuelling the city's financial prosperity.

Though modernized, the interior of the Crédit Lyonnais retains an aesthetic

continuity with the façade. Dominated by the oblong banking hall with a mezzanine gallery, pale yellow walls, golden-veined polished marble columns fitted with metal capitals, all topped by a bracketed cornice, it exudes the cool sense of classical order Guadet advised. Only when one looks upward at the hall's massive stained-glass ceiling, designed by Alsatian-born Jacques Grüber (1870–1936), the city's premier artist in the field and charter member of the Ecole de Nancy, does the imprint of Art Nouveau fully appear (**Fig. 9**).²⁵ If the thistle of Nancy's arms capping the façade did not convince local citizens of the bank's sympathy for their regionalist politics, Grüber's canopy made that allegiance plainly evident. The ceiling exhibits a design that subtly but incisively probes the relationship between nature and architectural theory. The curved portion of the ceiling that bends inward to support the flat summit is articulated at regular intervals by brown webbed brackets with knots and twists that make them resemble the branches of trees, whose central vertical element consists of a cornucopia bursting forth with purple blossoms, a motif that is mirrored in the flat expanse of the ceiling separated from it by a band of egg-and-dart moulding. Interlaced throughout these brackets are vines bearing the purple and white blooms of clematis, a flower native to Lorraine popular among artists of the Ecole de Nancy known for its pleasing scent and among French graphic artists as a symbol of both high moral character and security, qualities the bank would clearly hope to exude.²⁶ Collectively, Grüber's brackets and the leafy floral vines appear like the spreading shelter of a glade of trees supporting a great oblong yellow panel stretched over the length of the flat ceiling, stamped at the centre with a gold-rimmed floral medallion imprinted with a bold stylized indigo 'CL' insignia, likely a reference to coinage. An initial reading of the design suggests that the vitality of the region of Lorraine, as artistically inspired by nature,

undergirds the institutional strength of the Crédit Lyonnais. Yet Grüber also seems to be making a timely plea with the design for the appropriateness of Art Nouveau in an more ambitious context, as the style's use in an architectural framework was still just beginning to appear in central Nancy, to rave reviews (see Fig. 3).²⁷ In Grüber's ceiling the ambiguous identification of these sinuous elements as brackets or branches—and the interchangeability of this terminology—seems appropriate, as with either reading they constitute vital members of a tectonic framework supporting a sheltering canopy. Indeed, for more seasoned architectural eyes they might well have recalled the interlocking forms of tree trunks and branches forming the structural members of a primitive shelter seen in the famed 1755 frontispiece of Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Essai sur l'Architecture* that illustrated the long-acknowledged origins in nature of structure in French architectural circles, a design connection also recently advocated by the Ecole de Nancy's president Emile Gallé in his defence of Art Nouveau following the 1900 Exposition Universelle (Fig. 10).²⁸ In this context, Grüber's artistic statement promoting the constructive use of Art Nouveau provided a theoretical justification for the style's appeal amongst Nancy's architects as the nascent century matured.

The Société Générale: Art Nouveau for the Common Man

And spread it did. While Art Nouveau declined in popularity nearly everywhere else in Europe after 1900, in Nancy it gained considerable momentum, as evidenced by the population of the business district with scores of new storefronts and buildings using the style over the next decade.²⁹ One of the bolder entrepreneurs to employ the style was Henri Aimé, a physician, member of the board of directors of the regionalist newspaper *L'Etoile de*

l'Est, and enthusiast of art and literature who built a speculative apartment building on the rue St-Dizier in 1903, hiring the team of Eugène Vallin and his frequent collaborator, the Victor Laloux-trained Ecole graduate Georges Biet, to design it.³⁰ A stalwart advocate of Art Nouveau, Vallin, who specialized in interior design, had trained under his uncle as a restorer of Gothic churches, was imbued with the rationalism of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-duc, and beginning in 1901 served as one of the Ecole de Nancy's vice-presidents.³¹ True to his training in Paris under Laloux, Biet was more cautious and less inclined to favour any particular aesthetic, but the two men had proved their facility with the style in 1901–02 in their collaboration on Biet's own striking Gothic-inspired Art Nouveau apartment house and office in the rue de la Commanderie just west of Nancy's train station.

Located near the Crédit Lyonnais but south of Point Central in the rue St-Dizier, the Aimé Building's lower two levels swiftly became the location of the central office in Nancy of the Société Générale, which remains its tenant to this day (**Fig. 11**). In consonance with the desire of the Ecole de Nancy and many other advocates of Art Nouveau to make the style accessible to a broader population,³² the Société Générale historically had identified with a working-class clientele. Its name recalls the European corporations of the early nineteenth century that drew from the collectivist philosophy of Henri de St-Simon by working broadly for the common good, such as the Société Générale du Crédit Mobilier or the Société Générale de Belgique, both of which had played major roles in funding vital modern infrastructure projects such as the expansion of the French and Belgian national railway networks and Parisian public transit. In France, the name 'Société' also signalled the bank's organization as a joint-stock company, responsible to a numerous of shareholders with shared governance under a board of directors, unlike a bank such as the Rothschilds'

that was controlled by a single family and ultimately answered to their interests.³³

Appropriately, the Société Générale became the first financial institution in Nancy to use the style to appeal to a distinctly pedestrian milieu, and the bank's choice of the Aimé Building for its central location likewise illustrates the style's resonance as an emblem of unity and pride that bridged class lines. The building's overall presentation is yet unassuming: the commercial space on the ground level, balanced arrangement of windows, wide balcony on the fourth level, and curved mansard roof betray the classic typology of a modern apartment building in Third-Republic Paris.³⁴ Devoid of colour or texture besides its beige ashlar, the façade is animated by the flattened curves of the window surrounds and the outward swing of its balconies. In contrast to the Crédit Lyonnais, the grilles over the ground-floor windows are the sole tectonic indicators of the bank's existence, while above the curved floral ironwork classifies the building as Art Nouveau.

At street level, however, the unconventional aspects of the style come into play. Instead of relying on classical elements and a single, arched doorway common to provincial French banks, the entrance uses a double arch divided in the middle by a single pier that steps out from the recessed vestibule into the sidewalk like an enthusiastic salesman hawking a special deal for new customers; even its base protrudes forward, like a human foot waiting to trip up a passing pedestrian. Meanwhile, the sinuous outlines of the doorway on either side swing upward to a point farthest away from the central pier, forming an odd double portal that continually keeps observers guessing as to the architects' intentions: in one interpretation, it appears like a pair of eyes keeping watch over the street over the bridge of a nose, as if actively searching for the bank's next customer. In another, they suggest the open pages of a bound volume, referencing Aimé's own literary talents, the

pleasures of a well-narrated story, or even the ledgers of accounting. In yet a third, the symmetrical portals comprise the two wings of a butterfly, another favourite motif of the designers of the Ecole de Nancy representing the love of pleasures and frivolity, reflecting the carefree activities of downtown shoppers engendered by the ready availability of cash from a bank.³⁵ All readings seem probable; indeed, an even more dazzling and curious winged motif would be used for the iron-and-glass portal to Lucien Weissenburger's annex to the great Magasins Réunis department store nearby when it was completed in 1912 (**Fig. 12**). The entrance thus functions as a democratic social leveller, its unusual appearance privileging no potential customers by virtue of economic or cultural standing. Like Hector Guimard's Parisian Métro edicules, whose peculiar cast-iron portals operated in a similar manner in order to connect the city's diverse geographic neighbourhoods, the portal of the Société Générale functioned to attract clientele of all backgrounds and classes, a popular message in the seat of a heavily-industrialized region like Lorraine.³⁶

This openness to patrons of modest means was best expressed, however, in the bank's interior (since modernised), which continued the austerity of the surface of the storefront but dropped the frivolity of form. Here Biet's rigid interpretation of the principles of bank architecture became evident in the banking hall's utilitarian, almost industrial appearance (**Fig. 13**). Its frankly exposed iron framework, stamped with rivets, undergirded the glazed skylit ceiling. Uniform banking windows, with no visible distinctions between those for regular cashiers and those for stocks and bonds, were arranged in a L around one side and the back of the hall, maximizing the long, narrow space. Outfitted with clear glass panels and held in place by thin iron stanchions echoing the ceiling frame, they suggested a transparency of purpose, honesty, and a certain intimacy between customers and

employees. One of the few indications of Art Nouveau were the abstract fanlike brackets crowning the stanchions, whose minimalist design lacking a recognisable motif prevented any distraction of personnel or clients from the transactions being conducted. Even the polished wood panelling lacked ornament. The spartan aesthetic continued into the private spaces of the director's office, whose outfitting with simple, functional furniture suggested efficiency and straightforward service without fanfare, even at the upper levels of administration—a nearly-perfect expression of the company's core purpose (**Fig. 14**). This effective employment of Art Nouveau would prompt the Société Générale to reuse it, albeit in a more flamboyant manner, for other branches in eastern France, at Rambervillers (1910) and Châlon-sur-Saône (1912).³⁷

The Regionalist Ideal: The Banque Renault

The full expression of regionalism in Nancy applied to bank architecture, however, became manifest in the new headquarters of the Banque Renault, designed by Emile André (1871–1933) and Paul Charbonnier (1865–1953) on the corner of the rue Chanzy and rue St-Jean and finished in 1910 (**Fig. 15**). Its founder, Rambervillers native Charles Renault (1854–1916), was a financial wizard, and the desire to replace the company's old offices on the rue St-Dizier with a grand structure originally estimated to cost 250,000 francs (£1,020,000 in 2019) was justified by the company's quadrupling of its annual business receipts from 199 million to 810 million francs between 1895 and 1908.³⁸ The new headquarters reflected the nature of most large-scale Art Nouveau structures in Nancy, combining expert decorative craftsmanship with the most modern construction method available. The structure employed the Hennebique system of reinforced concrete, which had

been quickly adapted by Nancy architects after its invention in 1896, although it remained disguised by an exterior veneer of limestone, the preferred building material in the region.³⁹ The building's opening in July 1910 was celebrated with a full-page illustrated spread in the local construction journal *L'Immeuble et la Construction dans l'Est*, whose editor Emile Badel was a prominent and fervent supporter of the city's Art Nouveau.⁴⁰ Renauld was a staunch supporter of cultural regionalism and a pillar of Nancy's business community, particularly the industrialists within the Ecole de Nancy; he served on the board of directors of the publishing house Berger-Levrault, which had relocated from Strasbourg following the Franco-Prussian War.⁴¹ In 1904, Renauld had netted high praise by being one of the first to support the initiative of his brother-in-law Antonin Daum, one of the heads of the great Daum glassworks and a vice-president of the Ecole de Nancy, to construct a new building for the Chamber of Commerce of Meurthe-et-Moselle.⁴² It was perhaps inevitable, then, that Renauld would commission a pair of Ecole de Nancy-affiliated architects to design his new headquarters.

While Renauld personally knew both André and Charbonnier, the question of who he approached first remains a matter of debate, as the two men maintained separate offices and never created a formal partnership.⁴³ The architects were indeed an odd pair, having trained together in Victor Laloux's atelier at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and become fast friends, with Charbonnier even gifting to André a reproduction of one of his 1893 school projects for an ornamented medieval- or Renaissance-inspired tower, a common practice among Ecole students.⁴⁴ But while both men were committed regionalists, they exhibited this sympathy in different ways. André, who maintained a large design library, was highly adventurous, having traveled in the Middle East after graduation in 1898; he often looked

abroad for inspiration and was deeply interested in vernacular, rural models and the politically-charged regional symbolism of local flora. He dabbled in furniture design and painting, exhibiting his work alongside his multitalented colleagues in the Ecole de Nancy. For his part, Charbonnier had developed a traditional career path for French architects, entering government service as the official Architect of Historic Monuments for Meurthe-et-Moselle in late 1900 and later assuming the responsibility for all buildings in the département. An enthusiast of historicism and reader of Viollet-le-duc, in his independent work he was known for his reliance on historical vocabularies, especially the classical and Gothic. Despite his proficiency in Art Nouveau, Charbonnier was a conscientious student of Laloux and considered style ultimately subservient to a logical spatial programme.⁴⁵ The first plans for the new Banque Renault, which compress all the main spaces and offices besides the vaults into one floor, with no separate stocks and bonds hall, are done in Charbonnier's hand and dated 8 July 1907; at least one source has suggested that André was brought on board only after Renault judged them unsatisfactory.⁴⁶ Some evidence, however, suggests André may have been approached first, as Renault was already renting an apartment in the building owned by André's in-laws, the Bournique family, that was located on the site he coveted for his new bank. On 25 May 1907, Renault leased the entire building with stipulations that his company could take any steps to improve the structure and would eventually purchase it, which it did in 1935.⁴⁷ Journalists who viewed the models of the new bank in 1909 in André's office on the Place Stanislas were surprised to learn that André was collaborating with Charbonnier but not his regular partner, Gaston Munier.⁴⁸ In any case, later news reports eventually confirmed that André was primarily responsible for the façade and Charbonnier the interior spaces.⁴⁹

Renauld's support for regionalist politics and culture was reflected in his desire to build a bank whose architecture clearly indicated its service first and foremost to citizens of Lorraine; the Banque Renauld had no great international network like the Crédit Lyonnais nor did it attract a certain class of customers like the Société Générale or Caisse d'Épargne. Its new building was nonetheless conceived to rival the Parisian banks, if not by sheer scale, then by the quality and communicative power of its design, along with the range of services it offered. The seamless use of Art Nouveau everywhere in the structure would disclose this intention, cemented in practice by Renauld's tight control over the institution, itself exemplified by the use of the upper floors as his family's comfortable primary residence. The Banque Renauld's location was, and remains, one of the most advantageous commercial plots of land in Nancy, down the street from both the local branch of the Banque de France and the new Chamber of Commerce of Meurthe-et-Moselle, which itself doubled as a stock exchange. The bank's western façade fronted the Place St-Jean (now the Place Maginot), diagonally across which ran one of the city's main trolley lines that turned onto the rue St-Jean and down it towards Point Central; in the other direction, at the opposite corner of the square from the bank, stood the Magasins Réunis and, from 1912, the new offices of *L'Est Républicain*, the city's leading newspaper, between which the municipal trolley lines ran before slipping over the railroad lines and entering the residential quarter to the west (see Fig. 2).

Crowned by its distinctive spire, the tower constitutes the key piece of the Banque Renauld's exterior. At its base, the main entrance employs a triple arcade signalling the building's stature as a corporate headquarters, and unlike other banks in Nancy, its elevation three steps up from the dusty, sloping street lifts the customer to the circular

landing and prepares him for the more comfortable experience inside. It nonetheless recalls familiar precedents: Charbonnier himself had used the tripartite entrance form for the branch of the Caisse d'Epargne in the tiny Lorraine hamlet of Oleron he had constructed in 1901, whose hillside location necessitates grand staircases to reach the entry from street level (**Fig. 16**).⁵⁰ For the tower's general scheme he and André may have been influenced by the recently-deceased Edouard-Jules Corroyer's Parisian headquarters for the CNEP, whose façade also uses a triple arcade and is capped by a tall tapering mansard roof, likewise pierced by dormers, that terminates in a prominent clock tower with belfry (**see Fig. 4**). (In an ironic twist of fate, the CNEP's successor BNP Paribas would eventually take over the Nancy headquarters of the Banque Renault in the 1980s after the latter folded.)

Like André, Corroyer was considered one of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts' more daring graduates; a member of the atelier of Charles-Auguste Questel (1807–1888), he was an assiduous reader of Viollet-le-duc and shared the latter's sympathy for vernacular regional models along with his rationalism and enthusiasm for the Gothic.⁵¹ In Nancy, the corner tower was already employed in numerous structures, most prominently the Magasins Réunis and the Genin-Louis Grain Shop (1901–02), an Art Nouveau landmark one block east of the bank on the rue St-Jean, above which André had once lived. These tall structures emerged as the 'cathedrals of consumption' that were quickly displacing the spires of the city's Gothic-revival churches erected during the nineteenth century in residential districts—some by none other than Nancy native and Prix de Rome winner Prosper Morey—as the city's most visible monuments, signalling the ascendance after 1880 of Nancy's new civic devotion to commerce and capital, thus keeping it 'young in spirit,' according to Parisian architect and critic Louis-Charles Boileau (1837–1914).⁵² Corner

towers, furthermore, had emerged over the previous decades as familiar features of French bank architecture, particularly for many provincial branches of the Caisse d'Epargne, the first true bourgeois savings bank in the country.⁵³ Co-opting this popular architectural element, then, suggested Renauld's dedication to a clientele of all classes, even though the building served as a headquarters for his grand corporation.

André and Charbonnier recognised the significance of the bank's structural crown and struggled to find the perfect form. From the start, the pair decided that the turret needed to emerge outwards from the planar curve of the façade above the entrance, a move that emphasised the building's vitality, as if it was a living organism and the tower a massive, sprouting branch. Charbonnier initially proposed a striking design that resembled a Japanese pagoda, stepping back as it rose with tapered eaves on several levels, which was nonetheless discarded, along with three other proposed revisions (**Fig. 17**).⁵⁴ The spire's final form, settled on in October 1908 and generally attributed to André, consists of a conical cap with kicked eaves pierced at three levels by staggered dormers that are topped by miniature bronze spires; it is flanked by steep gabled roofs punctuated by flap dormers. The design appears to be an amalgamation of ideas from several sources.⁵⁵ Some influence from Flemish Renaissance models can be seen, such as the flap dormers and conical spire with kicked eaves pierced by dormers, used by Art Nouveau exponent Paul Saintenoy on his revivalist Pharmacie Delacre in central Brussels in 1898, which likewise occupies a corner site on a plaza (**Fig. 18**). Equally likely is the link to structures of security and defence; in neighbouring Alsace many town fortifications include bastion towers that feature an arcaded base and a spire at the top with kicked eaves. The flap dormers, meanwhile, can also be seen in many traditional Alsatian market halls.⁵⁶ Such elements would thus have

had the double advantage of familiarity to Nancy's large immigrant population from Alsace-Lorraine and by extension indicate the company's embrace of their contribution to Nancy's modern identity, as well as further embedding the building within the lineage of vernacular commercial architecture. André would have known these features personally from his assiduous explorations of regional architecture for the model Alsatian Village he was simultaneously designing for Nancy's Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France in 1909.⁵⁷ In Nancy itself, the conical tower was used in twin form to crown the Porte de la Craffe, a gatehouse north of the Place Stanislas that proved a strategic defensive position in the Battle of Nancy in January 1477, in which the city's defenders under René II, Duke of Lorraine, famously turned back the encroaching forces of the Burgundian Duke Charles the Bold, killing him and decisively ending the Burgundian Wars (**Fig. 19**).⁵⁸ To reinforce such proud associations, André and Charbonnier crowned the spire with a huge bronze thistle, the ultimate emblem of both Nancy and Lorrainers as an index of their tenacity and hardiness in fending off outside aggression; the depths to which Renauld's bank proclaimed its civic and regional allegiances can be symbolised also by the giant brackets that anchor the thistle to the roof like the massive root system characteristic of the plant that marks it as a particularly noxious weed.⁵⁹ The prickly and stubborn nature of thistles likewise reflects the bank's function as a secure protector of monetary reserves, and more broadly, the guarding of provincial resources against their requisition by the capital's institutions. If these suggestions of impregnability are not enough, at the impostes of the arcaded entrance André and Charbonnier have placed iron bands stamped with round bosses recalling coinage that are surrounded with reliefs of ginkgo leaves, whose forms fascinated Nancy artists and were recognised not only as a symbol of great wealth but also for their

extraordinary resistance to the elements, especially frost, a welcome quality considering the notorious frigidity of Lorraine winters.⁶⁰

* * *

The Banque Renault's distinctive envelope embraced a thoroughly French interior, as if to declare that the regionalist allegiances of the institution nonetheless sprang from and were rooted in a decidedly national character, as the plans reflected all the fundamental aspects of Guadet's principles (**Fig. 20**). The basement vaults were separated into two chambers, one for the bank's monetary and bullion reserves and the other for customer's deposits, each encased by thick walls and then together separated from the rest of the space by a corridor and another encircling wall. Across a vestibule from the safe-deposit boxes was another room with private tables for customers sorting their stored valuables, while the mechanical services for the building and the bank's archives were placed at the other end of the space. The other floors likewise used a very predictable layout. Unlike most Parisian bank headquarters, the banking hall that occupied the front of the main level was not massive, but this had the advantage of fostering a sense of intimacy between the bank's officials and their customers as expected in a local institution. Nonetheless, the space was originally crowned by a stained-glass ceiling by Grüber that accentuated its height and offset the lack of depth (**Fig. 21**). The north side of the banking hall opened onto ticket windows separating it from the stocks and bonds department, whose office of equal size to the main banking hall, capped by its own glazed ceiling and equipped with both private staff and public telephones, indicated the Banque Renault's provision of the full range of financial services equal to any other bank in the country. Opposite the stocks and bonds department on the south side of the banking hall, adjacent to the main entrance, was the

cashier's desk, luxuriously outfitted with richly-stained wood and a prominent sign with typography that visitors from Paris might have discerned as similar to that used by Hector Guimard's new Metropolitan entrances, thus subtly hinting that Nancy's Art Nouveau was every bit as cutting-edge and modern as that of the capital (**Fig. 22**). The western side of the building on the ground floor was reserved for the watchful eye of department managers, while the east side contains the grand staircases that lead to the vaults below and the mezzanine above. While the ground floor facilitated the bank's more public activities, this level accordingly housed its more private functions. The entire west side of the mezzanine contained the massive accounting department, organized around long tables set perpendicular to the large windows, while the south side of the floor was occupied by the publication staff of the bank's investment newsletter, the *Revue des Valeurs de la Banque Renauld*. Between these two spaces at the southwest corner of the building, above the main entrance, sat Renauld's office, with private doors opening onto to each adjacent space and a richly carved double portal to the gallery around the banking hall. He thus exercised expert control, on the one hand, over the internal undertakings of the bank's accounts, and on the other, the way the company disseminated financial reports and advice to investors. At the southeast corner of the building, Renauld's private staircase and elevator gave direct passage from his apartments on the building's levels above to the bank offices and ultimately the rue St-Jean. Such emphasis on efficiency in plan reflected the Banque Renauld's identity as a well-oiled modern machine for processing, guarding, and generating its patrons' wealth.

Following the advice of respected Paris Opéra architect Charles Garnier, who had advocated that French architects leave questions of interior decoration to expert craftsmen,

André and Charbonnier handed over these tasks in the Banque Renauld to the duo of Louis Majorelle and Jacques Grüber, the region's foremost talents in the applied arts, a decision that also reflected the collaborative nature of Art Nouveau buildings in Nancy as *Gesamtkunstwerks*.⁶¹ Though Majorelle and Grüber employed a plethora of floral imagery for the bank's décor, the unifying motif was undoubtedly the *monnaie-du-pape*, which still can be found virtually everywhere in the structure, from the woodwork of the furniture and panelling, to the stained glass—including the banking hall's sumptuous ceiling—to the ironwork and even the carved mouldings around doorways, light sconces, and tracing the lines of ceilings (**Fig. 23**). While the standard English translation of *monnaie-du-pape* is 'annual honesty,' the plant's more popular moniker of 'the pope's coin purse' speaks to its appropriate use here. Its round seed pods with a translucent silvery hue bear a striking resemblance to coinage, and the casting of the motif in Majorelle's iron balustrades makes it appear as if the institution literally mints its own money—a notion reinforced by the interior ubiquity of the motif as it seemingly sprouts from every crevice, imprints every panel of wood, and dangles from each railing, evoking the well-worn fanciful aphorism that 'money grows on trees,' yet nonetheless underscoring the strength of Renauld's corporation and the implication that Nancy's residents of means or financial acumen chose to patronize his bank over competitors.

The *monnaie-du-pape* betrays an even deeper symbolism for Renauld's institution, however, as it also is considered an emblem of neighbouring Alsace—the land of Grüber's birth and Majorelle's own father-in-law—in consonance with its general association with memory and forgetfulness, tied to its alternative French name *l'oubli* ('the forgotten').⁶² As the transfer of many Alsatian businesses and families added to the burgeoning wealth of

Nancy's citizens and the prosperity of French Lorraine after 1871, the close cultural ties between the city and Alsace constituted a major focal point of the 1909 Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France, held in Nancy the year before the new Banque Renault opened. But Nancy's residents had become frustrated by the perpetual slowness of the national government in Paris to attempt to recapture the 'lost provinces' from the German Empire and the extent to which most Frenchmen, by 1900, wished to forget about the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.⁶³ The use of the *monnaie-du-pape* in the Banque Renault thus added another layer to the company's allegiance to regionalist politics in the form of a subtle promise not to forget the immigrants from Alsace who had started over by resettling in Nancy after the Franco-Prussian War, but to make the security of their economic future one of its central concerns.

Renauld's deep commitment to regional politics and artistic aims was exemplified by the use of Majorelle and Grüber's decorative program for the very furniture of his own office, which, though seemingly inconsequential, in fact exhibited a rare seamlessness of décor for French banks, whose furnishings of private offices tended to use generic, mass-produced models.⁶⁴ Here, the decorative motifs used ferns, plants native to Lorraine said to be effective at warding off parasites, whose imagery was also visible in Grüber's glazed ceiling to the stocks and bonds hall.⁶⁵ Renauld's choice thus poised him to further impress visitors by highlighting his own understanding of the complexities of the contemporary art of Nancy and Lorraine, revealing the highly refined nature of the city's professional elites that Parisian observers increasingly were forced to recognise.⁶⁶ Indeed, the critical success that Nancy's architects and designers had achieved by the time of the Banque Renault's completion was impressed upon one visitor to its new premises: "[T]here is an edifice

which bursts forth full of originality and real beauty[.]...Nancy art...has already begun the conquest of Paris and will soon enough be the French Art.”⁶⁷

* * *

Renauld’s bank was far from Nancy’s last Art Nouveau structure to be built, as the style remained a vital component of the city’s building activity until the start of the First World War.⁶⁸ The human carnage of the conflict, however, mirrored the disastrous consequences for the region’s artistic firms and major architectural monuments, many of which were destroyed or relocated as the city found itself in the thick of fighting on the southern part of the Western Front. The city’s prominence was further reduced in the interwar period by the recapture of Alsace-Lorraine, confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles, and the resulting re-installment of Strasbourg as the leading metropolis on France’s eastern frontier, though Nancy nonetheless continued to expand. Although Nancy was pulled back into the orbit of Paris with the ascent of Art Deco as a French ‘national style’ during the 1920s, numerous traces of Art Nouveau motifs remain in the city’s built environment dating from the interwar period.⁶⁹ Perhaps most remarkably, the three banks analysed here, or their successors, remain in the same buildings and function much as they did over a century ago, all having since been honoured as historic monuments. They remain integral pieces of Nancy’s enduring regional identity as defined in part by the couple hundred Art Nouveau buildings scattered across its cityscape, a nostalgic testament to a period of prosperity unlikely to be forgotten.

Notes

¹ On this unequal relationship, see Alain Corbin, 'Paris—Province,' in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, I: Conflicts and Divisions*, dir. Pierre Nora, ed. Lawrence Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 427–64. Characteristic of such trends were the funds for Parisian improvements for the five Expositions Universelles the capital regularly hosted between 1855 and 1900, borne at the expense of the rest of the nation.

² Originally called the Place Royale. Formerly the King of Poland, Stanislas had been installed as Lorraine's ruler in 1736 as a result of negotiations ending the War of Polish Succession. Upon his death, Lorraine became French territory as the throne passed to his son-in-law, Louis XV of France.

³ Catherine Coley, *La Salle Poirel: Albert Jasson, architecte* (Nancy, 1989), pp. 4–5, 12–13, 24–37, 48; idem, 'Les Magasins Réunis: une réalisation architecturale exemplaire avant la première guerre,' *Le Pays Lorrain*, 81 (2000), pp. 83–94; and Roselyne Bouvier et al., *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Meurthe-et-Moselle* (Nancy, 1999).

⁴ Pierre Duroc (pseudonym of Emile Badel), 'Les nouvelles devantures,' in *L'Immeuble et la Construction dans l'Est* [hereafter, 'ICE'] (10 November 1901), p. 217; and Emile Nicolas, 'Les devantures artistiques à Nancy,' in *La Lorraine Artiste* (1 March 1902), pp. 77–78.

⁵ On the Ecole de Nancy, see Christian Debize, *Emile Gallé and the 'Ecole de Nancy,'* trans. Ruth

Atkin-Etienne (Metz, 1998); Claire Aptel, Henri Claude, et. al., *Nancy 1900: Rayonnement de l'Art nouveau* (Thionville, 1991); and Françoise-Thérèse Charpentier, et. al., *Art Nouveau: L'Ecole de Nancy* (Metz, 1987). On the Royer Printing House and Vaxelaire store, see Francis Roussel, *Nancy Architecture 1900* (Metz, 1992), III, pp. 28–33, 56–59.

⁶ Louis-Charles Boileau, 'Causerie: Art et Pratique,' in *L'Architecture* 14 (7 September 1901), pp. 303–08 (p. 307). Significantly, the style was also avoided by municipal architect Albert Jasson (1849–1923), in whose office many Nancy Art Nouveau designers had trained.

⁷ This was the argument made by Louis Laffitte in his *Rapport Général sur l'Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France–Nancy 1909* (Paris/Nancy, 1912); also see Max Durand, 'Nancy, II: A Travers l'Exposition,' in *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires* (8 August 1909), pp. 129–30 (p. 129).

⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types*, Bollingen Series XXV, vol. 19 (Princeton, 1976), p. 206. 'Caisse d'épargne' literally translates as 'savings bank.'

⁹ Hubert Bonin, 'La Révolution des banques françaises (1850–1930),' in Jean-François Pinchon et al., *Les Palais d'Argent: l'Architecture Bancaire en France de 1830 à 1930* (Paris, 1992), pp. 14–15, 22.

¹⁰ For example, when Edouard-Jules Corroyer (1837–1904) embarked on the commission for the new headquarters of the Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris (CNEP) in 1880,

he expressed a primary concern for the ‘art national’ that he was responsible for promulgating. See Corroyer, *L’Art gothique* (Paris, 1891), p. 5; and Philippe Sorel, “Corroyer et les décors du Comptoir d’escompte de Paris,” in Pinchon et al., *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹¹ Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–33.

¹² Edmond Delaire, *Les Architectes Elèves à l’Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1793–1907*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1907), pp. 135–39; such programmes were also used for the contests of 1788 and 1810, but no Prix de Rome competitions after 1899.

¹³ Guadet, *Eléments et Théorie d’Architecture* (Paris, 1901–04), II, pp. 413–24; and L. Max, ‘Les Banques Modernes,’ *ICE*, 26 (1908), pp. 257–58. The popularity of the Beaux-Arts system with architects abroad, who before 1914 often completed their training at the Ecole, meant that such principles and classical vocabularies became hallmarks of modern bank design throughout much of North America, too.

¹⁴ On British bank architecture, see John Booker, *Temples of Mammon: The Architecture of Banking* (Edinburgh, 1990). On classicism as the entrenched style at the Ecole, see Neil Levine, ‘The Romantic Ideal of Architectural Legibility: Henri Labrouste and the Néo-Grec,’ and Richard Chafee, ‘The Teaching of Architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts,’ both in *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, ed. Arthur Drexler (New York/Cambridge, USA, 1977), pp. 358ff and 87–88, respectively. Besides Art Nouveau, there were a few exceptions to the rule of classicism in French banks: Flemish-Renaissance models that reflected the

commercial heritage of Flanders infiltrated some designs in the northern *départements*, and a few architects, influenced by Viollet-le-duc, indulged in the Gothic revival. Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–71.

¹⁵ Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–47.

¹⁶ Max, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

¹⁷ On the early history of the Crédit Lyonnais, see Jean Bouvier, *Naissance d'une banque: Le Crédit Lyonnais* (Paris, 1968); also consult Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23, 36–38.

¹⁸ Letter from Baron Brincard to André Madinier, 13 February 1925. Paris, Archives du Crédit Lyonnais, 112 AH 3. The Crédit Lyonnais archives (now held by Crédit Agricole) contain no records pertaining to the construction of any of its locations except the main offices in Paris and Lyons; virtually all discussions regarding the design processes are understood to have taken place verbally. Annie Jacques, 'La politique architecturale du Crédit Lyonnais,' in Bernard Desjardins, et al., *Le Crédit Lyonnais 1863–1986* (Geneva, 2003), pp. 193–209 (p. 194).

¹⁹ Delaire, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

²⁰ For the 1900 Exposition, see Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto, 1967). Entering students at the Ecole could choose which atelier they would join

to complete their student work. On this system, see Chafee, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–109.

²¹ A tendency reinforced by French histories of architecture written before World War II, which only mention provincial buildings as derivative of trends in Paris. See Georges Gromort, ‘Architecture,’ in Gromort, et. al., *L’Architecture et La Sculpture en France de la Revolution à nos Jours* (Paris, 1922), n.p.; and David Van Zanten, *Building Paris: Architectural Institutions and the Transformations of the French Capital, 1830–1870* (New York, 1994), p. 48.

²² For the Italian Quattrocento as a pivotal period in banking history, see Raymond de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank* (Cambridge, MA, 1963); Frederic Lane and Reinhold Mueller, *Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice 1:Coins and Moneys of Account* (Baltimore, 1984), pp. 69–75; Richard S. Goldthwaite, ‘The Medici Bank and the World of Florentine Capitalism,’ *Past and Present*, 114 (1987), pp. 3–31; and Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–70.

²³ On Venetian finance, see Lane, ‘Venetian Bankers, 1496–1533: A Study in the Early Stages of Deposit Banking,’ *Journal of Political Economy*, 45 (1937), pp. 187–206. For Sansovino and Venice, see Deborah Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven, 1975; 2nd printing, 1987), pp. 41–45. On Sangallo’s Papal Mint, see Alan Ceen, *The Quartiere de’ Banchi: Urban Planning in Rome in the First Half of the Cinquecento* (doctoral dissertation., University of Pennsylvania, 1977), pp. 141–49.

²⁴ An element that Narjoux would later highly recommend as a standard distinguishing feature on the façades of the bank’s various branches. André-Félix Narjoux, ‘Note sur la

construction et la décoration des agences, juillet 1924.’ Paris, Archives Historiques du Crédit Lyonnais, 112 AH 3.

²⁵ On Grüber’s stained glass, see René d’Avril, ‘Les Vitraux de Jacques Gruber,’ *La Revue Lorraine Illustrée* 7, (1912), pp. 41–48; Louis Lumet, ‘Un décorateur nancéen: Jacques Gruber,’ *L’Art décoratif*, 11 (May 1909), pp. 161–67; Jacques-Louis Vallières, ‘Jacques Grüber, le régénérateur du vitrail,’ *La Vie en Alsace*, 14 (January 1936), pp. 6–12; and Françoise Dierkens-Aubry, et al., *Jacques Grüber, Ebéniste et Maître-verrier, 1871–1936* (Brussels, 1983).

²⁶ Emile Jacquemin, ‘Le plafond en vitrail du Crédit Lyonnais,’ *ICE*, 17 (20 April 1902), pp. 402–3; Maurice Pillard-Verneuil, *Dictionnaire des Symboles, Emblèmes, et Attributs* (Paris, 1897), p. 42.

²⁷ Jacquemin, ‘L’art de la rue,’ *ICE*, 16 (3 March 1901), p. 347; idem., ‘Quelques Constructions du Centre,’ *ICE*, 17 (23 June 1901), p. 58; and Duroc, *op. cit.* Also see Emile Nicolas, ‘Les Vitraux de M. Jacques Gruber,’ *La Lorraine Artiste*, 21 (1 August 1903), pp. 232–33; and S., ‘Meubles de J. Gruber,’ idem., vol. 19 (1901), pp. 9–13, 99–100.

²⁸ In response to Art Nouveau’s critics who ridiculed its ‘nightmarish creations’ that carried a ‘grimacing turbulence of movements,’ Gallé famously declared that the style’s search for a new, modern system of structure and form in furniture and décor was preferable to the stagnating revivalist pastiches then in fashion. He argued Art Nouveau was in fact founded

upon rational principles that emanated directly from nature, in effect developing a ‘style without style.’ See Gallé, ‘Le Mobilier Contemporain orné d’après la nature,’ *Revue des Arts décoratifs* (1900), reprinted in *Ecrits pour l’art: Floriculture–Art 13eputation–Notices d’Exposition (1884–1889)* (Paris, 1908), pp. 237–76 (pp. 246–47). For Laugier, see his *An Essay on Architecture*, new edn, trans. Wolfgang and Anni Herrmann (New York, 2009).

²⁹ See H.C., ‘Les devantures de Magasins,’ *ICE* 28 (26 June 1910), p. 193; and L. Max, ‘Devantures et Etalages,’ in *ICE* 27 (6 February 1910), p. 665.

³⁰ Hortus, ‘M. le Docteur Henri Aimé: Président de nombreuses Sociétés, candidat à la 14eputation,’ *Le Cri de Nancy* 2 (1909), p. 208; Raoul Wagner, *Dictionnaire Biographique Illustré de Meurthe-et-Moselle* (Paris, 1910), p. 6; and Delaire, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

³¹ Emile Nicolas, ‘Eugène Vallin et son oeuvre,’ *La Lorraine Artiste* 22 (1904), pp. 257–75; and Frédéric Descouturelle, *Eugène Vallin: Menuisier d’art industriel* (Nancy, 1998).

³² These supporters abounded as Art Nouveau emerged in France in the 1890s, and included physician and critic Henri Cazalis (pseudonym Jean Lahor); see his *L’Art Nouveau: son Histoire, l’Art Nouveau étranger à l’Exposition, l’Art Nouveau du Point de Vie Social* (Paris, 1901); Frantz Jourdain and the members of L’Art dans Tout were also included in this group; on them, see Meredith Clausen, *Frantz Jourdain and the Samaritaine: Art Nouveau Theory and Criticism* (Leiden, 1987); and Rosella Froissart-Pezzone, *L’Art dans Tout: Les Arts décoratifs dans l’Europe et l’utopie d’Art Nouveau* (Paris, 2004). The Ecole de Nancy recognized this

ecumenical purpose of the style in its initial by-laws. See Emile Gallé, et al., *Ecole de Nancy: Statuts* (Nancy, 1901): n.p.

³³ Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–38.

³⁴ This austerity was evident to Nancy's architectural critics. See Emile Jacquemin, 'Nancy: Et les sculptures?!' *ICE*, 21 (30 April 1905), pp. 420–21. The Aimé Building particularly resembles Parisian buildings erected after new laws lifting height restrictions were enacted in 1884. See François Loyer, *Paris Nineteenth Century: Architecture and Urbanism*, trans. Charles Lynn Clark (New York, 1988), pp. 384–436; also Monique Eleb and Anne Debarre, *L'Invention de l'Habitation Moderne: Paris 1880–1914* (Brussels, 1995), pp. 289–330.

³⁵ Pillard-Verneuil, *op. cit.*, p. 135. In preliminary drawings, the outer jambs of the portal curved inward as they approached the ground, accentuating the wing-like appearance.

³⁶ On Guimard's multivalent cast-iron forms of the Métropolitain, see Malcolm Clendenin, 'Hector Guimard, Political Movements, and the Paris Metro: Natural Sympathies, Governing Harmony, and Social Change' (doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2008), pp. 262–75.

³⁷ See Bonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 74, 75, 80.

³⁸ 'Banque Renault et Cie,' *Revue Industrielle de l'Est*, 17 (1908), p. 646. The franc was then pegged to the price of gold, so I have calculated the purchasing power of 250,000 French francs in 1908 using algorithms at historicalstatistics.org and measuringworth.com (Accessed 1 July 2019).

³⁹ See Jean Micque (pseudonym of Emile Jacquemin), 'Béton et ciment armé,' *ICE*, 11 (1896), pp. 165–67; and 'Les Carrières d'Euville,' *ICE*, 1 (1887), pp. 12–13.

⁴⁰ Emile Badel, 'Le nouvel immeuble de la Banque Renault,' *ICE*, 28 (17 July 1910), pp. 267–68.

⁴¹ 'Imprimerie et Librairie Berger-Levrault,' *Revue Industrielle de l'Est*, 19 (1910), p. 853.

⁴² 'Bourse de Commerce,' *Revue Industrielle de l'Est*, 13 (1904), pp. 304–05. Antonin Daum had married Marguerite Didion, sister of Renault's wife Marie. His brother Auguste served as the secretary of Renault's board of directors; when he died in 1909, Renault served as a pallbearer at his funeral. The Daums were frequent guests of the Renaults; on one occasion one of the former (possibly Auguste's son Jean) photographed Renault's wife and two daughters on the balcony of their apartment in the new bank after its completion. Personal communications between Marc Pernot and Pierre Lescanne (grandson of Auguste Daum) and the author, 26 and 27 June 2006. Also see 'Banque de MM. Renault & Cie.,' *Revue Industrielle de l'Est*, 10 (1901), p. 1; and 'Obsèques de M. Auguste Daum,' *L'Est Républicain*, 4 April 1909, 2.

⁴³ The tendency of Nancy's architects to collaborate informally was common before 1914.

No correspondence between André, Renault, or Charbonnier is known to survive. Most of André's drawings are conserved at the Archives Départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle in Nancy (hereafter ADMM). According to the grandson of Paul Charbonnier, none of the latter's office records or writings exist, either. Letter from Paul-Daniel Gérard to the author, 3 May 2006.

⁴⁴ Now conserved in the Fonds André in the Centre de Documentation of the Musée de l'Ecole de Nancy, Nancy, along with several other such drawings gifted between the city's architects.

⁴⁵ On André, see Hervé Doucet, *Emile André: Art Nouveau et Modernités* (Arles, 2011); and Delaire, *op. cit.*, 46; the *Liste des ouvrages donnés par Jean-Luc André le 7 août 2002* and the *Liste des ouvrages donnés par Jean-Luc André le 10 septembre 2002* (Nancy, unpublished typescript, Centre de Documentation, Musée de l'Ecole de Nancy). For Charbonnier, see Delaire, *op. cit.*, p. 210; Emile Badel, 'Chez nos Architectes: M. Paul Charbonnier,' *ICE*, 35 (1923), pp. 5–6; and G.S., "L'Exposition de la Maison d'Art Lorraine," *La Lorraine Artiste*, 18 (1900), p. 159. The primacy of the plan and spatial arrangement was a hallmark of Laloux's teaching: 'Hommage à Laloux de ses Elèves Américains,' *Pencil Points*, 18 (1937), pp. 621–30.

⁴⁶ Charbonnier, ground floor plan for the Banque Renault, 8 July 1907. Nancy, Fonds André, ADMM, 119 J 661. Roussel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 50.

⁴⁷ André's wife Jean was the daughter of Camille Bournique. Hervé Doucet, *Art Nouveau et Régionalisme: Emile André (1871–1933), architecte et artiste* (doctoral thesis, Université de Versailles–St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2004), pp. 303–05.

⁴⁸ Emile Nicolas, 'L'art décoratif à l'Exposition,' *L'Etoile de l'Est*, 12 July 1909, p. 2. The models bore André's name and that of a Mr. Cayotte, their builder, but not Charbonnier's.

⁴⁹ Emile Badel, 'La Banque Renault,' *ICE*, 27 (1910), p. 829.

⁵⁰ 'Concours d'Oloron: Caisse d'épargne par M. P. Charbonnier,' *La Lorraine Artiste* 19 (1901), pp. 164–65. This building remains intact today.

⁵¹ Albert Soubies, *E.J. Corroyer (1835–1904)* (Paris, 1904); Henri Bouchot, *Notice sur la vie et des oeuvres de M. Edouard Corroyer* (Paris, 1905); and Sorel, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–41.

⁵² Emile Badel, 'Les transformation de la rue Saint-Jean à Nancy,' *ICE* 25 (1907), p. 210; idem, 'Les transformations de la rue St Jean,' *ICE* 35 (1923): n.p. Also Boileau, 'Société Centrale des Architectes Français: Rapport du Jury des Récompenses,' *L'Architecture* 15 (1902), pp. 185–88 (p. 187); and André Hallays, *Nos villes d'art célèbres: Nancy* (Paris, 1908), 124–25; and Roussel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 40.

⁵³ Madeleine Leveau-Fernandez, *Hôtels de Caisses d'Epargne* (Paris, 1994), pp. 79–85.

⁵⁴ Conserved in the Fonds André, Nancy, ADMM, 119 J 661.

⁵⁵ None, however, appear to be German models from Nuremberg, as speculated by Emile Badel in his review, 'Le nouvel immeuble de la Banque Renault,' p. 267.

⁵⁶ Charles Diehl, 'L'art en Alsace-Lorraine,' in Maurice Barrès, et al., *Alsace-Lorraine: Les Provinces Captives* (Toulouse, 1917), pp. 271–96 (pp. 285–86).

⁵⁷ In fact, one drawing in the Fonds André, ADMM, 119 J 661, includes a sheet of paper with a sketch of the elevation of the Banque Renault on one side and one of André's proposal for the Ecole de Nancy's pavilion at the 1909 exposition on the other. On the fair, see Frédéric Descouturelle, et. al., *Nancy 1909: Centenaire de la grande Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France, triomphe de l'industrie, de la science et de l'Art nouveau* (Nancy, 2008).

⁵⁸ This symbolism in Lorraine is well-documented. See Pierre Gérard, *La Lorraine... Vivante Réalité Humaine...* (Nancy, 1972), pp. 9ff; and Léon Germain, *Le Chardon Lorrain sous les Ducs René II et Antoine* (Nancy, 1885), pp. 1–32.

⁵⁹ Paul B. Cavers, et. al., 'The Biology of Canadian Weeds. 147. *Onopordum acanthium* L.,' *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*, 91 (2011), pp. 741–47, 750–53; B.M. Sindel, 'A Review of the Ecology and Control of Thistles in Australia,' *Weed Research*, 31 (1991), pp. 189–201; Jack F. Hooper, et. al., 'Economic Evaluation of Scotch Thistle Suppression,' *Weed Science*, 18 (1970), pp. 583–86; and B.H. Hyde-Wyatt, 'The Control of Cotton Thistle,' *Tasmanian Journal of Agriculture* (1970), pp. 123–33.

⁶⁰ Laurence Picard, 'L'art et les plantes: les plantes inspiratrices de l'Ecole de Nancy' (doctoral thesis, Université de Paris 5, 1996), 109; as he notes, the ginkgo was the only plant to survive the nuclear attack on Hiroshima in 1945. Cyril Galley, et al., *D'Arbre en Art: L'Arboretum d'Amance: Un contemporain de l'Ecole de Nancy et un outil toujours actuel de recherche et de diffusion de la connaissance* (Paris, 2000), pp. 50–53. Significantly, the ginkgo motifs are also carved into the Banque Renault's gables at the roofline, a highly exposed part of the structure.

⁶¹ Charles Garnier, *Le Théâtre* (Paris, 1871), 404.

⁶² Majorelle's father-in-law, Joseph Xavier Emile Kretz, had been born in Marckolsheim, Bas-Rhin (Alsace), before the Franco-Prussian War. See the *Liste des Baptêmes, Mariages, et Sépultures* for the Parish of Saint-Vincent/Saint Fiacre, Nancy, 1863–65, no. 67. Nancy, ADMM, Series E, 5 Mi 394/R 184.

⁶³ Emile Gallé's famed table *Le Rhin*, shown at the 1889 Exposition Universelle, with its defiant imagery protesting the 1871 Treaty of Frankfurt, was a key example of this, but the attempts in Nancy to combat such sentiments spanned all types of visual and textual media. [Redacted citation]. On French 'forgetting' about Alsace-Lorraine, see 'L'Alsace-Lorraine et l'état actuel des esprits,' *Mercure de France* 24 (1897), pp. 641–812; and Michael Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 57–60.

⁶⁴ Agence Alain Richard, *Banque Nationale de Paris, Succursale de Nancy: Etude des Eléments Architecturaux et du décor s'apparentant à l'Ecole de Nancy* (Paris, 1984), n.p. Also Bonin, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁶⁵ Picard, *op. cit.*, p. 103; Bonin, *op. cit.*, p. 85. A drawing in the Musée d'Orsay's collection reveals the use of the fern motif in Grüber's ceiling. Paris, Musée d'Orsay Centre de Documentation, Section des Arts Décoratifs, Dossier Jacques Gruber.

⁶⁶ Boileau, 'Causerie: Art et Pratique,' pp. 303–08; and Hallays, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–35.

⁶⁷ *Revue des valeurs régionales de la Banque Renauld*, 14 (1910), p. 1.

⁶⁸ For a catalogue of most of the major Art Nouveau buildings in Nancy, see Roussel, *Nancy Architecture 1900*.

⁶⁹ Roussel, *op. cit.*, I, 16; and Catherine Coley, 'L'effort moderne à Nancy dans les années vingt: Chronique du comité Nancy-Paris,' *Le Pays Lorrain*, 67 (1986), pp. 5–20.