Architectural Histories

Gervits, M. 2025. The Richelieu Lyceum Project by Auguste de Montferrand. *Architectural Histories*, 13(1): pp. 1–26. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/ah.10457

Open Library of Humanities

The Richelieu Lyceum Project by Auguste de Montferrand

Maya Gervits, New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA, maya.gervits@njit.edu

This article examines the Richelieu Lyceum, an unrealized architectural project by French architect Henri Louis Auguste Ricard, alias de Montferrand (1786–1858), designed in 1817 for the city of Odesa (formerly in the Russian Empire, now Ukraine). The lyceum was a new building type: a school facility incorporating critical elements of 19th-century educational design and significant landscape interventions highlighting the natural environment, leading to an ecologically sound building. Over the last several decades, certain aspects of Odesa's architecture and city planning have attracted scholarly attention, but much about the built environment of this metropolis remains to be examined. Analyzing Montferrand's architectural drawings for the Richelieu Lyceum alongside contemporary memoirs, travelers' diaries, and published documents in the context of 19th-century European architecture and education builds a picture of the educational ideals of the period and their manifestation in Odesa's urban landscape.

Keywords: Odesa; ecological design; educational facilities; Russian empire; Ukraine; 19th-century architecture

Introduction

Designed in 1817 by the French architect Henri Louis Auguste Ricard, alias de Montferrand (1786–1858) for Odesa, in what was then the Russian Empire, now Ukraine, the Richelieu Lyceum project was never realized.[1] Yet its monumental neoclassical design is considered a precursor to educational buildings in the 19th century and beyond in the articulation of the relationship between its educational spaces and the site's surrounding natural environment. Indeed, many of Montferrand's design principles apply to ideas about architecture for education that prevail today.

A perspective view that is in the collection of the Museum of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg (not reproduced here but can be viewed on the museum site; see link in note 2) and the drawings published in 1817 (**Figures 1, 2**) together help visualize how the lyceum might have looked if it had been built — a symmetrical complex with a centralized building facing the street, with a vegetable garden behind each wing, then a semi-circular garden in the rear, terminating in a park and then a terrace that faces the sea.[2] The perspective view conveys the grandeur of this large neoclassical architectural structure. The sea and a garden are visible in the background, and long rows of trees surround the ensemble, all emphasizing a closeness to nature and placing the building within the natural environment, conveying the significance of nature to the design. The courtyards and surrounding landscape are expansive, and the human figures within the courtyard emphasize the massive scale of the complex. The composition's focal point is the central building, the main entrance, whose facade shows six two-story columns supporting a classical pediment, flanked by symmetrical wings.

The site plan in **Figure 1** reveals that the main entrance leads to a large courtyard bordered by the primary building, with its offices and classrooms, from which extend the two wings, each housing four classrooms. The whole architectural complex, which is closely aligned to the local topography and natural surroundings, would accommodate research, study, recreation, and living quarters, creating a sense of community. The peristyle of the main courtyard, reminiscent of medieval cloisters or courtyards in Italian palazzi, is intended to create an intermediary space between inside and outside. It recalls the building's purpose by evoking associations with Greek gymnasiums and early universities. Within each wing is a service court, fronting a vegetable garden on each side of the axis created by the central structure. While fostering encounters and group interactions, these courtyards would also accommodate independent activities. Boarding and day students were separated and did not interact. The main part of the building, a single story, opening onto the street with two wings, would accommodate day students. The portion dedicated to the boarding students rises higher than the front part of the building that was assigned

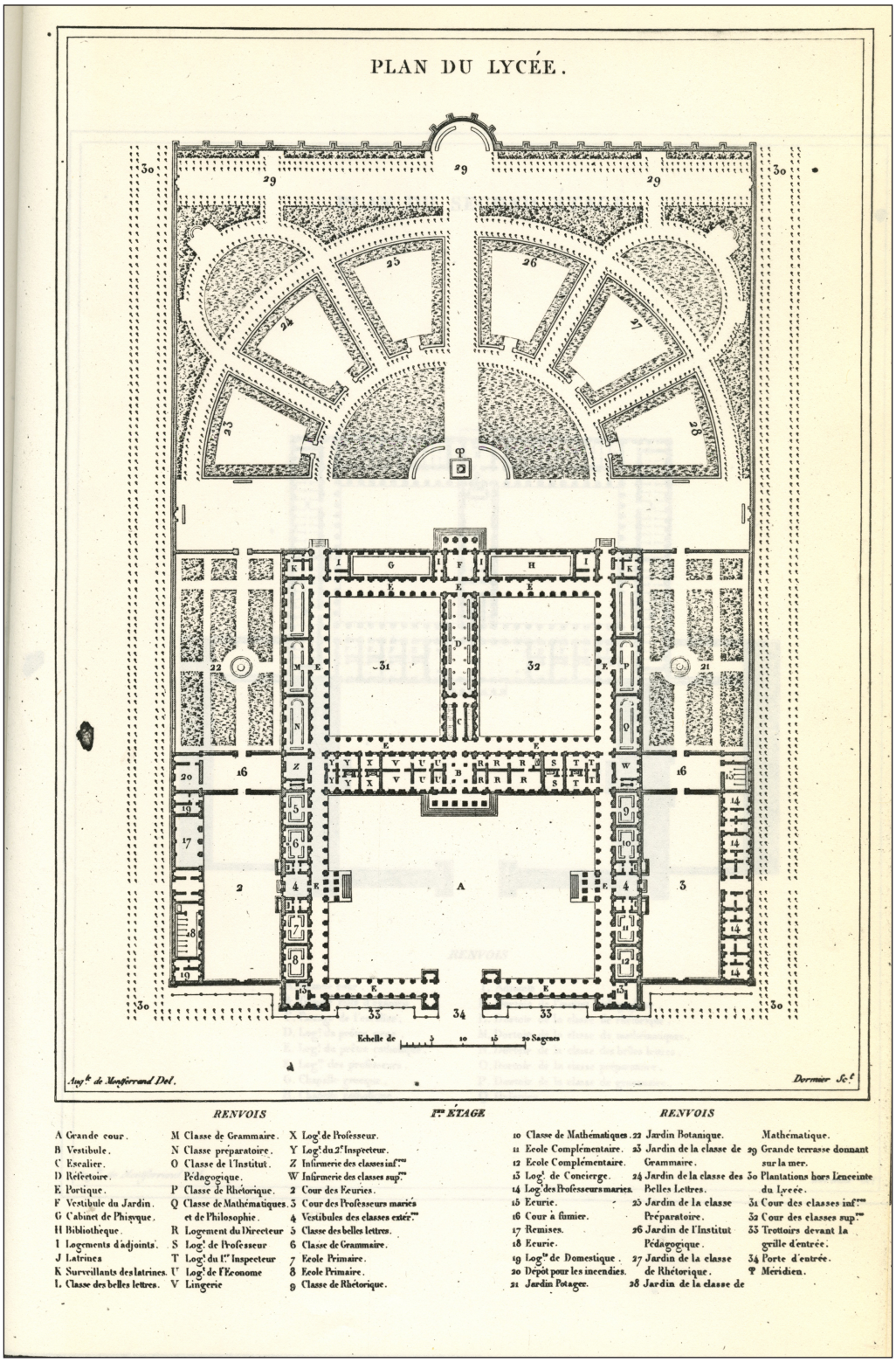

Figure 1: Auguste de Montferrand, Lyceum in Odesa. Site plan. From Montferrand (1817: 121).

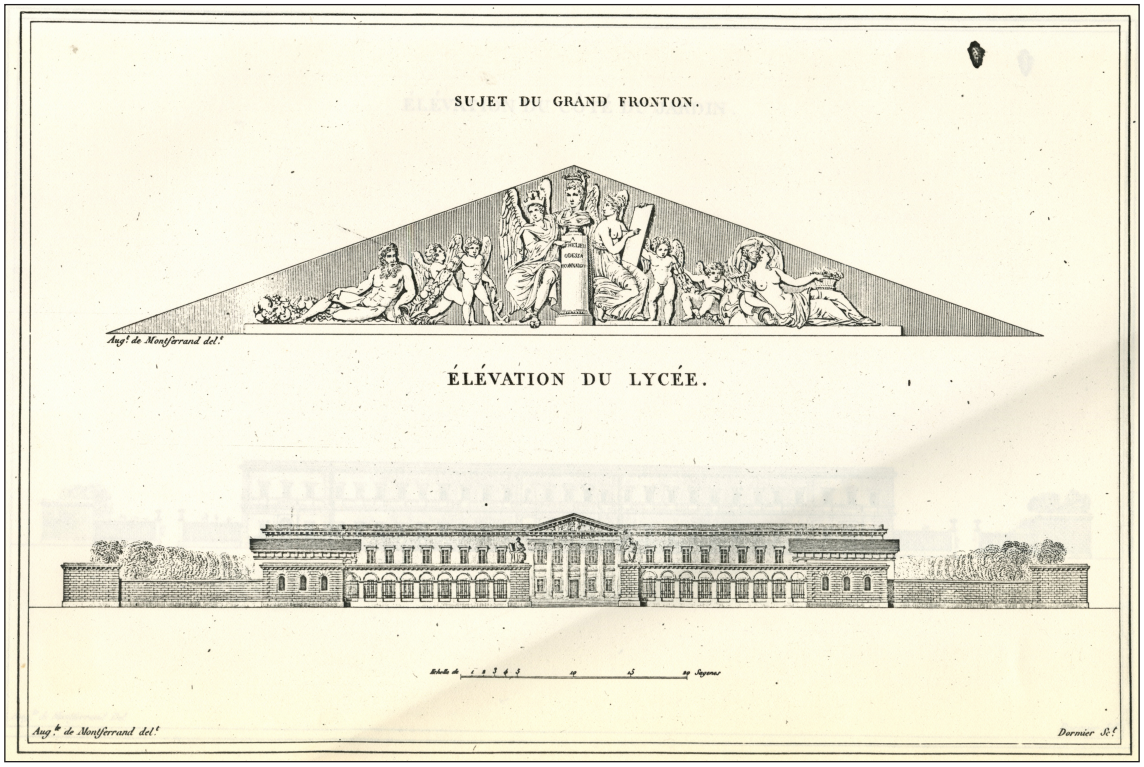

Figure 2: Auguste de Montferrand, Lyceum in Odesa. Main façade and a pediment. From Montferrand (1817: 127).

for day students (**Figures 3, 4**). The back court, two stories high, is divided into two equal parts, the communal places for boarding students. The elevated rear portion was two stories and included a basement, all together housing classrooms, lodging, and various services. Behind the structure, the axial symmetry continues into the formal garden that borders the terrace along the Black Sea.

This is a hierarchical structure that both delineates communal spaces and provides access to nature through the porticoes, all part of a building with two large vegetable gardens, an even larger study garden, and a generous park to the rear that looks out over the sea — all signs of good school design as it is understood today (Care and Chiles 2015; Lawrence and Staehli 2023). though the school was never built, these characteristics make the Richelieu Lyceum worthy of further consideration and contextualization.

The idea for a lyceum was conceived by Odesa's governor, the Duc de Richelieu, and after the school began in 1818, it became one of the foremost educational institutions in the Russian Empire. Yet it occupied old, adapted buildings, never to find a home in the structure Montferrand proposed before the school was even founded.

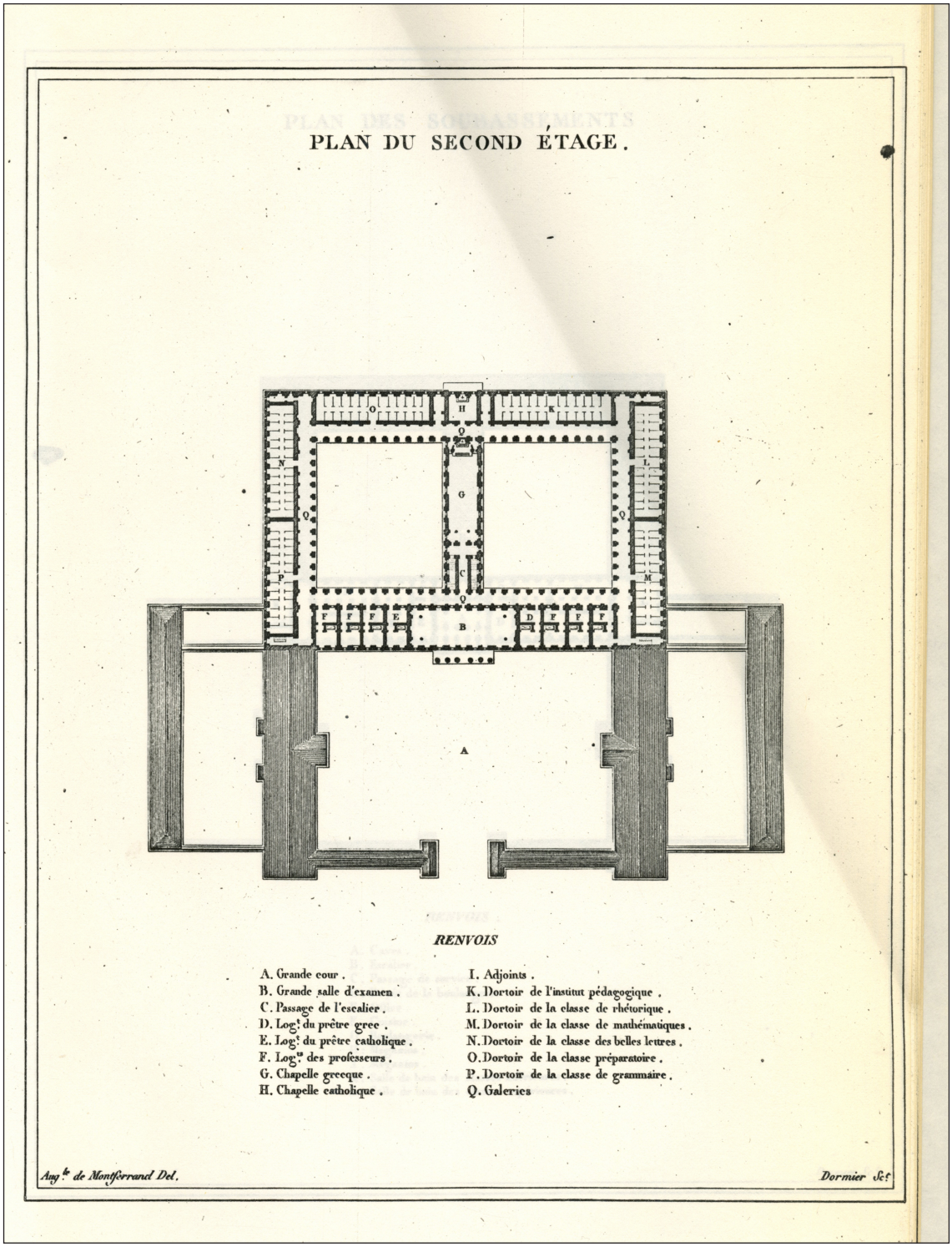

Figure 3: Auguste de Montferrand, Lyceum in Odesa. Second-floor plan. From Montferrand (1817: 123).

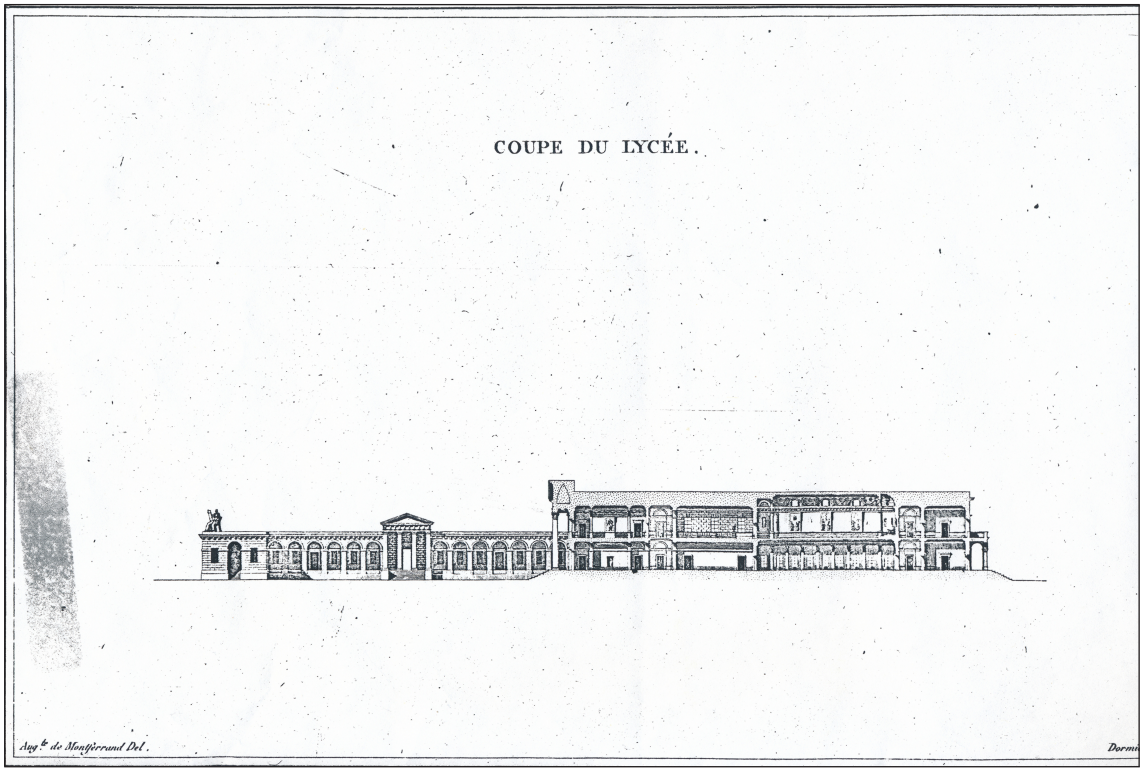

Figure 4: Auguste de Montferrand, Lyceum in Odesa. Cross-section. From Montferrand (1817: 131).

The architect's constructions in St. Petersburg, such as St. Isaac's Cathedral (1818–1858), the Alexander Column (1830–1834) (**Figure 5**), Count Lobanov-Rostovsky's residence (1817–1820), and the interiors of the Winter Palace (c. 1820–c. 1830), gained him recognition and have been discussed in several monographs (Rotach and Chekanova 1979; Chekanova 1994; Shuiskii 1986; Virieux 2009). The only work that mentions the lyceum project is Valerii Shuiskii's 2005 *Ogiust Monferran: Istoriia zhizni i tvorchestva* (Auguste Montferrand: History of Life and Work). It provides a brief account and includes reproductions of some of Montferrand's nine drawings in the Museum of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg.[3] Documenting a few of Montferrand's versions of his project with subtle variations, Shuiskii suggests that Montferrand produced an additional twenty-seven drawings, although their whereabouts are unknown. The primary and crucial source of information concerning Montferrand's final iteration of the project remains *Établissement du Lycée Richelieu à Odessa*, published by Pierre Didot in Paris in 1817. This source was unfortunately overlooked in Shuiskii's book, which emphasizes biographical information but includes little analysis of the lyceum building as a structure designed for education. Investigating the lyceum building as a design concerned with the relationship between architecture and its environment in the broader context of Odesa's historical development and architectural landscape requires a more nuanced analysis of Montferrand's architectural vision.

Figure 5: Auguste de Montferrand (1786–1858). Lithographer: Louis-Philippe-Pierre-Alphonse Bichebois (1810–1850); Lithographer: Adolphe Jean Baptiste Bayot (1810–1866). *Ceremonial Unveiling of the Alexander Column*. Russia, circa 1836. Paper; lithography. 45 × 60.5 cm. Inv. no. ERG-25305. Reproduced with permission from The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum.

Westernization of Russian Culture and Educational Reforms

Montferrand was not the first French architect to work in Russia. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia was seen as a land of opportunity and attracted many foreigners. By the end of the 17th century, Peter I (1672–1725) had begun to modernize Russia by adopting Western sciences and culture, sending young Russians to study in Europe, and inviting foreign experts to work in Russia, mainly in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Empress Elizabeth (1709–1762) continued this effort by establishing the Academy of the Three Most Noble Arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture) in 1757. This national art school was inspired by the royal academies in Paris. The first Russian minister of education, Count Ivan Shuvalov (1727–1797), recruited foreign artists and architects, corresponded with French intellectuals, and donated his book and art collections to the Academy (Grabar' et al. 1995: 177). Graduates of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts were awarded trips to Paris upon completing their education. Those interested in architecture might thus further their studies under Charles de Wailly (1730–1798) or Jean-François-

Thérèse Chalgrin (1739–1811) and become immersed in French architectural practices of the time. Their detailed reports from Paris emphasized monuments designed in the neoclassical tradition, reflecting their preferences (Evsina 1985: 142).

Upon ascending to power in 1762, Catherine II (1729–1796) wanted to continue modernizing Russian society, including its architectural identity, according to Western European standards. She thought that the Russian Baroque style, and the works of Francesco Bartholomeo Rastrelli (1700–1771) were outdated and associated with excessive 'uncivilized' luxury (Shvidkovskii 2013: 107). Instead, Catherine championed neoclassicism, which was rooted in antiquity. Although discussions on city planning had been a feature of Peter I's era, it was not until Catherine's reign that action commenced at an unprecedented scale. In the second half of the 18th century, most Russian cities still retained their medieval character. To modernize them according to Western standards, Catherine established a special commission to implement stricter regulations and standardized urban design inspired by the rational approach of French neoclassicism. The ideal new city would prioritize social hierarchy and emphasize regularity and functionality, striking a delicate balance between order and variety with the creation of spacious thoroughfares, straight streets, and symmetrical squares. Wooden houses, so typical of Russian architecture of the time, were to be replaced with masonry constructions aligned along street facades, heralding a shift toward a more cohesive urban fabric.

Under Catherine's reign, approximately 350 towns were reconstructed or built anew. (Shvidkovskii 2007). As her aggressive foreign campaigns stretched the empire's borders, many towns were created on territories recently annexed by Russia in neighboring Bessarabia, the Northern Caucasus, Ukraine, Belarus, the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Crimea. The rationality of a 'regulatory state' meant dismissing existing structures (Lotman 1992: 13). Perhaps that, along with Catherine's desire to develop conquered lands quickly, explains her aggressive approach to creating cities on 'new territories', among them Ekaterinoslav (1776), Kherson (1778), Mariupol (1778), Sevastopol (1783), Simferopol (1784), Melitopol (1784), and Odesa (1794). The Novorossiya (New Russia) region where Odesa would rise, where Montferrand's lyceum was to be located, became a vanguard of urban development. To realize her plans, the empress recruited prominent foreign architects to work in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and provincial towns, many in newly acquired lands.

Catherine's Enlightenment aspirations also included the creation of a new kind of virtuous citizenry, and lyceums would become central to this goal — schools that would prepare youth in their teenage years to serve in administrative positions. Catherine believed the state should establish schools for children taken from their homes at an early age 'to avoid bad influences' and be educated as the state deemed

fit. The empress was familiar with the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and John Locke (1632–1704) and commissioned Denis Diderot (1713–1784), with whom she corresponded, to write a proposal for the organization of Russian education. However, by the end of the 18th century, the number of schools in the country remained limited. Only 269 schools, with 16,525 pupils, existed in an empire with a population of 28 million (Roucek 1958). Most school buildings were small and unsuitable for teaching. When Catherine's grandson, Alexander I (1777–1825), came to power in 1801, he immediately proposed more radical reforms. The following year, he created the Ministry of Education and, in 1803, established the Main Directorate of Schools. Educational institutions in the empire remained under state control. They were divided into several categories: one-class parish schools, three-class district schools, four-year provincial (*gubernia*) schools, gymnasiums, and universities.

Many of Alexander's ideas were inspired by German and French educational reforms. Over the first half of the 19th century, German institutions such as Göttingen University were the most admired in the West. New Russian universities established in Tartu (1802, known as Dorpat at the time), Vilnius (1803), Kharkiv (1804), and Kazan (1804) were modeled after the German prototype. Simultaneously, some changes in Russian education were influenced by Revolutionary France. Previously run by religious orders, French universities became subordinate to the state and were separated into professional schools. The École polytechnique, École normale supérieure, and École nationale des ponts et chaussées were founded in Paris in 1794 to offer a more practical approach to learning. Napoleon Bonaparte, who came to power in 1799, established imperial lyceums and public colleges by a decree of 1802. Lyceums were charged with teaching the elite, providing educational opportunities beyond secondary school, and raising statesmen. They provided a secular, classicist education, and six years of study at a lyceum was considered adequate for many careers. By 1805, France boasted 30 elite lyceums, primarily boarding schools, and 250 community colleges (Lemoine and Bonfante-Warren 1998: 71). Some of the lyceums were housed in monasteries expropriated during the revolution, an act characterized by Barry Bergdoll as 'not only pragmatic but symbolically charged' (Bergdoll 2000: 108).

In Russia, Alexander's reforms introduced similarly specialized technical schools and lyceums. Lyceums were higher educational institutions, sometimes equivalent to universities and sometimes ranked either below or above them. However, they did not have faculty divisions and functioned as general higher schools. Count Viktor Kochubey (1768–1834), a statesman and close friend of the emperor, declared that the 'lyceum system is the best system to be adopted in Russia' (Vremennik 1872: 77).[4] Beginning in 1809, according to a new decree, the careers of the Russian nobility became dependent on education, and lyceums as elite institutions were intended to attract children of

the nobility, who until then preferred homeschooling. Lyceum graduates were to be awarded ranks between nine and fourteen, and these determined their governmental employment prospects. Ranks awarded to lyceum graduates were comparable and sometimes higher than those granted by universities, meaning that career advancement no longer depended exclusively on university attendance. New buildings were needed that would reflect the new educational approach.

Lyceums in the Russian Empire

The first lyceum in Russia opened in Tsarskoye Selo in 1811. Among its first graduates were the future chancellor of Russia, Alexander Gorchakov (1798–1883), the director of the Imperial Public Library Modest Korf (1800–1876), the composer Mikhail Yakovlev (1798–1868), and the poets Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), Anton Delvig (1798–1831), and Wilhelm Küchelbecker (1797–1846). To accommodate both the school and boarding students, the architect Vassiliy Stasov (1769–1848) reconstructed the wing of the imperial Summer Palace that had been designed by Vassiliy Neelov (1722–1782), creating small dormitories with modest furniture that was modeled upon monks' cells.

The Richelieu Lyceum in Odesa was the second to open in Russia. Its establishment reflected the ambitious plans of Novorossiya's governor, the Duc de Richelieu, at a time when Odesa was a fast-growing city. Alexander I revitalized many projects initiated by his grandmother Catherine II, including the creation and development of Odesa in Novorossiya. In 1803, he appointed the Duc de Richelieu, an émigré from France whose personal name was Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis, as the governor of Odesa, and soon after of the whole Novorossiya region. A member of one of the most illustrious families in France and a prominent statesman and aristocrat who held various positions at the court of Louis XVI, Richelieu escaped the Revolution and came to Russia during Catherine's reign. In Richelieu's eleven years as governor, from 1803 to 1814, Odesa advanced as an administrative, commercial, and cultural center, becoming third in size and importance, after Moscow and St. Petersburg. From the beginning, immigrants were key to Odesa's image as a vibrant multicultural city. A German writer and historian, Johann Georg Kohl (1808–1878), who visited Odesa in the 1830s, was impressed by its cosmopolitan population, observing that 'the confusion of tongues … reaches in Odesa the true Babylonian extreme' (Kohl 1842: 426). A French writer, Charles James Herbert de Courcy St Julian (1819–1874), wrote in his *Voyage pittoresque en Russie* of 1854 that Odesa's population is 'one of the most mixed in the world' and that 'all the regions of Europe are represented there' (Saint-Julien and Bourdier 1854: 435). Among the newcomers, French émigrés played a unique role. Escaping the terror of revolutions and seeking asylum abroad, many were members of the French nobility with strong connections to Russia.

Governor Richelieu paid particular attention to establishing educational institutions (Kirpichnikov 1895: 575). In 1807, he founded a school for girls and a commercial school that taught accounting, economics, and trade. Institutes for noble young men and women followed in 1813 and 1814, respectively. In addition, Richelieu thought of creating a lyceum in Odesa based on the Institute for Noblemen in combination with the commercial school (Skal'kovskii 1837: 286). He donated a rich personal library and his substantial annual salary to advance the cause (Kirpichnikov 1895: 578).

The originator of the lyceum's program of education, Abbé Charles Dominique Nicolle (1758–1835), a Jesuit, was an old friend and a recognized educational expert in France and Russia. Before coming to Russia, he oversaw education in the community of Sainte-Barbe in Paris. He served as a private tutor to the family of the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Marie-Gabriel-Florent Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier (1752–1817). After the fall of the French monarchy, Nicolle accompanied the Choiseul-Gouffier family to St. Petersburg, where he established a boarding school for children of the nobility (McClintock and Strong 1880). In 1814, Richelieu invited him to Odesa, where he authored *Nachertanie pravil vospitaniia v oboikh Odesskikh blagorodnykh institutakh* (Essay of the Rules of Education in Both Noble Institutions of Odesa), the first book ever published in that city (Nicolle 1814). Richelieu and Nicolle shared a vision, which Nicolle explores in that publication, for establishing a lyceum as a boarding school with a section for day students. As Odesa was rapidly turning into an important commercial center, the lyceum was to provide classical education and commerce-related studies so as to advance educational standards, setting the stage for the development of academic institutions that would contribute to the intellectual and cultural enrichment of the entire region. These ideas were further articulated three years later in the publication of Montferrand's *Établissement du lycée Richelieu à Odessa* (1817) and in an 1818 report by the minister of education, Prince Aleksandr Golitsyn (1773–1844), to the emperor. Montferrand's publication outlined the principles of the lyceum's organization and future building plans, while Golitsyn's report, called *Formation and Charter of the Richelievsky Lyceum in Odessa*, focused on the general aspects of the lyceum's organization and funding (Golitsyn 1818). According to these key documents, the lyceum would consist of a boarding school for the nobility and a free-of-charge external lyceum for 250 day students (day students were of more modest origin, not from the nobility) (Golitsyn 1818: 84). There would be also a pedagogical institute for 24 students who were considering a teaching career and two other advanced schools: one for commercial education and one for legal studies. In these schools, students acquired the secondary or conventional knowledge needed for their particular career path, following Diderot's recommendations in his *Plan d'une université pour le gouvernement de Russie* (1875).

According to Nicolle's plan, outlined in these publications, boarding students entered the lyceum between the ages of seven and nine and stayed there for 10 years. The requirements for entering the lyceum were the ability to read and write in any language and a record of smallpox inoculation. The lyceum would have five separate grades. Studies lasted ten years, two in each grade. Most classes were taught in French, with only a few upper-level courses offered in Russian. At the time, French was the preferred language of the Russian gentry (Gervits 2011: 34). Among foreign languages taught in the lyceum were German and Italian, as well as classical Greek and Latin. The curriculum Nicolle proposed included a variety of subjects. A typical day would last from 5:45 am to 9 pm and include prayers, moralized reading, music, dance, fencing, and six hours of lessons for lower grades and ten hours for upper grades. Students would be released on Sundays, holidays, and the afternoon hours in the first two weeks of July. Walks in the company of school wardens after lunch were also permitted.

Montferrand's design was to be a large 32,000-square-foot building on an almost five-acre lot (200,000 sq. ft.). The entrance is distinct, accentuated by a colonnaded porch. Two smaller porches mark entrances from the court to the wings where the day school would be housed. The internal staircases linking the two floors accentuate the central entry to the main building.

According to a hierarchical distribution, apartments for the director and most professors are located on the main floor, whereas student dormitories were planned for the upper level (**Figure 3**). Living quarters for faculty, wards, and priests were placed next to students for ease of supervision and counsel. A 1,600 square foot refectory would be large enough to accommodate all boarding students and faculty. Orthodox and Catholic chapels were planned on the upper floors, next to student dormitories, which were both single and double rooms. All spaces on both levels on the architect's drawings are connected by a gallery running along the building's perimeter and overlooking interior courts, allowing for cross-ventilation. Two infirmaries (separated for the secondary and primary schools) are also in this part of the lyceum. Service units — kitchen, bakery, cellars, storage areas, and two washrooms (for the lower and upper schools) — are marked on the subterranean level. A staircase connects the basement with the upper floor, leading from the vestibule to the refectory. The location of the refectory and its windows opening onto the peristyle gallery on both sides of the room would guarantee sufficient light exposure, proper ventilation, and shade in the summertime. The dormitories overlook the gardens, with some also offering sea views. The classrooms were to be connected by colonnaded galleries surrounding inner courts.

Because qualified teachers in Odesa were in short supply, Nicolle, the first director of the Richelieu Lyceum, recruited some faculty from France (Batiushkov 1885: 527). The staff consisted of nine full professors, six adjuncts, twelve wardens, a Catholic priest, an Orthodox priest, two art teachers, one dance teacher, one fencing teacher, and two inspectors who were also responsible for managing the office, the library, and the cabinets of physics and natural science. Everyone had to live on the premises and share meals with students. Each professor taught classes to boarding and day students alike. Most aspects of student life, such as health and hygiene, awards, and punishment, were strictly regulated. The focus of this lyceum was classical academic education and public service. Students were taught to become enlightened and moral citizens, prepared for individual development and success.

Approved in 1817 by the emperor, the Richelieu Lyceum proposal was published in Paris that same year (Montferrand 1817). Along with describing the school's structure, organization, and curriculum, the proposal included architectural drawings by Montferrand. According to Shuiskii, Auguste Bettencourt (aka Augustine de Betancourt a Molina, 1758–1824), a leading European civil engineer recruited by Alexander I, commissioned the design of the lyceum from Montferrand. Shuiskii suggests the initial project was proposed by Nicolle, and only after its rejection was the design entrusted to Montferrand (Shuiskii 2005: 23). It seems more plausible that Nicolle had addressed conceptual aspects of the school, while the design was conceived by Montferrand from the outset. However, it is possible that the commission for the project was orchestrated by Betancourt, who actively sought opportunities for Montferrand after the architect arrived in St. Petersburg in 1816. This dynamic suggests a collaborative effort wherein Nicolle's conceptual framework intersected with Montferrand's architectural expertise, ultimately shaping the project's trajectory.

Educated in France under Charles Percier (1764–1838) and Pierre-François-Leonard Fontaine (1762–1853), whose projects in the Empire style were well known in Russia, Montferrand worked for the architect of the Prefecture of the Seine Jacques Molinos (1743–1831). He had served in Napoleon's army and began looking for opportunities abroad following its defeat, with no commissions available in France. In 1814, Montferrand presented his portfolio to Alexander I, who happened to be visiting Paris. It was accepted favorably, and two years later, Montferrand was in Russia (AGORHA 2017; Vigel 2000: 363).

Betancourt's initial idea was to engage Montferrand in the design of products for the imperial porcelain factory. When that did not work out, he helped him become involved in work on St. Isaac's Cathedral. Montferrand used this opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge of historical styles. For various cathedral projects, he quoted antiquity and

the Renaissance alongside Gothic, medieval Russian, and Asian architecture. Some of his constructions for the Nizhniy Novgorod Fair (1817–1822) (**Figure 6**) and pavilions in the Ekaterinhof Park near St. Petersburg (1830s) drew inspiration from Asian, Gothic, Moorish, and medieval Russian architecture, while his projects of a villa in Crimea commissioned by K. Naryshkin (1822) and the architect's home in St. Petersburg were designed in Gothic style. His approach is representative of the period's historicist and eclectic tendencies.

Figure 6: Auguste de Montferrand, Chinese pavilions in Nizhnii Novgorod. 19th-century watercolor over photographic print by A.O. Karelin (1837–1906). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Китайские_ярмарочные_ряды.jpg.

The lyceum design was Montferrand's first project in Russia to draw on this stylistic versatility. Its round-headed arches, rusticated facades, and alternating triangular and segmented window pediments demonstrate his interest in Renaissance palazzi. It is also possible that the project was inspired by Paul-Guillaume Lemoine's 1775 Prix de Rome winning entry of 'des écoles de médecine.' Furthermore, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, awarded second prize in the 1780 competition for the design of a school, explored the educational building typology in his seminal *Precis des leçons d'architecture* (Durand 1802) (**Figure 7**). A comparison of Montferrand's project with Durand's drawings of the Lycée Bonaparte in Paris reveals some similarities and helps us imagine how the lyceum in Odesa might have been constructed (**Figure 8**).

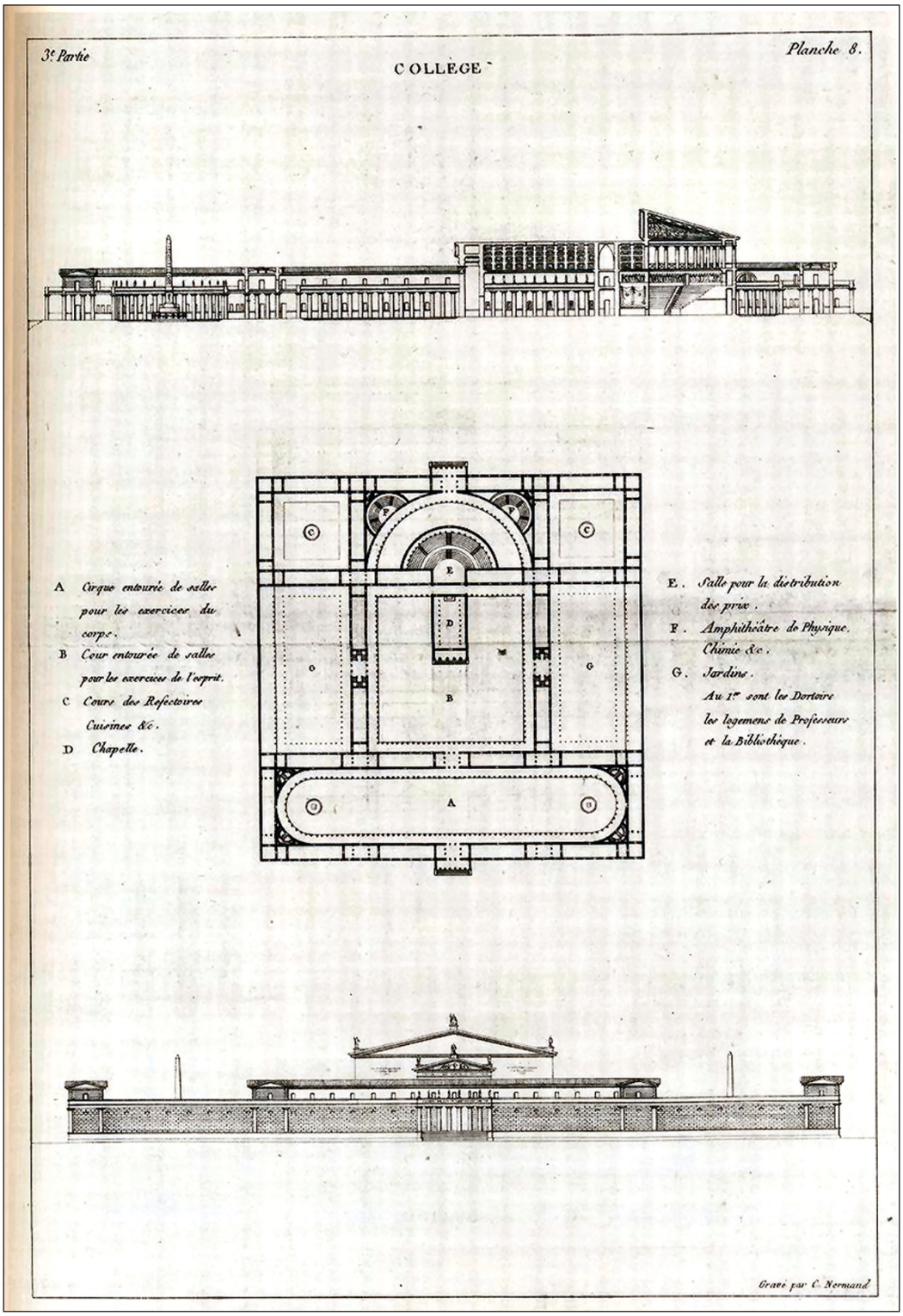

Figure 7: Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, design of a college building as a part of the architect's Examination of the Principal Kinds of Buildings. From Durand (2000: pl. 8).

Figure 8: Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, "Entrée du Lycée Bonaparte, ci-devant Cloître du Capucins, Rue Ste. Croix Chaussée d'Antin" (1807). *Paris: Capital of the 19th Century*. Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library. https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:84007/.

For his own design, Durand turned to ancient Greek gymnasiums as models for college buildings, describing them in *Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École royale Polytechnique* as spacious structures, 'each with its garden and consecrated grove'. This was a reference to Plato's Academy, which borrowed its name from an area near Athens known as the *Akadēmeia* that contained a sacred grove and a public school, or gymnasium, to use the Greek term. The gymnasium entrance, continues Durand, led to courts with porticoes and surrounding buildings. Three sides held halls furnished with seats, 'in which philosophers, rhetoricians and so on, assembled their disciples'. Durand said that educational facilities should be commodious and salubrious, which French colleges were not. He praised Oxford, Cambridge, and some Italian universities for their inclusion of spacious courts, rooms for various kinds of study, chapels, libraries, refectories, dormitories, and gardens with fountains, all essential elements that 'promote health and development of all the faculties' (Durand 2000: 158). The communal lifestyle championed in these educational facilities can also be traced back to monastic architecture and early European universities such as the University of Bologna, the Sapienza in Rome, and the University of Padua. Durand proposed that a building for education should be placed in a remote area so that students could create a tranquil

environment conducive to learning and reflection where students ‘would invariably enjoy all the calm necessary for study’. He recommended buildings be arranged around a principal court so that ‘the view from the study court across the gardens, through the vestibules that would lead to them, would endow that court with an air of life and gaiety that is more necessary than might be supposed in places devoted to the labors of the mind’ (Durand 2000: 159). Both Montferrand’s drawings and a textual explanation from Montferrand himself that mentions that the school’s location as being ‘in the part of the city most renowned for the healthiness of the air’ reveal similarities with Durand’s ideas, whose theoretical work was known in Russia (Montferrand 1817: 40).

The Richelieu Lyceum’s location on a cliff high above the sea would surround students with nature, creating a quiet, bright, breezy, and healthy environment. While entirely rural colleges were uncommon in Europe, many educational institutions at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries effectively integrated natural settings. This approach reflected the broader cultural shift toward appreciating nature and promoting outdoor learning, scientific study, and holistic education. The plans show that the windows of the Richelieu Lyceum classrooms open onto the vegetable and botanical gardens. Large spaces are assigned for physics and natural history, and the library overlooks the more extensive regular garden out back. It is divided into six sections corresponding to six subjects, including math, rhetoric, and belles lettres. These sections allow for contemplation and study and offer a sense of privacy. For Montferrand, this would have seemed especially appropriate for an educational institution designed for ‘the labor of the minds’, to use Durand’s expression. Beyond the garden, a park with a terrace overlooking the sea was also very much in keeping with Durand. Along with open porticoes, peristyles, gardens, and a park, such a design was intended to create a healthier environment, providing relief on hot days and proper ventilation for indoor spaces. The combination of educational facilities with gardens also offered a reminder of the Peripatetic school of philosophy, in which education happened while walking. Ivan Pushchin (1798–1859), a Russian poet and a graduate of the lyceum in Tsarskoye Selo, remarked that the lyceum type ‘by its very name amazed the public in Russia — that did not always know the concept of colonnades and rotundas in the Athenian gardens, where Greek philosophers conducted scholarly conversations with their students’ (Pushchin 1907: 7).

In 18th-century France, gardens became important subjects of aesthetic and philosophical discussions, and Rousseau further articulated the significance of nature in children’s development. Influenced by his ideas, in 1804 Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) established in Switzerland an experimental institution where outdoor learning and gardening were considered valuable parts of education. This school, in Yverdon, became famous throughout Europe, and Alexander I, interested in Pestalozzi’s work, met him during a visit to Basel in 1814.

In the first half of the 19th century, gardens in Russia symbolized freedom, carefree exploration, and a sanctuary for secluded reading and contemplation. This notion was highlighted by cultural historian Dmitry Likhachev (1906–1999) in his *Poeziia sadov* (Poetics of Gardens) (Likhachev 1982: 319). In Montferrand's lyceum for Odesa, the lyceum garden was conceived as an integral part of an architectural ensemble. By extending the landscape beyond the school building and fostering close contact with nature, Montferrand envisioned the garden as a crucial learning component. The garden was designed to serve as an outdoor class, a didactic landscape, an extension of the architecture, and a transitory space between the lyceum building, the park, and the sea. The layout conceived by Montferrand alludes to early 18th-century French compositions, with radial alleys, parterres, *patte d'oies*, and bosquets. It is highly structured and geometric, with symmetry as a central principle. Paths, parterres, and planting beds are laid out precisely, often in mirror-image patterns. It may have been influenced by Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville's *La théorie et la pratique du jardinage*, a standard text about garden layout and design principles, popular in Russia (Dezallier 1747). The Lycée Hoche, established by Bonaparte on the site of a convent in Versailles in 1803, could also serve as a reference point for Montferrand's project. Famous gardens in Versailles designed by André Le Nôtre were well known in Russia and emulated by Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond in Peterhof Park (1714).

Despite a growing interest in English 'picturesque' parks, strictly organized French-style gardens remained prevalent in 19th-century Russia, particularly when adjacent to residences. Gardens located further from buildings gradually became parks or woods. In Montferrand's project, the formal garden, also identified as a park on a cliff above the sea, is characterized by a rich interplay of geometric precision and emerging naturalistic and picturesque styles. It exemplifies gardens that reflected a broader cultural shift toward Romanticism, becoming spaces not only for leisure and display but also for contemplation, education, and an appreciation of natural beauty. Montferrand's project can be seen as a harmonious blend of a classical tradition combined with the romantic appreciation of 'wild' nature.

The Afterlife of the Lyceum

Although Montferrand's project was approved by the emperor, a lack of funding delayed construction to the point where the project was abandoned. While this lyceum did finally open, with the same name, in January 1818 under the new governor, Count Louis Alexandre Andrault de Langeron (1763–1831), it was housed in a much smaller building that already existed in the center of the city, rather than backing onto the sea (**Figure 9**). This building was adapted to serve as a lyceum by another French architect, François Schaal (1793–1870), who arrived in Odesa in 1817 to serve as city architect.

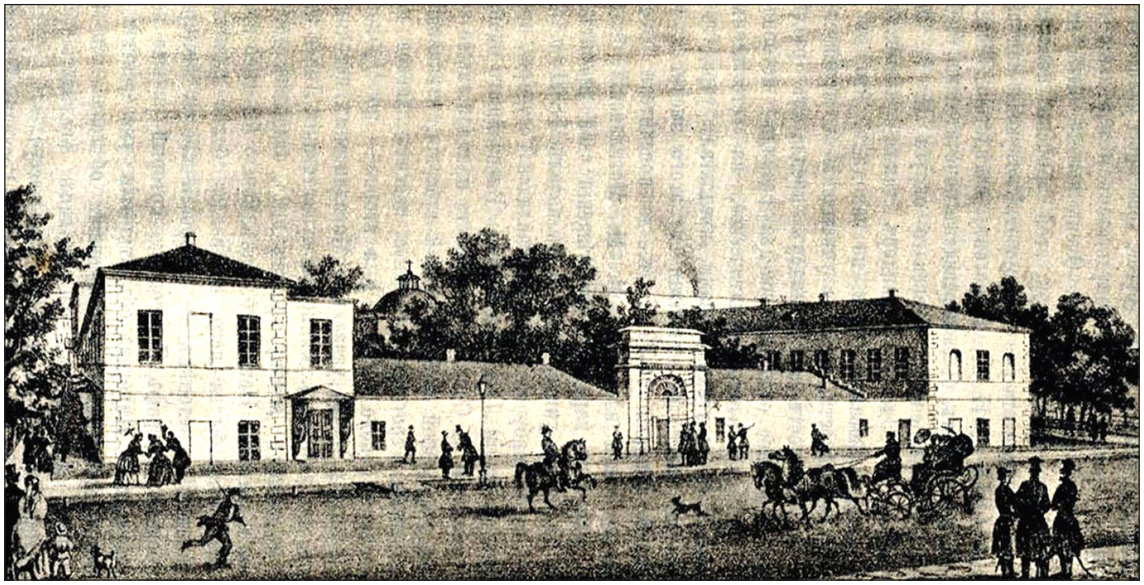

Figure 9: Richelieu Lyceum on Ekaterinenskaia Street, Odesa. Engraving, beginning of the 19th century. National Library of Ukraine, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Рішельєвський_ліцей,_Катеринінська_вулиця.JPG.

Shuiskii highlights the exorbitant costs associated with Montferrand's project as the reason for its abandonment, a sentiment echoed in other publications. However, a combination of factors likely contributed. Nicolle's tenure as the lyceum director was short-lived. In 1817, the Ministry of Education was reorganized into a ministry combining spiritual affairs and public education, with a new minister, A. Golitsyn. Although he recognized Nicolle's achievements and supported the establishment of the lyceum, Golitsyn was a proponent of educational clericalization. The Russian Orthodox Church clergy's concern with the growing influence of Catholicism meant that Catholic Jesuits, who came to Russia during Catherine II's reign, were no longer welcome. In 1820, Alexander I signed a decree expelling Jesuits, charging them with undermining the Russian Orthodox faith. As a Jesuit, and facing accusations of proselytism and neglect of Russian studies, Nicolle was forced to move on. By 1819, he had returned to France.

With Montferrand working on St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg and the Nizhny Novgorod Fair and the lyceum's other primary supporters gone, the project was set adrift. The momentum behind the expensive plans began to wane, eventually leading to the abandonment of Montferrand's vision. More than a decade later, Edward Morton, a visitor to the city, referred with regret to a magnificent building that was to have been situated in the vicinity of the fortress: 'These plans were never carried into effect and the buildings formerly appropriated to the Gymnasium and the Institute were repaired and converted into the present Lyceum of Richelieu' (Morton 1830: 288).

The popularity of the lyceum held in the converted buildings grew fast. The poet, statesman, and historian Konstantin Batiushkov (1787–1855), who visited the lyceum in August 1818, in his letter to Alexander Turgenev, called it 'Odesa's best decoration, just as Odesa is the best city after the capitals'. He noted that 'the lyceum is flourishing, and children are happy there, they are in good hands. God bless the Abbé who educates useful government servicemen … his methods are perfect'. Batiushkov continued,

> I have spoken to the relatives of the children; all enlightened and kind people relate to him with gratitude. Go ahead and ask Princess S.G. Volkonskaia: her children are there, and the mother's voice is always eloquent and strong, and fair, I would add … I saw several relatives in Moscow; everyone praised the lyceum and thanked the government and Providence for it. (1885: 527)

Princess Sofia Volkonskaia (Wolkonsky) (1785–1866), a sister of a future Decembrist, was close to Alexander's court and a close friend of the empress. Her decision to enroll her sons at Odesa's lyceum promoted the institution to other members of the nobility.

An 1819 account of Odesa reported that,

> for the last three years the [lyceum] has been in operation which besides its public course of lessons to day scholars contains a particular branch for the instruction of seventy-five pensionnaires [boarding scholars]. The study of the national and foreign languages the arts and sciences history and belles lettres comprise the plan of education. (Stevens 1819: 9)

However, not everyone was as enthusiastic as Batiushkov. General Ivan Sabaneev (1772–1829), a decorated military man who spent most of his life on battlefields and several years as a prisoner of war in France, complained in his letter to Odesa's Governor Prince Mikhail Vorontsov (1782–1856) that the school did not serve Russia as it ought:

> This is the general and main deficiency of our educational institutions for young people. Suppose that all those who are brought up in Odesa's Lyceum will be well-educated and would appreciate Homer, Virgil, La Fontaine, etc. but what is in that for Russia? They will be well-educated foreigners. (Bartenev 1895: 459)

This concern reflected growing nationalistic tendencies in Russian society. However, due to extensive Western influence, Odesa was not a typical Russian city. A French traveler visiting in 1838 confirmed that Russians preferred Odesa even to St. Petersburg, as 'they enjoy greater liberty, and are retrieved from the rigorous etiquette … Odesa

is their Paris, which they are all bent on visiting at least once in their lives, whatever be the distance they have to travel' (de Hell 2020: 8). People in Russia were attracted to Odesa style of life that was similar to that of Western European countries. That impression was due not only to the city's cosmopolitan population but also to the fact that 'life there was significantly freer than anywhere else in Russia; there was a sense of cultural equality and brotherhood' (Kirpichnikov 1895: 125). Many members of Russian nobility, desiring their children to be raised in such a spirit, chose the Odesa lyceum. The lyceum continued to thrive, as authorities recognized the high quality of education it provided. In 1867, the lyceum attained university status and was then housed in a specially designed building in the center of the city, with a small two-story greenhouse constructed within its courtyards, further enriching the institution's academic offerings. However, it was a building more modest than the magnificent ensemble once conceived by Montferrand.

Conclusion

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the number of Russian universities and lyceums was limited. Most educational facilities were relatively small and were housed in converted buildings. Although Montferrand's lyceum project was not realized, it was published almost as soon as the project was approved, and as such may have inspired the monumental neoclassical structures of Bezborodko Lyceum in Nezhin (1824, arch. A. Ruska), Demidov Lyceum in Yaroslavl (1825, arch. P. Pan'kov), and particularly St. Vladimir's University (1834) (now the main building of Kyiv University), with its large inner court and park designed in a remote area of Kyiv by Montferrand's colleague, the architect Vincenzo Beretti (1781–1842) (**Figure 10**).

In France, as in Russia, many schools offered rudimentary accommodations or used inherited buildings. Examples include the Lycée Bonaparte, which opened on the grounds of the Convent Saint-Louis-D'Antin, and the Lycée Henri-IV, which occupied the former Abbey of Saint Genevieve, both in Paris. Some new French lyceums were designed in the neoclassical style, featuring gardens, colonnaded porticoes, and inner courts with peristyles. According to the 1862 publication *Bâtiments scolaires: Recements construits en France et propres à servir de types pour les* édifices *de ce genre*, these features improved the functionality of educational facilities and added a sense of monumentality (Vaquer 1862). Seventeen years later, César Pompée's 1879 publication *Plans-modèles pour la construction de maisons d'écoles et de mairies* was distributed throughout the subprefectures, foreshadowing the standardized design that would be applied to French schools by the century's end (Lemoine and Bonfante-Warren 1998: 79).

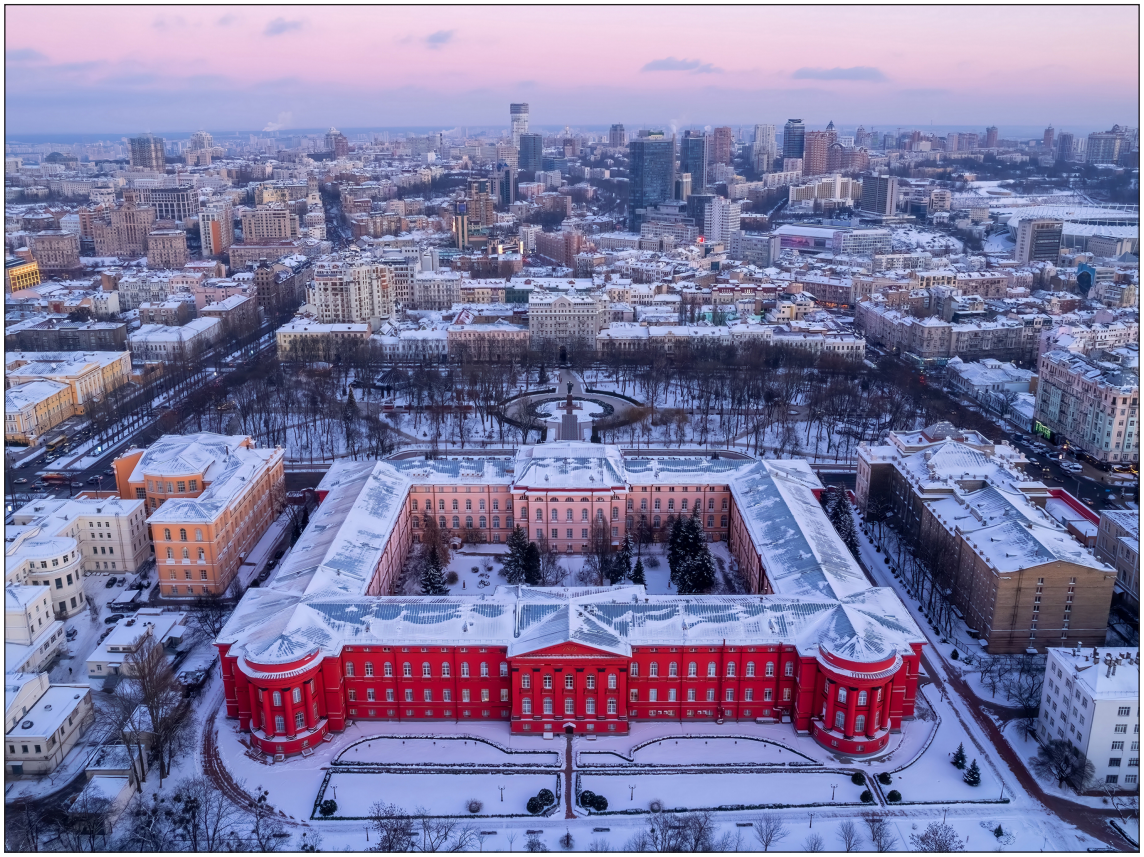

Figure 10: Vincenzo Beretti, main building of Kyiv University, built in 1834 as St. Vladimir's University, aerial view, 2022. Photo by Ryzhkov Oleksandr, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=154592617.

The Richelieu Lyceum's design is an example of the attempt to find a dedicated form of architectural expression for Enlightenment theories of education and pedagogy. It would have incorporated all the critical elements of later 19th-century educational building typologies. The project was a pivotal precedent that embodied a particular ideal learning environment: a microcosmic community where students and faculty lived together under the same roof. The lyceum, as both a building and a school, was designed to support educational and recreational activities, separating various programs while encouraging interaction. Garden and extended classrooms would enhance academic and emotional learning. The location on a hill overlooking the sea would ensure noise control and strong connections to nature. The design provides good circulation, accessibility, ventilation, lighting, and functionality, with clearly defined entry points and perimeter fencing. Recreational areas, classrooms, infirmaries, and washrooms are all distinctly separated. The library and science lab are prominently

placed for easy access, and faculty apartments are strategically positioned for control and security. While most Russian buildings of the period were constructed in timber, the functional design that Montferrand proposed utilizes local materials like sandstone and bricks, which would reduce the costs of importing wood, improve fireproofing, and respect the regional climate. It also includes methods to address Odesa's water shortage, such as stormwater collection and in-ground cisterns.

Championed by Montferrand, the practice of integrating nature into educational environments has been embraced by schools throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. (Kuo and Jordan 2019) Noteworthy examples include Jan Duiker's renowned Open-Air School in Amsterdam (1930), Hans Scharoun's unrealized project for a school in Darmstadt (1951), which proposed external courtyard gardens for different classrooms, and, more recently, Utterslev School in Copenhagen by KHR Arkitekter (2006). With increasing evidence supporting the positive impact of nature on learning,[5] more ecologically sound educational projects are being developed, for example, the Green School in Stockholm by 3XN Architects (2012), a learning environment that harmonizes and blends the landscape with architecture. Although using the methods and language of the 21st century, these designs aim to promote academic growth and physical, emotional, and social development, anticipating an ecologically integrated approach to the learning environment, much as Montferrand's lyceum plan does.

Although an example of 'paper architecture', Montferrand's lyceum is a compelling early case study in this evolving area. Had it been constructed, Montferrand's lyceum would have enriched Odesa's built environment, adding another landmark to the city's 'splendid panorama of palaces, churches, hotels, and other habitations built upon a steep cliff which rises precipitously from the sea' (Verne 1883: 122).

Notes

[1] With the exception of 19th-century publication titles, the Ukrainian spelling 'Odesa' is used throughout rather than the Russian spelling with double 's'.

[2] The project was published in Paris in 1817 as *Établissement du Lycée Richelieu a Odessa, fondé par un ukase de S. M. L'mpereur de toutes les Russies*. This publication is the source of most of the images. Unfortunately, permission to reproduce the perspective view mentioned here was not granted by the Museum of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, where the drawing is held (Muzei Akademii Khudozhestv, NIM-RAkH-5921). The image can be viewed on the museum´s site: https://collection.artsacademymuseum.org/api/spf/rWjGD5kI9-LhkuDd9-RJhKrzYFSzmW6XCZDXLT-bbiPqJ54RuvfOqB8TLzdbG1UIz.webp?w=1000&h=1000.

[3] The drawings are in the Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg (Muzei Akademii Khudozhestv, NIM RAkH 5918–5926).

[4] All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

[5] Recent studies such as the Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California conducted by the American Institute for Research (2005) or a report submitted to the British Royal Horticultural Society on the Impact of School Gardening on Learning (2010) stress the benefits of learning in natural outdoor settings. Research suggests that 'a significant amount of learning can take place in the garden, encompassing all curriculum areas (such as math, science, languages, the humanities, personal, social, health and economic education and the arts) and a range of verbal, oral and personal and social skills'. The report continues, noting that 'a holistic approach to the building of a school and its surroundings can bring significant ecological benefits' and that 'ground can be designed to support creative learning throughout the school experience, whether this is cerebral or physical' (Care and Chiles 2015: 169, 171).

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

AGORHA. 2017. Ricard de Montferrand, Auguste. Biography in AGORHA, https://agorha.inha.fr/ark:/54721/636926a1-ea2f-4181-a218-c97791d3b383.

American Institute for Research. 2005. *Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California*, January 27, 2005. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Outdoor schoolreport_0.pdf.

Bartenev, Pl. 1895. *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova 1870–1895* Moscow: A.I. Mamontov.

Batiushkov, K. 1885–1887. *Sochineniia K.N.Batiushkova*. St. Petersburg: Tip. Badasheva.

Bergdoll, B. 2000. *European Architecture 1750–1890*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Care, L, and **Chiles, P.** 2015. *Building Schools: Key Issues for Contemporary Design*. Basel: de Gruyter.

Chekanova, O. 1994. *Ogiust Monferran*. Sankt-Peterburg: Stroiizdat.

de Hell, XH. 2020. *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus, & c*. Berlin: Outlook Verlag.

Dezallier d'Argenville, AJ. 1747. *La theorie et la pratique du jardinage, où, l'on traite a fond des beaux jardins appellés communément les jardins de plaisance et de propreté*. Paris: P-J. Mariette.

Diderot, D. 1875. *Plan d'une université pour le gouvernement de Russie*. In: *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*. Vol. 3. Paris: Garnier frères.

Durand, J-N-L. 2000. *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture: With Graphic Portion of the Lectures on Architecture*. Trans. D. Britt. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.

Evsina, N. 1985. *Arkhitekturnaia teoriia v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XVIII–nachala XIX veka*. Moscow: Nauka.

Gervits, M. 2011. Historicism, Nationalism, and Museum Architecture in Russia from the Nineteenth to the Turn of the Twentieth Century. *Visual Resources*, 27(1): 32–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2011.542352.

Golitsyn, A. 1818. *Obrazovanie i ustav Rishel'evskogo litseia v Odesse*. St. Petersburg: Departamenta narodnogo prosveshcheniia.

Grabar' et al. 1995. *Peterburgskaia arkhitektura v XVIII i XIX vekakh*. St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburg orkestr.

Kirpichnikov, A. 1895. Odessa, *1794–1894*. Odessa: Shul'tse.

Kohl, JG. 1842. *Russia: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkoff, Riga, Odessa, the German Provinces on the Baltic, the Steppes, the Crimea, and the Interior of the Empire*. London: Chapman and Hall.

Kuo, MBM, and **Jordan, C.** 2019. Do Experiences with Nature Promote Learning? Converging Evidence of a Cause-and-Effect Relationship. *Frontier Psychology*, 10 (Feb. 19): 305. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00305

Lawrence, S, and **Staehli, B.** 2023. Montessori Architecture: A Design Instrument for Schools. Zurich: Park Books.

Lemoine, B, and **Bonfante-Warren, A.** 1998. *Architecture in France, 1800 to 1900*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Likhachev, D. 1982. *Poeziia sadov: k semantike sadovo-parkovykh stilei*. Leningrad: Nauka.

Lotman, Y. 1992. *Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda*. In: Lotman, Y, *Izbrannye stat'i*. Vol. 2. Tallinn: Aleksandra.

McClintock, J, and **Strong, J.** 1880. Nicolle, Charles-Dominique. *The Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. New York: Harper and Brothers. Online at https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/N/nicolle-charles-dominique.html.

Montferrand, A. 1817. *Établissement du Lycée Richelieu a Odessa, fondé par un ukase de S.M. L'Empereur de toutes les Russies en date du 2 Mai 1817*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie de P. Didot.

Morton, E. 1830. *Travels in Russia, and a Residence at St. Petersburg and Odessa, in the Years 1827–1829*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green.

Nicolle, CD. 1814. *Nachertanie pravil vospitaniia v oboikh odesskikh blagorodnykh institutakh*. Odesa: Gorodskaia tipografiia.

Pushchin, I. 1907. *Zapiski I.I. Pishchina o Pushkine*. St. Petersburg: Sirius.

Rotach, AL, and **Chekanova, OA.** 1979. *Monferran*. Leningrad: Lenizdat.

Roucek, J. 1958. Education in Czarist Russia. *History of Education Journal*, 9(2): 37–45.

Royal Horticultural Society. 2010. *Impact of School Gardening on Learning*. Available at https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/2135/rhs01.pdf.

Saint-Julien, C de, and **Bourdier, MR.** 1854. *Voyage pittoresque en Russie, suivi d'un voyage en Sibérie par MR Bourdier*. Paris: Belin-Leprieur et Morizot.

Shuiskii, V. 1986 *Ogiust Monferran, 1786–1858*. Exhibition catalog. Leningrad: Iskusstvo.

Shuĭskii, V. 2005. *Ogiust Monferran: Istoriia zhizni i tvorchestva*. Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf.

Shvidkovskii, D. 2007. *Russian Architecture and the West*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shvidkovskii, D. 2013. Puti razvitiia rossiiskoi arkhitektury. *Prostranstvo i vremia* 1(11). Available at https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/puti-razvitiya-rossiyskoy-arhitektury/viewer.

Skal'kovskii, A. 1837. Pervoe tridtsatiletie istorii goroda Odessy 1793–1823: Sochineniia odesskogo zhitelia A. Skal′kovskogo. Odesa: n.p.

Stevens, R. 1819. *An Account of Odessa, with Some Reflections, Showing the Benefits of the Trade of the Black Sea to the United States of America, and the Advantages of a Commercial Treaty with Turkey*. Newport: William Simons.

Verne, J. 1883. *Kéraban-le-Têtu*. Paris: J. Hetzel.

Vigel, F. 2000. *Zapiski*. Moscow: Zakharov.

Virieux, J, Aguilar, D, and Landré, S. 2009. *Auguste Ricard de Montferrand, 1786–1858: Un architect français à Saint-Pétersbourg*. Puy-de-Dôme: Conseil Général du Puy-de-Dôme. Exhibition catalog.

Vremennik Demidovskago iuridicheskago litseia. 1872. Yaroslavl: Demidovskii iuridicheskii litsei.