Arc de Triomphe

The **Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile** ([UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English): [/ˌɑːrk də ˈtriːɒmf, - ˈtriːoʊmf/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA/English),[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-4) [US](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_English): [/- triːˈoʊmf/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA/English),[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-5) French: [[aʁk də tʁijɔ̃f də letwal]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA/French) ([listen](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Arc_de_Triomphe.oga)); lit. 'Triumphal Arch of the Star') is one of the most famous monuments in [Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris), [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), standing at the western end of the [Champs-Élysées](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champs-%C3%89lys%C3%A9es) at the centre of [Place Charles de Gaulle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_Charles_de_Gaulle), formerly named Place de l'Étoile—the *étoile* or "star" of the juncture formed by its twelve radiating avenues. The location of the arc and the plaza is shared between three [arrondissements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrondissements_of_Paris), [16th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/16th_arrondissement_of_Paris) (south and west), [17th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/17th_arrondissement_of_Paris) (north), and [8th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_arrondissement_of_Paris) (east). The Arc de Triomphe honours those who fought and died for France in the [French Revolutionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolutionary_Wars) and [Napoleonic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars), with the names of all French victories and generals inscribed on its inner and outer surfaces. Beneath its vault lies the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I).

The central cohesive element of the [*Axe historique*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axe_historique) (historic axis, a sequence of monuments and grand thoroughfares on a route running from the courtyard of the Louvre to the [Grande Arche de la Défense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Arche)), the Arc de Triomphe was designed by [Jean Chalgrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Chalgrin) in 1806; its [iconographic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconography) programme pits [heroically nude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heroic_nudity) French youths against bearded [Germanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_peoples) warriors in [chain mail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chain_mail). It set the tone for public monuments with triumphant patriotic messages. Inspired by the [Arch of Titus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Titus) in [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome), Italy, the Arc de Triomphe has an overall height of 50 metres (164 ft), width of 45 m (148 ft) and depth of 22 m (72 ft), while its large vault is 29.19 m (95.8 ft) high and 14.62 m (48.0 ft) wide. The smaller transverse vaults are 18.68 m (61.3 ft) high and 8.44 m (27.7 ft) wide. Three weeks after the Paris victory parade in 1919 (marking the end of hostilities in World War I), [Charles Godefroy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Godefroy) flew his [Nieuport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nieuport%22%20%5Co%20%22Nieuport) biplane under the arch's primary vault, with the event captured on newsreel.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-6)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-7)

Paris's Arc de Triomphe was the tallest [triumphal arch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumphal_arch) until the completion of the [Monumento a la Revolución](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monumento_a_la_Revoluci%C3%B3n%22%20%5Co%20%22Monumento%20a%20la%20Revoluci%C3%B3n) in [Mexico City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico_City) in 1938, which is 67 metres (220 ft) high. The [Arch of Triumph in Pyongyang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Triumph_%28Pyongyang%29), completed in 1982, is modelled on the Arc de Triomphe and is slightly taller at 60 m (197 ft). [La Grande Arche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Grande_Arche) in La Défense near Paris is 110 metres high. Although it is not named an Arc de Triomphe, it has been designed on the same model and in the perspective of the Arc de Triomphe. It qualifies as the world's tallest arch.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-ParisDigest-8)

History

**Construction and late 19th century**



[*François Rude*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Rude)*working on the Arc de Triomphe*, 1893 painting by [Joseph-Noël Sylvestre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph-No%C3%ABl_Sylvestre).



Avenues radiate from the Arc de Triomphe in [Place Charles de Gaulle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_Charles_de_Gaulle), the former Place de l'Étoile.



The Arc de Triomphe is located on Paris's [*Axe historique*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axe_historique), a long perspective that runs from the [Louvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre) to the [Grande Arche de la Défense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Arche).

The Arc de Triomphe is located on the right bank of the [Seine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seine) at the centre of a [dodecagonal configuration of twelve radiating avenues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_Charles_de_Gaulle). It was commissioned in 1806, after the victory at [Austerlitz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Austerlitz) by [Emperor Napoleon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon) at the peak of his fortunes. Laying the foundations alone took two years and, in 1810, when Napoleon entered Paris from the west with his new bride, Archduchess [Marie-Louise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Louise%2C_Duchess_of_Parma) of Austria, he had a wooden mock-up of the completed arch constructed. The architect, [Jean Chalgrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Chalgrin), died in 1811 and the work was taken over by [Jean-Nicolas Huyot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Nicolas_Huyot).

During the [Bourbon Restoration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourbon_Restoration_in_France), construction was halted, and it would not be completed until the reign of [King Louis-Philippe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Philippe_I), between 1833 and 1836, by the architects Goust, then Huyot, under the direction of [Héricart de Thury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis-%C3%89tienne_H%C3%A9ricart_de_Thury%22%20%5Co%20%22Louis-%C3%89tienne%20H%C3%A9ricart%20de%20Thury). The final cost was reported at about 10,000,000 francs (equivalent to an estimated €65 million or $75 million in 2020).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-10)

On 15 December 1840, [brought back to France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retour_des_cendres) from [Saint Helena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Helena), Napoleon's remains passed under it on their way to the Emperor's [final resting place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon%27s_tomb) at [Les Invalides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Invalides).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-11) Prior to burial in the [Panthéon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panth%C3%A9on%22%20%5Co%20%22Panth%C3%A9on), the body of [Victor Hugo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Hugo) was displayed under the Arc during the night of 22 May 1885.

**20th century**



Arc de Triomphe, postcard, circa 1920.

The sword carried by the *Republic* in the *Marseillaise* relief broke off on the day, it is said, that the [Battle of Verdun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Verdun) began in 1916. The relief was immediately hidden by [tarpaulins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarpaulin) to conceal the accident and avoid any undesired ominous interpretations.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-12) On 7 August 1919, [Charles Godefroy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Godefroy) successfully flew his biplane under the Arc.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-13) [Jean Navarre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Navarre) was the pilot who was tasked to make the flight, but he died on 10 July 1919 when he crashed near [Villacoublay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villacoublay%22%20%5Co%20%22Villacoublay) while training for the flight.

Following its construction, the Arc de Triomphe became the rallying point of French troops parading after successful military campaigns and for the annual [Bastille Day military parade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bastille_Day_military_parade). Famous victory marches around or under the Arc have included the [Germans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire) in 1871, the French in 1919, the [Germans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_France_by_Nazi_Germany) in 1940, and the [French and Allies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_of_Paris) in 1944[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-14) and 1945. A United States [postage stamp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postage_stamp) of 1945 shows the *Arc de Triomphe* in the background as victorious American troops march down the Champs-Élysées and U.S. airplanes fly overhead on 29 August 1944. After the interment of the Unknown Soldier, however, all military parades (including the aforementioned post-1919) have avoided marching through the actual arch. The route taken is up to the arch and then around its side, out of respect for the tomb and its symbolism. Both [Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler) in 1940 and de Gaulle in 1944 observed this custom.

By the early 1960s, the monument had grown very blackened from coal soot and automobile exhaust, and during 1965–1966 it was cleaned through [bleaching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleaching). In the prolongation of the [Avenue des Champs-Élysées](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avenue_des_Champs-%C3%89lys%C3%A9es), a new arch, the [Grande Arche de la Défense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Arche), was built in 1982, completing the line of monuments that forms Paris's *Axe historique*. After the *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* and the *Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile*, the *Grande Arche* is the third arch built on the same perspective.

In 1995, the [Armed Islamic Group of Algeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_Islamic_Group_of_Algeria) placed a bomb near the Arc de Triomphe which wounded 17 people as part of a [campaign of bombings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995_Paris_M%C3%A9tro_and_RER_bombings).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-15)

**21st century**

In late 2018, the Arc de Triomphe suffered acts of vandalism as part of the [Yellow vests movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_vests_movement) protests.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-16) The vandals sprayed the monument with graffiti and ransacked its small museum.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-17)

**L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped**

*Main article: [L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Arc_de_Triomphe%2C_Wrapped%22%20%5Co%20%22L%27Arc%20de%20Triomphe%2C%20Wrapped)*

In September 2021, the arc was wrapped in a silvery blue fabric and red rope,[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-18) a posthumous project planned by artists [Christo and Jeanne-Claude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christo_and_Jeanne-Claude) since the early 1960s.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-19)

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The wooden Arc de Triomphe built on the occasion of the entry into Paris of [Napoleon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon) and [Marie Louise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Louise%2C_Duchess_of_Parma) in 1810

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State funeral of [Victor Hugo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Hugo), 31 May 1885

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[Charles Godefroy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Godefroy) flying through the Arc de Triomphe in 1919

**Monument**



[Jean Chalgrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Chalgrin)'s project for the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, circa 1806.

The [astylar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astylar) design is by [Jean Chalgrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Chalgrin) (1739–1811), in the [Neoclassical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism) version of ancient [Roman architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_architecture). Major [academic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy) sculptors of France are represented in the sculpture of the *Arc de Triomphe*: [Jean-Pierre Cortot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Pierre_Cortot); [François Rude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Rude); [Antoine Étex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoine_%C3%89tex); [James Pradier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Pradier) and [Philippe Joseph Henri Lemaire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippe_Joseph_Henri_Lemaire). The main sculptures are not integral [friezes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frieze) but are treated as independent trophies applied to the vast [ashlar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashlar) masonry masses, not unlike the gilt-bronze [appliqués](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appliqu%C3%A9) on [Empire furniture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_%28style%29). The four sculptural groups at the base of the Arc are *The Triumph of 1810* (Cortot), *Resistance* and *Peace* (both by Antoine Étex) and the most renowned of them all, *Departure of the Volunteers of 1792* commonly called [*La Marseillaise*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Marseillaise) (François Rude). The face of the allegorical representation of France calling forth her people on this last was used as the belt buckle for the honorary rank of [Marshal of France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshal_of_France). Since the fall of Napoleon (1815), the sculpture representing *Peace* is interpreted as commemorating the [Peace of 1815](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_%281815%29).[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

In the attic above the richly sculptured frieze of soldiers are 30 shields [engraved with the names of major French victories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battles_inscribed_on_the_Arc_de_Triomphe) in the [French Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wars_of_the_French_Revolution) and [Napoleonic wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars).[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-20) The inside walls of [the monument list the names of 660 people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_inscribed_under_the_Arc_de_Triomphe), among which are 558 French generals of the [First French Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_French_Empire);[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-21) The names of those generals killed in battle are underlined. Also inscribed, on the shorter sides of the four supporting columns, are the names of the major French victories in the Napoleonic Wars. The battles that took place in the period between the [departure of Napoleon from Elba to his final defeat at Waterloo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Days) are not included.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

For four years from 1882 to 1886, a monumental sculpture by [Alexandre Falguière](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandre_Falgui%C3%A8re) topped the arch. Titled *Le triomphe de la Révolution* ("The Triumph of the Revolution"), it depicted a chariot drawn by horses preparing "to crush Anarchy and Despotism". It remained there only four years before falling in ruins.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

Inside the monument, a permanent exhibition conceived by the artist [Maurice Benayoun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Benayoun) and the architect Christophe Girault opened in February 2007.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-22) The steel and new media installation interrogates the symbolism of the national monument, questioning the balance of its symbolic message during the last two centuries, oscillating between war and peace.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

**Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**



[Tomb of the Unknown Soldier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Unknown_Soldier) beneath the Arc de Triomphe.

Beneath the Arc is the [Tomb of the Unknown Soldier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Unknown_Soldier) from [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I). Interred on [Armistice Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_Day) 1920,[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-NaourAllen2005-23) it has the first [eternal flame](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_flame) lit in Western and Eastern Europe since the [Vestal Virgins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vestal_Virgin)' fire was extinguished in the fourth century. It burns in memory of the dead who were never identified (now in both world wars).[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

A ceremony is held at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every 11 November on the anniversary of the [Armistice of 11 November 1918](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_of_11_November_1918) signed by the Entente Powers and Germany in 1918. It was originally decided on 12 November 1919 to bury the unknown soldier's remains in the [Panthéon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panth%C3%A9on%22%20%5Co%20%22Panth%C3%A9on), but a public letter-writing campaign led to the decision to bury him beneath the Arc de Triomphe. The coffin was put in the chapel on the first floor of the Arc on 10 November 1920, and put in its final resting place on 28 January 1921.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*] The slab on top bears the inscription ICI REPOSE UN SOLDAT FRANÇAIS MORT POUR LA PATRIE 1914–1918 ("Here lies a French soldier who died for the fatherland 1914–1918").

In 1961, U.S. President [John F. Kennedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy) and First Lady [Jacqueline Kennedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqueline_Kennedy_Onassis) paid their respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, accompanied by President [Charles de Gaulle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle). After the 1963 [assassination of President Kennedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy_assassination), Mrs Kennedy remembered the eternal flame at the Arc de Triomphe and requested that an eternal flame be placed next to her husband's grave at [Arlington National Cemetery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arlington_National_Cemetery) in Virginia. President Charles de Gaulle went to Washington to attend the state funeral, and witnessed Jacqueline Kennedy lighting the eternal flame that had been inspired by her visit to France.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

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| **Arc de Triomphe** |
| Front left views of the Arc de Triomphe, Paris 21 October 2010.jpg |
| [https://maps.wikimedia.org/img/osm-intl,16,48.873797222222,2.2950111111111,250x200.png?lang=en&domain=en.wikipedia.org&title=Arc+de+Triomphe&groups=_5ec37d5b0f05e6e5e735fd6ec9c1cf68d4713ff2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe%22%20%5Cl%20%22/map/0)[Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) |
| **Alternative names** | Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile |
| **General information** |
| **Type** | [Triumphal Arch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumphal_Arch) |
| **Architectural style** | [Neoclassicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism) |
| **Location** | [Place Charles de Gaulle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_de_l%27%C3%89toile) (formerly Place de l'Étoile) |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[48°52′25.67″N 2°17′42.04″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Arc_de_Triomphe&params=48_52_25.67_N_2_17_42.04_E_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[48°52′25.67″N 2°17′42.04″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Arc_de_Triomphe&params=48_52_25.67_N_2_17_42.04_E_type:landmark) |
| **Construction started** | 15 August 1806[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-Raymond2008-1) |
| **Inaugurated** | 29 July 1836[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe#cite_note-Fleischmann1914-2) |
| **Height** | 50 m (164 ft) |
| **Dimensions** |
| **Other dimensions** | Wide: 45 m (148 ft)Deep: 22 m (72 ft) |
| **Design and construction** |
| **Architect** | [Jean Chalgrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Chalgrin)[Louis-Étienne Héricart de Thury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis-%C3%89tienne_H%C3%A9ricart_de_Thury) |