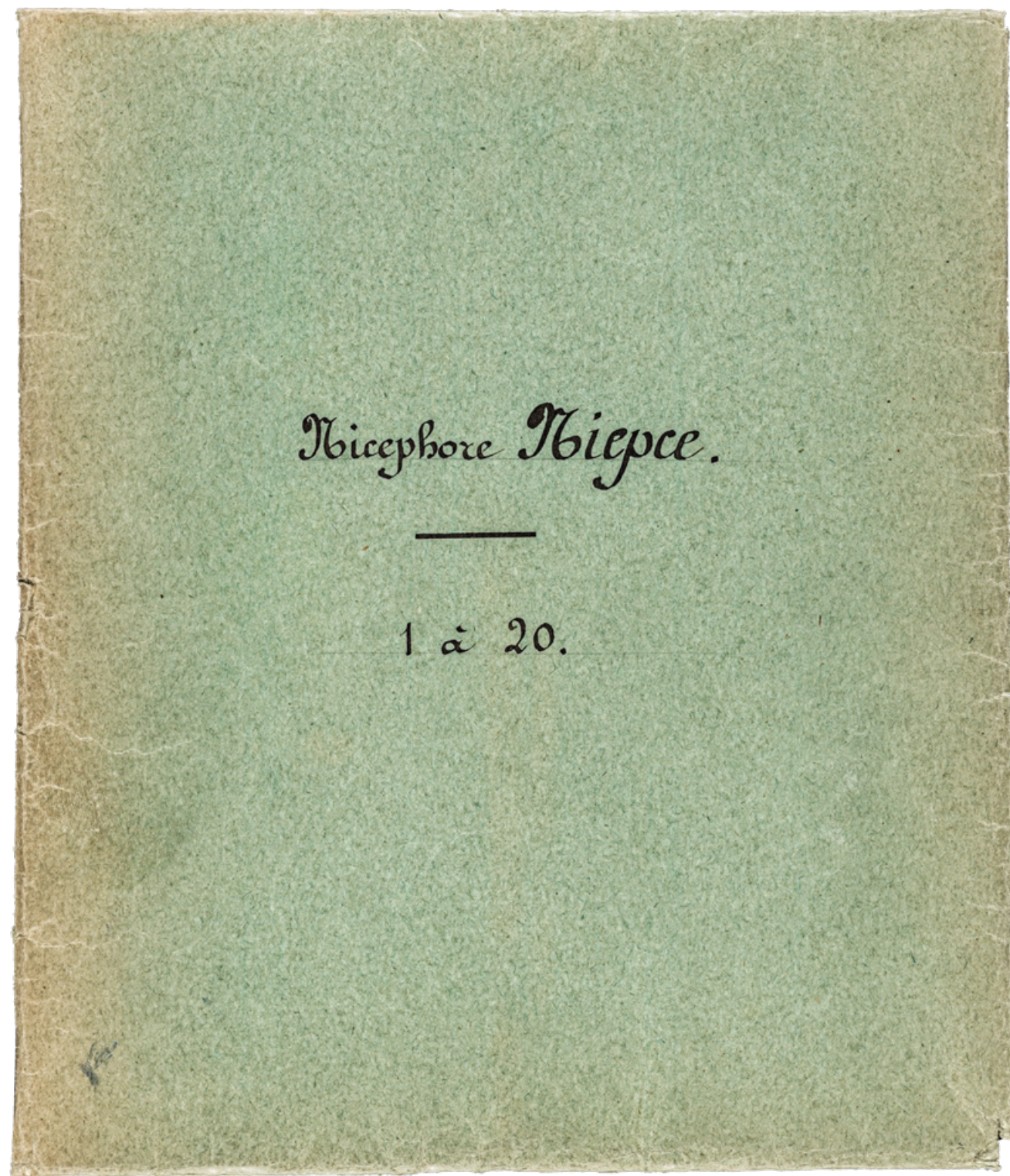




Illés Sarkantyu

://: Latents¹

around Nicéphore Niépce

Here, at the Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle, Budapest), the material presented within the framework of "Routes and Crossroads / 3rd National Salon of Photography 2026" is a snapshot from a project under development.

S. I.

¹ In the plural, the word "latent" plays on the phonological proximity of "latente" (latent) and "l'attente" (expectation) in French. This polysemy in the title activates the expectation during the exposure time, the emergence of the pictorial imprint on the photosensitive medium, as well as a yet invisible presence about to be realized.



Illés Sarkantyu

://: Latentes¹

Joseph Nicéphore Niépce was born in Chalon-sur-Saône on March 7, 1765.

The Picture before the Picture

His middle name is evocative of pictorial history: Saint Nikephoros I (758–828) was the Patriarch of Constantinople, a representative of Byzantine Iconodules, who opposed iconoclasm. In reply to Emperor Leo V the Armenian’s accusations, he wrote his *Antirrhetici*.

He strongly believed that the respect paid to an icon addressed God, amounting to the worship of the Creator. He did not merely protect the image – he deeply professed that matter could manifest the divine.

Although he was rejected in his lifetime, the triumph of Orthodoxy in 843 ultimately vindicated his theological and spiritual intelligence. Nikephoros I made sure that icons make Biblical doctrine accessible to everyone. Unaware as he is, our newborn in Burgundy, where 90% of the population is still illiterate, shares a similar destiny.

¹ In the plural, the word “latent” plays on the phonological proximity of “latente” (latent) and “l’attente” (expectation) in French. This polysemy in the title activates the expectation during the exposure time, the emergence of the pictorial imprint on the photosensitive medium, as well as a yet invisible presence about to be realized.

The World as “Bricolage”

Guided by their father Claude Niépce, their tutor Abbé Montangerand, and the teacher monks of the Oratory in Chalon-sur-Saône, Nicéphore and his brother Claude show swift development in language acquisition, science, and literature.

Their childhood, spent in learning, is intimately enclosed in their family. In their free time, the brothers construct their first crane models; their experimental zeal moves beyond mere mechanical interests.

This is the milieu in which their inseparable collaboration is formed.

A Coded World

Nicéphore, the son of a lawyer, royal councillor, and trustee of the Chalon trusts, was born into a coded world, where loyalty towards the monarch and moral rigour would determine careers. His father makes sure to have him educated by the Oratorians, who were often accused of free-thinking opposed to the generally prevalent Jesuit doctrines.

This combination of moral rigour and intellectual ambition feeds Nicéphore's scientific curiosity and independent spirit. The social logic of the era sets him on the authoritative and influential path of a cleric. Thus, he holds temporary positions as a superintendent in the colleges of Angers and, later, Troyes.

Discipline amid Chaos

The wave of anti-congregationalism in 1790 led to the abolishment of the Oratory and its colleges. On May 10, 1792, Nicéphore decides to join the revolutionary army as a sub-lieutenant in the 42nd Infantry (formerly of Angoumois). In 1793, he participated in the campaign of Cagliari against the Kingdom of Sardinia. Promoted as a lieutenant of the 83rd Demi-Brigade, he leads his troops, launches assaults, experiences the chaos of war, and tastes defeat. That experience points him towards discipline, strategy, and the practice of engineering physics, with particular regard to the swift movement of cannons, the calculation of trajectories, and the regulation of explosions.

Fig. 1: Illustration from *Essai sur l'électricité des corps*, M. l'abbé Nollet, Royal Academy of Sciences, 2nd ed., 1765. BnF Gallica

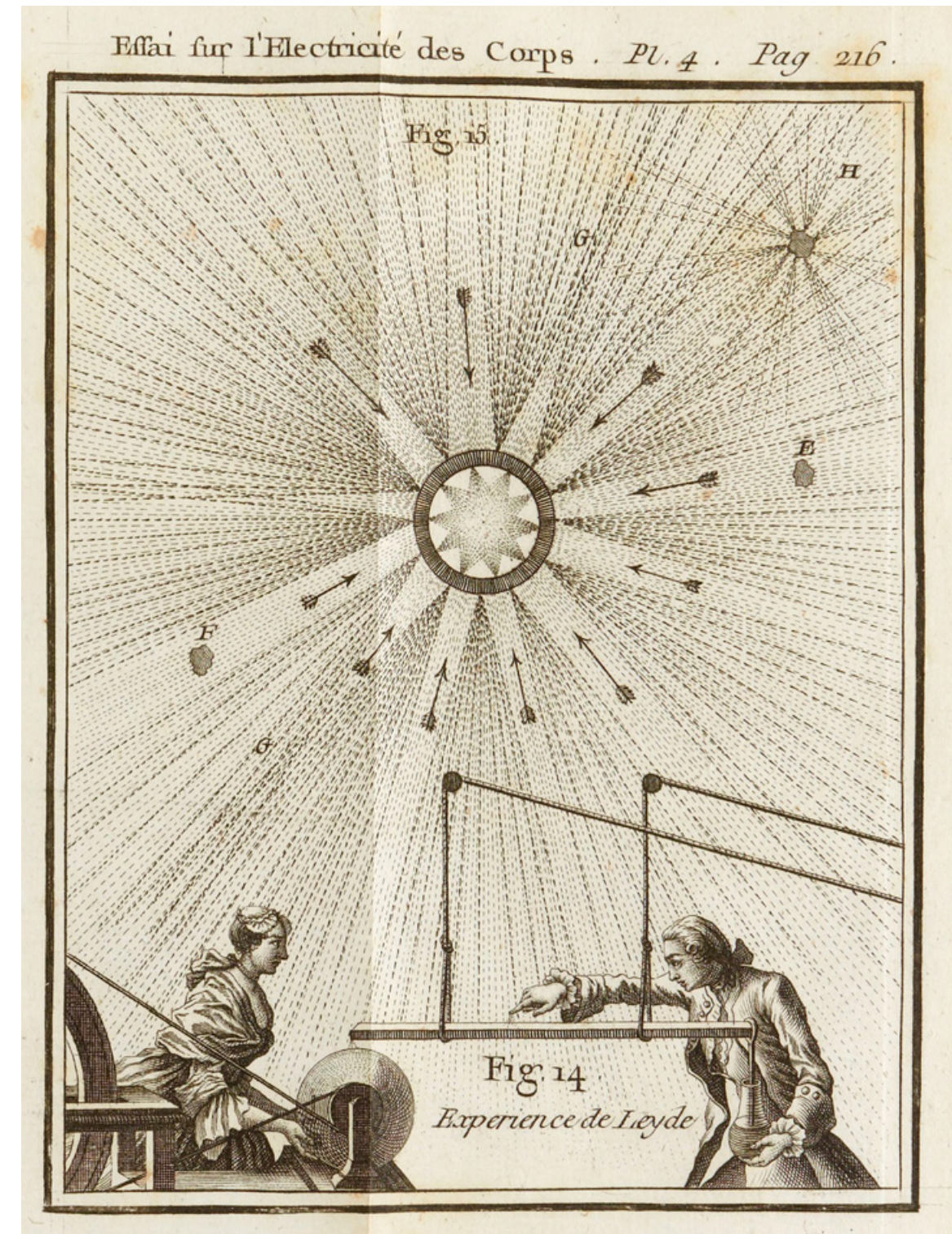




Fig. 2: Anonymous, *Misslungener Angriff der Franzosen gegen Sardinien* ("Failed attack of the French against Sardinia"), etching, 24 × 34.5 cm, 1793. Representation of the French bombardment of Cagliari during the French expedition in Sardinia. Publisher: P. I. Fill (A. V. [Augusta Vindelicorum]). BnF Gallica

Above Reproach

Entering the army is not merely an ideological choice. Nicéphore's family, tied to the ancien régime, is weakened, treated by the revolutionaries with suspicion. His move can be seen as a gesture of civil loyalty: he rises above reproach where inactivity counts as hostility. In addition to the advantages linked to the defence of the Republic, Nicéphore also finds a training ground there for unfolding his curiosity and practical skills and tackling complex challenges – those characteristics that will subsequently define his scientific achievements.

Learning on the Move

In 1793, Nicéphore familiarizes himself with tactical innovations in the French army in Italy that unite mobility with strategy: conventional closed formations are replaced by concentrated artillery, more precise coordination, initiative, and resilience. He progresses between the spectacular twin careers of Napoleon Bonaparte and Thomas-Alexandre Dumas in the military history of the Revolution. His diligence and adroitness earn him the appreciation of his superiors; he becomes an adjutant to the general staff.

Seeing Differently

He falls ill, probably with typhoid fever. After months spent in the hospital, the chief surgeon’s verdict is final: “Joseph Niépce [...] has such poor eyesight by nature that he can barely perceive, let alone distinguish between, even the closest objects with great pains.” His partial blindness cuts his military career short, interrupting a pathway promising greater glories: he is discharged at the age of 29.

Is it not likely that his visual impairment should lead to a tipping over of the order of perception, reorganizing one’s relation to the visible as well as to the tools registering and documenting it?

Bonding

Nicéphore’s recovery is long and tortuous. He has to rely on the aid of his tenant, Mme Roméro, with her daughter Agnès, widowed eight months ago, taking particularly good care of him. They grow ever more intimate.

The girl was, “indeed, made to charm him: taller than average, pretty, very graceful, witty, with impeccable manners and a rare air of distinction.”

On August 4, 1794, Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce marries Marie-Agnès Roméro.

From the Battlefield to the Field of Conscience

After the Terror, in November 1794, Niépce becomes a member of the district committee of Nice in the recently annexed territory of the fragile Republic.

He contributes to the administrative development of a system born from the fall of the very world to which he once belonged. This is his turn from military experience to administration, from manoeuvring battles to judging consciences.

May this also be his turn from ideological questions to the practice of organization and adaptation?

The House Laboratory

From the riots around Nice, the Niépce family withdraws to Saint-Roch, a rural haven close by the city. Nicéphore is delighted to welcome Claude, who has just returned from sea voyages, back into the family; another addition is imminent: in the 3rd year of the First Republic, on the 15th day of the month of Germinal, the first Niépce child, Jacques-Marie-Joseph-Isidore is born.

Isidore soon becomes an object of deep, mutually felt bonds and the embodiment

of hope. Agnès and Nicéphore, alongside Claude, surround him with equally tender and temperate affection.

In the peaceful life of the family, the Directorate has difficulty enforcing its power. In Nice, armed bands, whereas among the neighbouring hills, the pillages of barbets – who oppose the French integration of the city – maintain the terror.

In this air of unrest, their home becomes a laboratory. Claude and Nicéphore make observations and carry out experiments. It is here that they first formulate the principle of an impellent force that can move a ship without sails and oars. Another, more modest invention – recording images with a camera obscura – also emerges in their conversation. In this gory and chaotic period, their experiments – incomplete but already fruitful – feed their commitment and “keep alive the sacred fire that animates them.”

Balancing Uncertainty

In Milan, in January 1799, Nicéphore attempts to enrol Napoleon’s army, but the fight against Austria and its allies makes every such move most risky. Paradoxically, he joins the Austrians in 1800, who guarantee the fragile protection of Nice: “The unfortunate city of Nice would have far greater troubles to lament,” he writes.

But Niépce frequently returns to the idea of “Ubi bene, ibi patria” (“The homeland is where one feels fine”) and obstinately rekindles his own desire for his native Burgundy.

In his mother’s environment, more than one person looks askance at his treatment of the family estate. Therefore, he waives the usufruct of his inheritance. His decision clears the way towards his long-desired security. The Treaty of Lunéville, signed in February 1801, ends the war between France and Austria, finally making it possible for them to return to Chalon. After more than a decade of painful separation, Claude and Nicéphore, in the company of Agnès and Isidore, are reunited with their mother and their younger brother, Bernard.

Movement without Sails and Oars

Between 1801 and 1806, the Niépce brothers manage the family estate and, within it, the fields of corn and rape, as well as the vineyards around Jambles. Their attention, however, is focused primarily on their invention: a heretofore unknown engine of internal combustion.

Jouffroy d’Abbans’s (1751–1832) *Pyroscaphe*, a developed version of steamships,

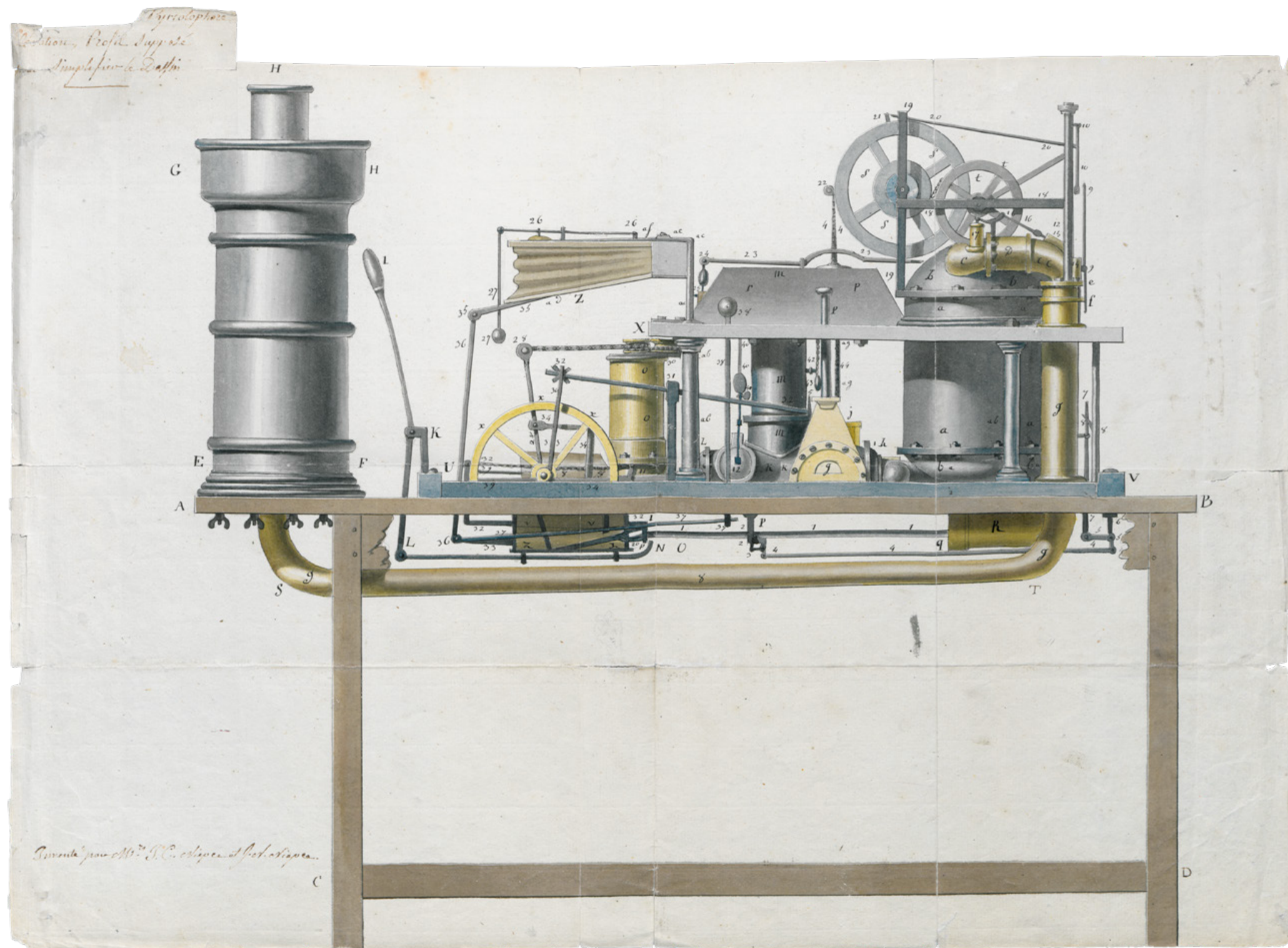


Fig. 3: Nicéphore Niépce, *Pyrèolophore* plan (plate 39), in the patent of Claude and Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *Pyrèolophore*, a machine whose driving principle is air expanded by fire, capable of setting various mechanisms in motion, 1807. Archives de l'Institut national de la propriété industrielle (INPI).

cleared the way for river transportation, while the vivid memory of artillery explosions guides them to a fundamental principle: energy can be turned into mechanical motion.

The explosion, produced by the rapid combustion of a mixture – first lycopodium powder, then coal and resin – in a confined space, transforms chemical energy into mechanical energy.

Explosion under Control

The explosion in a cannon frees the energy bounded by the metal chamber and directed by the barrel, ejecting the missile with precision. In the engine of the Niépce brothers, the same logic applies: the explosion expands the air in the chamber and, by sucking in and then ejecting water, ensures motion.

The 2.5-metre prototype moves upriver at almost twice the speed of the Saône itself, testifying to its power and reliability.

Explosion no longer comes from the outside: they have created and regulated it, transforming the shockwave into continuous and controlled motion. For the first time in human history, explosive energies can be turned directly into useful impellent force. The world's first engine to operate in a continuous and mechanical cycle obtains a patent for ten years officially issued by Bonaparte on July 20, 1807.

To denote its function faithfully, Claude and Nicéphore christened it *Pyréolophore* ("pyr-": "fire"; "éolo-": "wind"; "-phore": "carry, create").

The *Pyréolophore* – whose thermodynamic principle would be formulated as late as 1893, by Rudolf Diesel – remained the main ambition of the brothers. It was more than a project: it became an impellent force itself, alone vindicating their vast spendings and objectives.

Invention Unrealized

"At that time, they were far more concerned with achieving glory and ensuring that their names would be remembered by far-off posterity than with profiting from their inventions and work; they considered financial gain to be a question of entirely secondary importance."

During the Imperial Era, the Niépce brothers devote themselves to projects of public benefit, serving innovation and industrial substitution. The hydrostatic pump they submit to the tender to replace the *machine de Marly* – the hydraulic system supplying the gardens of Versailles with water – is based on an uninterrupted mechanism relying on the equilibrium of two water columns. Their proposal,



Fig. 4: Yan Dargent, *Maison de campagne des Gras*, 1869. Musée Nicéphore Niépce (Chalon-sur-Saône).

however, is rejected, revealing the logic of imperial tenders: other, more complicated machines are preferred.

Economy of Shortage

Within the same context, the Niépce brothers attempt to find substitutes for colonial resources. They launch the production of dyer's woad (pastel) as an alternative to imported indigo: sowing, harvesting, and extracting the blue pigment.

In 1814, the Continental Blockade – which Napoleon introduced in 1806 to isolate England’s economy – collapses. The massive export of British woad is relaunched, so the Niépce enterprise loses its raison d’être.

Matter and Imprint

Lithography was invented by Senefelder in Munich in 1796. Nicéphore’s interest in printing and graphic reproduction may conceivably have originated with Agnès, who is the offspring of a family of printers, but he really becomes a devotee of lithography after it is introduced in France as well.

In 1813, Nicéphore undertakes experiments to reproduce engravings and drawings, along the lines of lithography: he has a stonecutter in Chalon chisel the rocks from the Chagny quarries, Isidore making several drawings then coated with a lacquer composed by Niépce himself and then etched with acid.

May these chemical procedures outline the pathway eventually leading to heliography?

Forced Choices

Isidore is 19 when war breaks out in Burgundy once again. The powers conspiring against France – Russia, Prussia, and Austria – occupy the country. In the east, they reach Dole, Lons-le-Saunier, Louhans, Mâcon, Dijon, Auxonne, Saint-Jean, and, finally, Chalon. To aggravate the crisis of rising taxes, drought strikes the region in 1814. In 1814, Napoleon I abdicates; Louis XVIII becomes the king of France.

Isidore opts for a surprising direction: though the offspring of a family active during the Revolution and Napoleon’s Empire, he joins the army of the Restoration in June 1814. During the reign of Hundred Days – at Napoleon’s return – he is discharged, so he does not fight at Waterloo.

When Isidore considers leaving the army, Nicéphore reminds him of the costs incurred, the loss of regular incomes, and the risk of interrupting his military service; when he decides to stay, his father stresses the benefits of prestige and social respect.

The income from the estate does not cover the expenses of their plans. They take loans from their environment.

Far more than a matter of ideology, politics becomes a source of material instability. On November 1, 1815, Isidore rejoins the army.

Operative Loneliness

In 1816, before the patent should expire, Claude travels to Paris to negotiate the sale of the *Pyréolophore*.

Isidore’s trajectory is already set, so the internal relations of the Niépce family are uprooted: Nicéphore takes over the management of the estates, yields, and sales, as well as the administrative tasks. At the same time, quite moderately, he conducts an extensive, though attentive and faithfully loyal correspondence, alert at all times to assist his loved once, if need be. Unwillingly though, he becomes the pillar of his family.

Conquering Light

In 1816, Niépce has turned 51. He has another seventeen years to live. He leaves Chalon to return to the fruitful peace and calm of the provincial residence, his Maison du Gras in Saint-Loup-de-Varennnes. He has won his freedom. His life is framed by the walks and discussions with Agnès, and he now has an entire house at his disposal – a space of lasting loneliness, the dream of creative being. He may set out to conquer light.

He begins his research into photosensitivity – an idea that occurred to him as early as 1793, in Cagliari, in Claude’s company – using a miniature contraption of a side length of 3.6 or 4 cm, endowed with an “artificial eye.”

After placing the box, he removes the cover, so that light itself can draw. He watches nature, which he believes to be recordable, with fixed motionlessness.

He then cautiously sits down on the chair placed in the vicinity of the contraption.

He straightens up and shuts his eyes.

He waits.



://: *Hatching*

The frozen shell carries within it the future form.

Saturated with a fluid and amorphous substance, it already contains its own fundamental components and the rigid shells in which appendages and organs will take their place.

Delicate instruments reveal the beginnings of structures and sensory organs, while a creamy, greenish, and formless fluid prepares the organ of sight.

Beneath the transparent shell, the process can be observed day by day: the pale mass dries and solidifies to form pigments, hairs, and scales. Edges emerge, lines are carved in, dark or light patches surface one after another – red, then green, black, white.

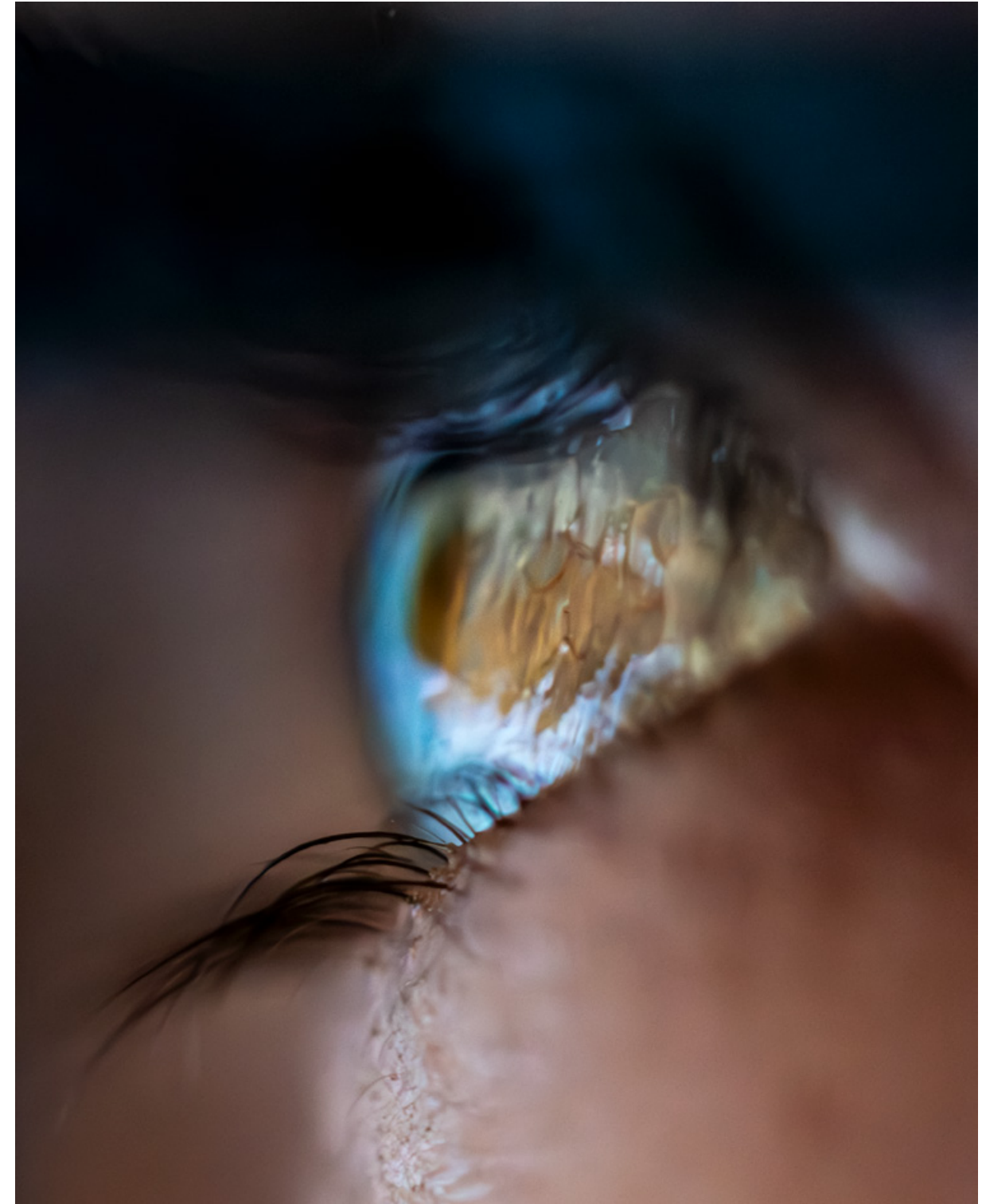
The skin thins under the influence of a fluid, becoming as fragile as silk-paper. Then the torso tenses, stretches, and deepens into rings; a crack opens on the back, the chest cavity bursts open.

Beneath the sails, Nicéphore passes through the slit.

← *The window that served as a point of view in 1816*, Maison du Gras, Saint-Loup-de-Varennes, 2024

← *Latent No. 1*, 2026

Ocular, 2026





://: Alliance

Dialogue fragments between father and son

ISIDORE:

“Dear father, can you fathom what effect this strange discovery could have on the destiny of the peoples if spread mechanically, without limits?”

NICÉPHORE:

“Look, dear Isidore, our discovery may unfold but with the support of the most developed tools – not only the ones we possess but even those promised us by the future.”

NICÉPHORE:

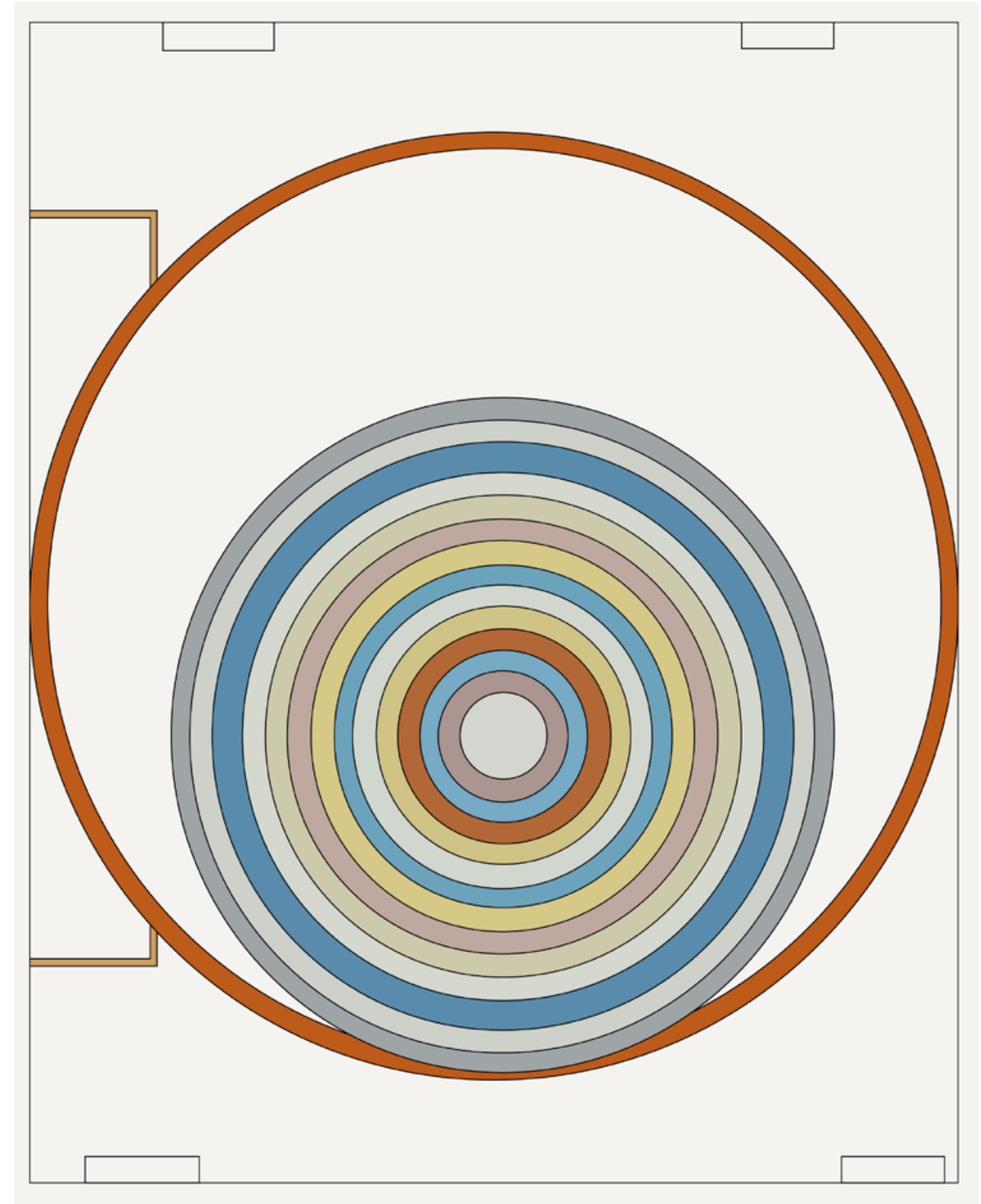
"If we talk about creation, let us open our vision towards a parallel train of thoughts.

"In the centre of the crucial discovery – which confirmed that the Earth really orbited the Sun – was one's vision, controlled and guided by one's tool.

"Examining the moons of Jupiter and the phases of Venus, Galileo confirmed the Copernican theory and shattered the geocentric view of the universe. If yesterday's optics shook that model, though it had reigned since antiquity, tomorrow's will open our way towards an exploration of the visible world that will be infallibly exact. It will enable us to fix a reproduction of unprecedented precision.

"Dear Isidore, let us excite our unquenchable thirst for light, so that it may reach as broad a circle of attentive gazers as possible!"

Geocentric theory, after "De Sanctificatione septime diei", verso of folio 4 of the Nuremberg Chronicle. Edition by Hartmann Schedel (1493), 2025





AVNBØG, CARPINUS BETULUS.

A. BORTZELLS TRA. B. STUM.

ISIDORE:

"Father, of what research of light are you an enthusiastic devotee, anyway?"

NICÉPHORE:

"Light, my dear Isidore, elevates and feeds us, like that tender presence which affects us through the quiet, temperate beauty of a hornbeam.

"That sturdy and not too tall tree, wearing an arched canopy, quietly accompanies its more imposing fellows, which have raised our interest in poetry as they did in the fine arts. The *Carpinus betulus* is neither pompous, nor spectacular; yet it carries valuable traits: resistance, perseverance, refinement.

"The hornbeam adapts. It sheds its foliage, but a portion of its leaves may stay on its branches until the end of winter. It grows modestly, it survives for centuries, it takes its power from the stream of light, from the intake of water and nutriment.

"Seest thou, my son, this light – the which slowly transforms our entire matter?"

Fig. 5: Carl Linnaeus, *Carpinus betulus*, copper engraving, c. 1753.
Большая Российская энциклопедия (Great Russian Encyclopaedia).



Protected, after Carl Linnaeus, 2025



NICÉPHORE:

“Come to the window, Isidore. Stand here, turn thy cheek towards the sun, and shut thy eyes. Seest thou this reddish-orange, ochre colour... or is it purple, now? Since our skin is partly translucent, light penetrates the tissues of our eyelid and produces a colourful screen.

“While the same light feeds our desirous vision, it also invigorates our every last fibre, animating our mind’s motions.

“Through this simple phenomenon, one may already intuit how light sneaks in and penetrates, opening the way to the world beyond the visible.

“May we ever arrive at controlling it, so that the secrets of our body be revealed in their full complexity?”

NICÉPHORE:

“While perfecting my experiments, I cannot break away from the observation of the colours. It impresses me... but inspires an awe in me as well.

“I am reminded of Monsieur Carbillet’s painting, the ‘Head of a Negro’, which we saw at his place. The title itself gives me the shivers: how could one saturate the essence of a man – painted with such dignity, sitting at a three-quarter view – into a word as brutal as that? His aspect carries a humanity that no title could possibly lock it into a frame.

“And yet his name is taken away, leaving behind but a visual label.

“This reminds me of Gall and Spurzheim, devotees of cranioscopy, who currently enchant so many scholars. In their treatises, they claim that the shape of a skull alone need be inspected so as to establish whether someone is honest, brave, or dull. They pass from one salon to the next, measuring foreheads, convinced that the soul is carved into the bone, that the truth of the spirit is written into the braincase.





"Canst thou think it, Isidore, that the day that we shall be able to fix a face, some will be using that to judge their fellow men? That alone causes me to shudder.

"My deepest concern is that our undertaking – beautiful and innocent though it is – may eventually strengthen prejudices, false racial or social ideas. That from the comparison of two portraits, someone should start to deduce which soul is more valuable than the other. The danger that a lighter hue of skin may become a synonym of virtue or that a darker complexion may carry the stamp of shame...

"The image can never betray its own essence. Never can a single fixing obliterate the light that lightens us – what connects us more deeply than any appearance."

Fig. 6: *Negro head*, attributed to Théodore Géricault, 1812–1814, oil on canvas, Musée Vivant Denon (Chalon-sur-Saône)

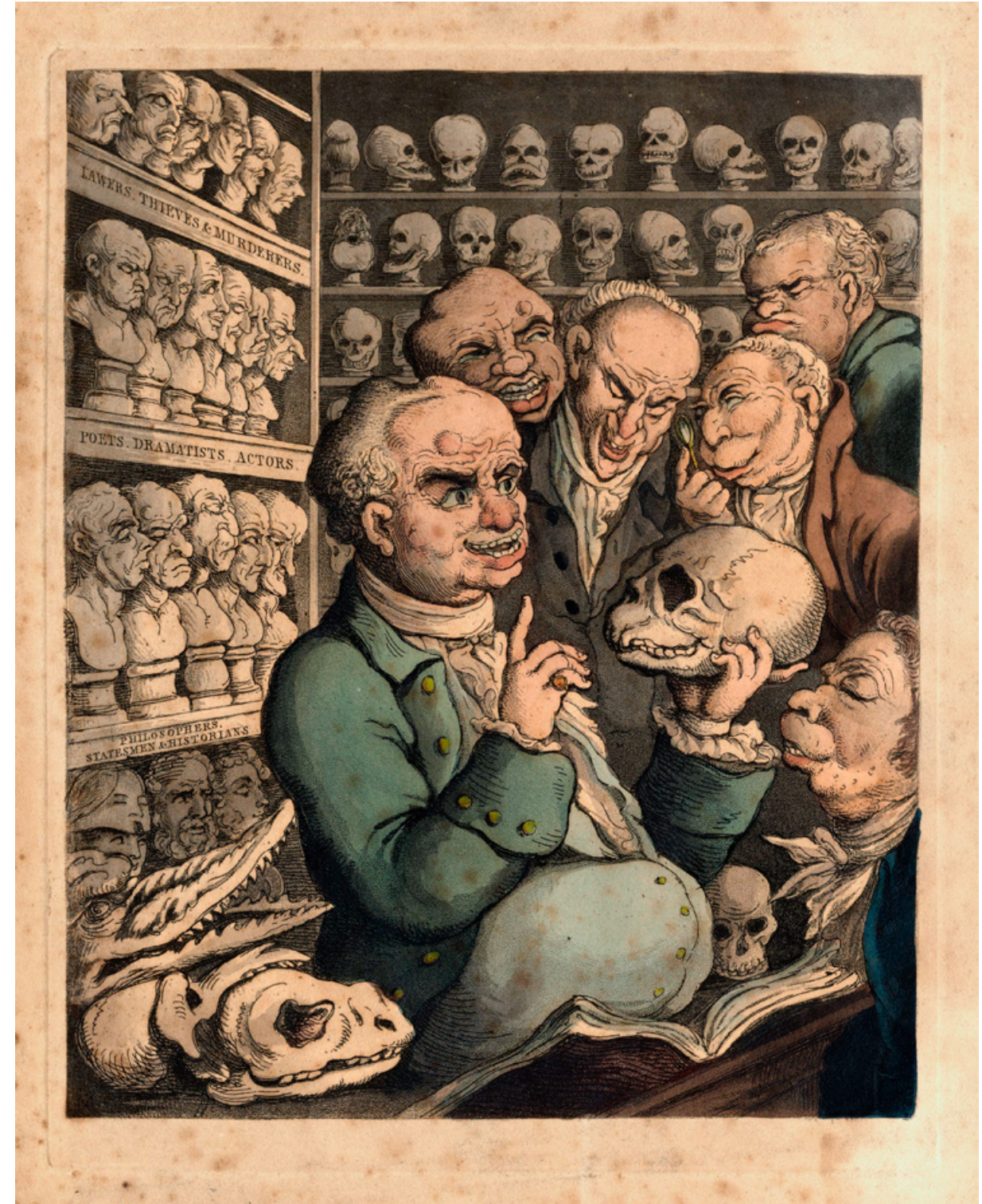


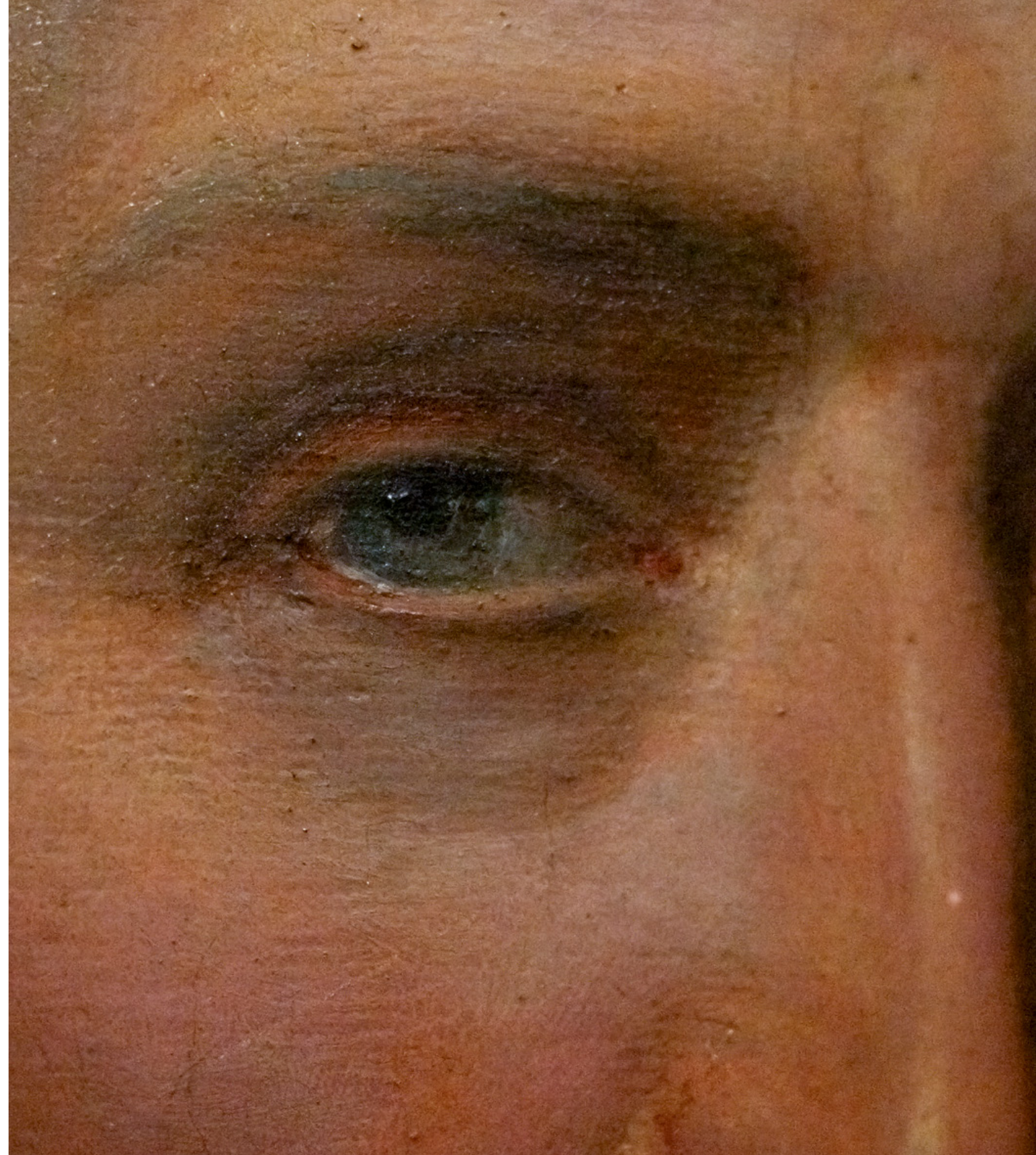
Fig. 7: Thomas Rowlandson, *Franz Joseph Gall discussing with colleagues inside an anatomical room*, engraving, 1808

Attempt at a Portrait

One metre seventy-six,
hair light brown,
eyes grey,
eyebrow (illegible),
sharp nose (thin and elongate),
mouth average,
chin round,
forehead broad,
face oval.

This is 36-year-old Nicéphore's description by the Revolutionary Administration in Nice (1801).

François Berger, *Portrait of Joseph Nicéphore Niépce*, oil on canvas, 1854.
Detail, Musée Nicéphore Niépce, 2024



The reproduction of an “authentic portrait of Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, inventor of photography” is first printed as the frontispiece of Victor Fouque’s book *La Vérité sur l’invention de la photographie* (Paris, 1867). Paul Bourgeois’s photo documents Isidore’s bust modelled on his father.

Though there are no fewer than three busts exhibited in the Nicéphore Niépce Museum in Chalon-sur-Saône, none of them is a copy of the official portrait. In online archives, no source can be found to confirm the existence of the bust; it is not known who owned it and whether it has survived. Neither can it be proved whether Isidore made it before or after his father’s death.

As far as I know, all other known portraits of Niépce – whether painted, drawn, or engraved – are posthumous. Thus, our picture of the inventor emerges from a web of reconstructed portraits and apocryphal, post festa portrayals.

Entrapped, 2025



Paupertatem summis ingeniis obesse ne provehantur*

*Dextra tenet lapidem; manus altera sustinet alas;
Ut me pluma levis, sic grave mergit onus.
Ingenio poteram saperas volitare per arces,
Me nisi paupertas invida deprimeret.*

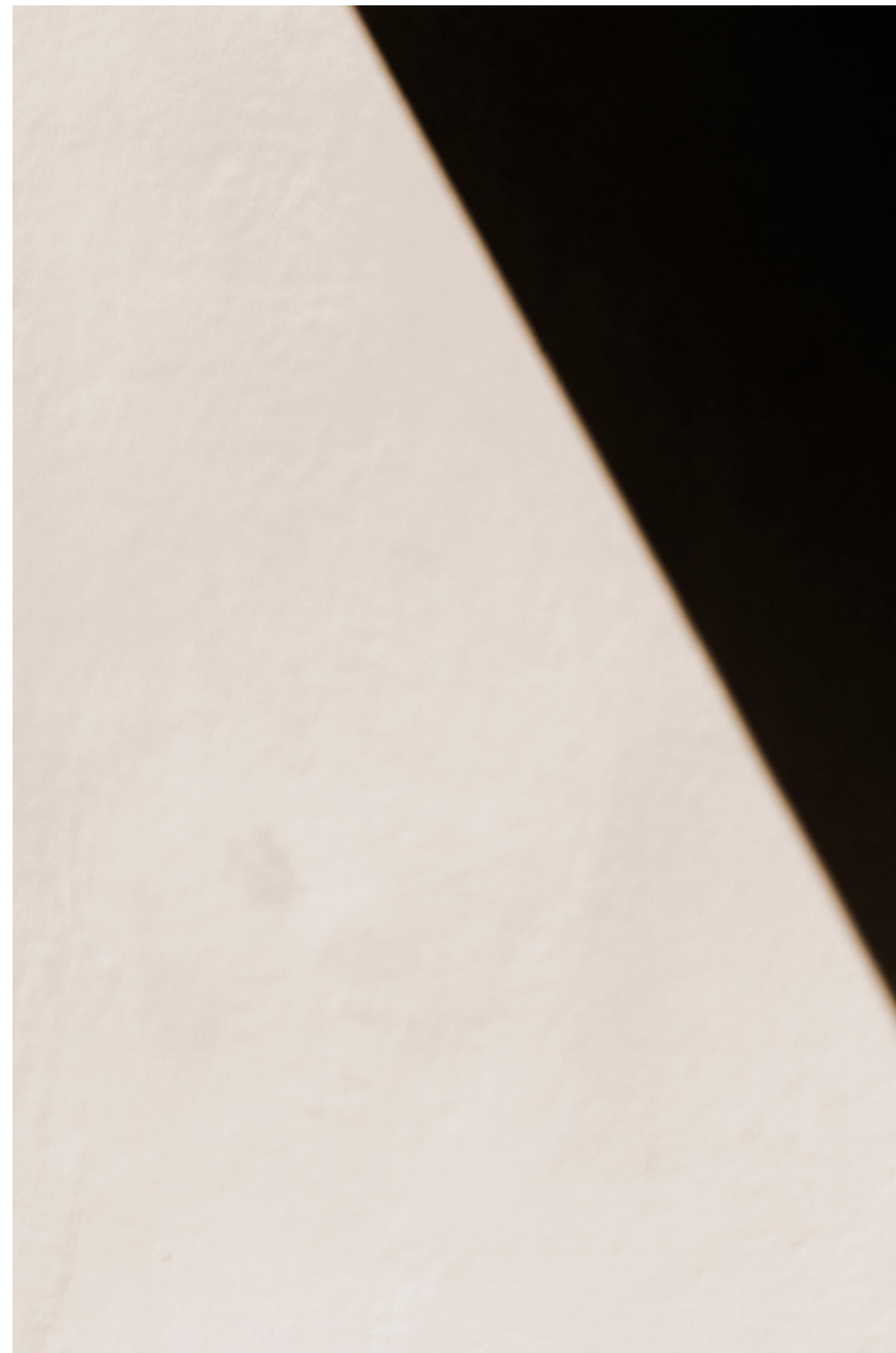
Poverty hinders the unfolding of the greatest geniuses

My right arm holds a heavy rock; my left a pair of wings.
The airy feathers lift me up, the rocky weight pulls down.
Ingeniously I might soar up the highest mountain peak,
But greedy poorness hinders me from that my life's great dream.

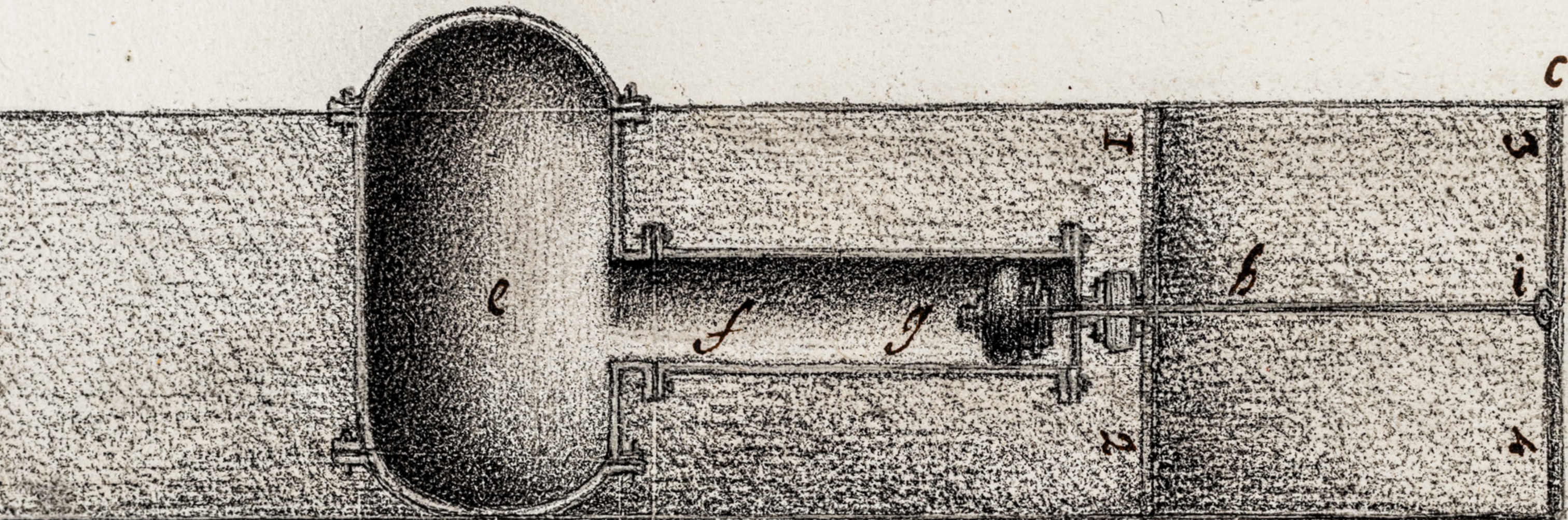
* This poem is taken from *Emblemata*, a collection of allegories in Latin by Andrea Alciati. It was first published with engravings in Augsburg in 1531; by 1620, it had had more than one hundred editions in France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy.

Illuminated face, 2025





*Bust &
Background, 2025*





ISIDORE:

“As opposed to charcoal, which is made from dense, matte, and velvety black vegetative coal, graphite is a natural mineral which, after mining, can be ground into a grey, fine, slippery powder. That material is then mixed with clay in various proportions and diluted with water... The emerging mass is cast into moulds or pressed into thin rods, dried, and burnt, so that the core should solidify, then polished or filed so as to make it solid and even. Thereafter, the filling is inserted between two half-cylinders of wood, formerly carved out to receive it. Piecing together, gluing with a glue made from animal leather or bones, chiselling, shaping... and, finally, it gains its ultimate shape, its perfectly round form. I hold it between my thumb, index finger, and middle finger.

“This ingenious work makes it possible for me to put my theme on paper... (continues in silence)

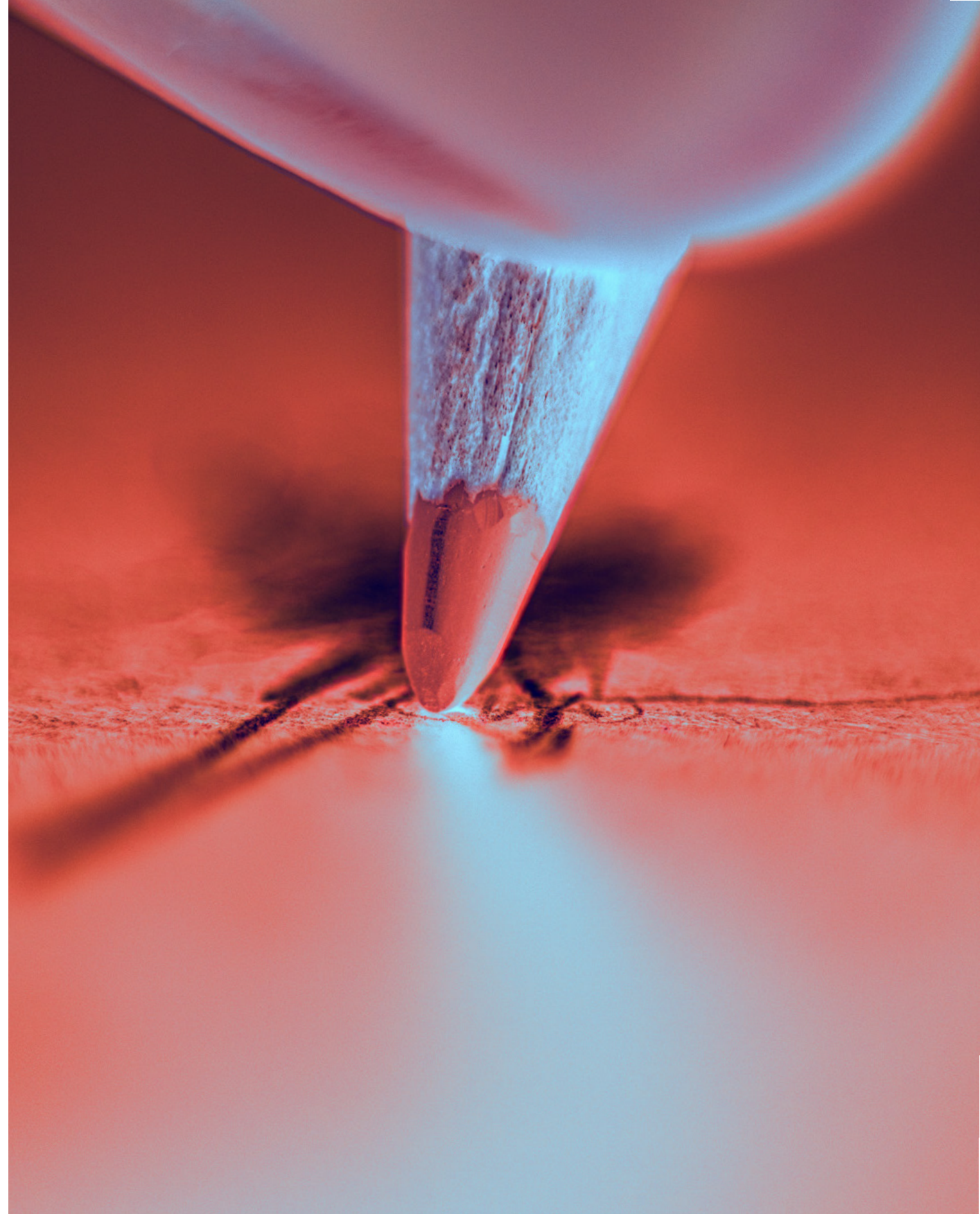
So, shall we start working on the stone tomorrow morning?”

← *Drawing from a letter by Nicéphore Niépce to Claude, 19 July 1822. Musée Nicéphore Niépce, 2024*

← Saône, 2024

Moving, 2026

Dawning, 2026 →





NICÉPHORE:

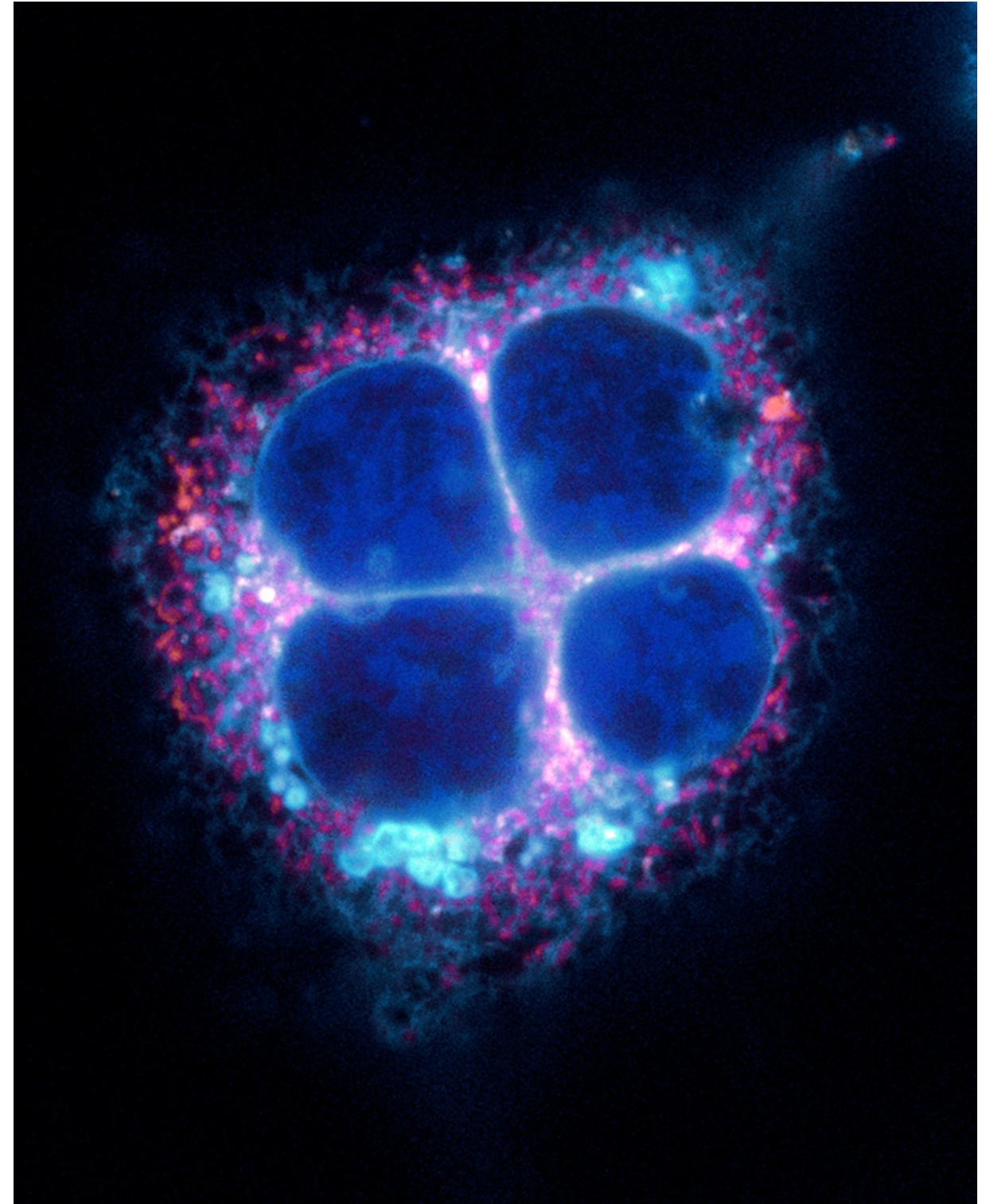
“Our scientists, equipped with ever more accurate microscopes, observe peculiar structures in living tissues. Yet, some before them have already intuited invisible structures: Democritus and Lucretius spoke about indivisible nuclei. Gassendi ruminated on the movement of particles, which he could not observe directly in air, in vapours, or in dust. He wanted to understand how air transmitted waves, how invisible phenomena moved living matter.

“Half a century later, in the 1670s, Leeuwenhoek passed a boundary that others could but imagine: his lenses finally revealed the ‘animalcules’, blood corpuscles, and the first images of life on earth.

“And what if these seeds, which our ancestors imagined, should some time really reveal themselves to our devices? Canst thou imagine that?

“Perhaps the day will come when I try to record nature with the spontaneous operation of light, and we shall be able to make these seeds visible to their minutest detail and grasp the essence of that stream of particles that constitutes us.

Samuel Czitrom, *internal compartments of human cells*
imaged by spinning disk confocal fluorescence microscopy (63× objective), 2025



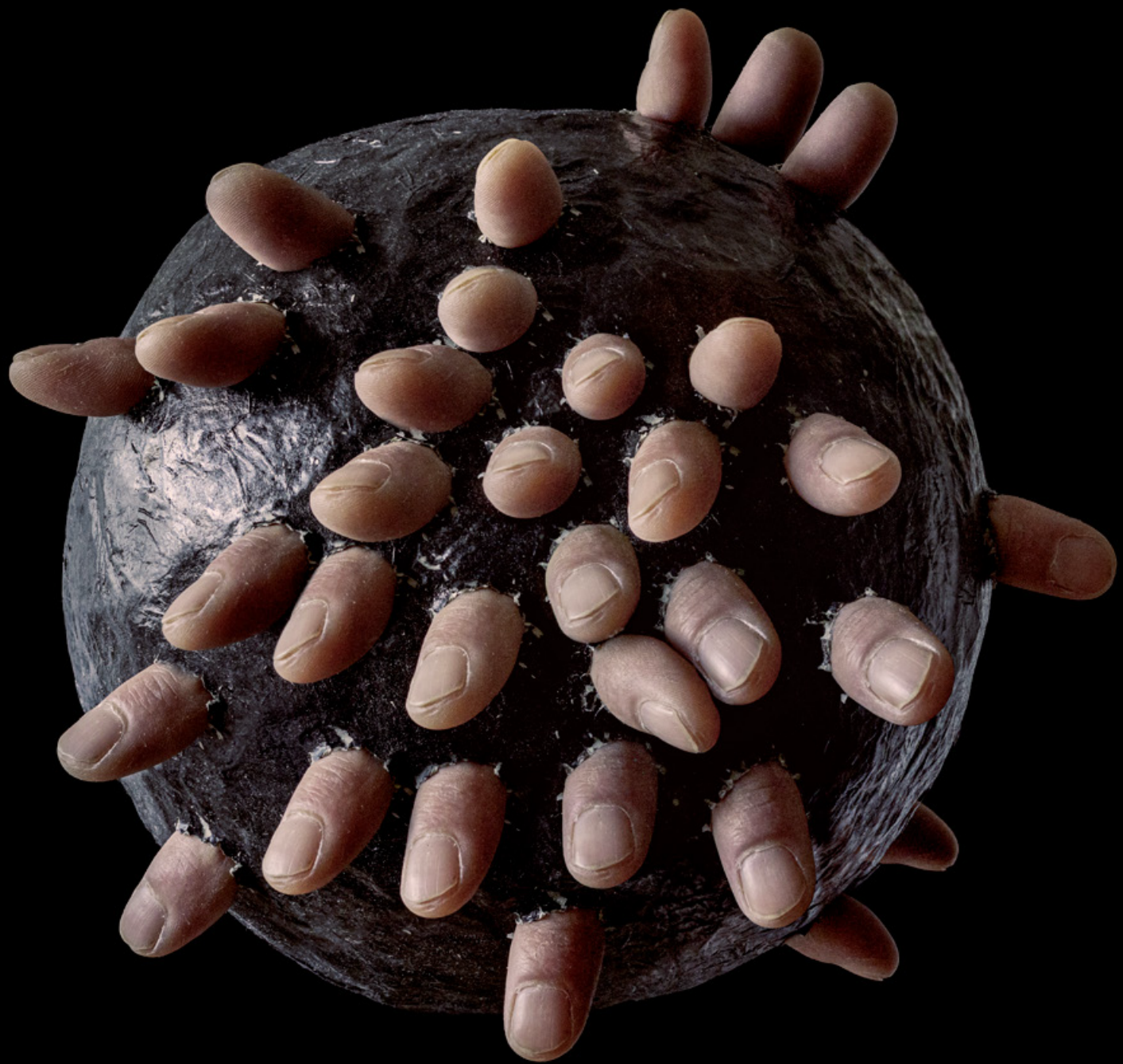
“Perhaps one day we shall reach even further: we shall see of what matter every single particle is made, what are they elementary building blocks. To make visible, to safeguard, and to break down each of their components; to understand what purpose this or that one serves, where it is headed; to know how those tiny cogwheels that shape us fit together. Maybe one day a scientific book will publish pictures of what happens in the brain when a thought is born, developed, and let soar – all this will be immortal and visible in a picture of the seeds of a boy of roughly thy age.

“But... my dear son, we are not there yet. And probably neither thou, nor I shall live to see all that.”

Extensor tendons, dorsal nerves, venous network under the skin, left hand, 2025

Extracts, 2025 →





ISIDORE:

"Every turn of your sentences evokes the thought one can read in *Giphantia** just listen to the words of Charles François Tiphaigne de la Roche: 'I actually resolve the savours, with the same ease that Newton did the colours. From all the fruits that go to decay, from all the plants of no use, from even the herbs of the field, in a word, from all bodies whatever, I extract all their savoury parts; I analyze these parts; I reduce them to their primitive particles; and then uniting them again in all imaginable proportions, I form saline powders, which give such a taste as is desired. I can inclose in a small snuff-box, wherewith to make in an instant a complete entertainment, courses, ragouts, fricassees, deserts, coffee, tea, with all kinds of wine and other liquors. From a single bit, though ever so insipid, I produce at pleasure the wing of a partridge, the thigh of a woodcock, the tongue of a carp, &c. From a decanter of water, I draw Tomar, Ai, Muscadine, Malmsey, Chian wine, Lacryma Christi, and a thousand others.'

"I am tired, father, the bed is beckoning. I shall gladly continue our discourse tomorrow..."

* Charles François Tiphaigne de la Roche, *Giphantia*, translated from the original French (London: 1761), Part II, Chapter I: "The Repast," pp. 8–9. The book, first printed in 1760, is one of the earliest examples of science fiction.

NICÉPHORE:

“Isidore, set aside thy É, P, H, I, G, A, N, T, I*,
and get thee to bed!

“Not even the gods of phantasmagorias strike down too
heavily upon thy imagination...

“Never may those shades, with their hair standing on end,
bathed in the glow of a thousand candles, their eyes wild
and their features tormented, set thy mind ablaze, nor
pour blood and vitriol upon thee, nor bring forth those
livid, hideous phantoms, armed with daggers and wearing
Phrygian caps!”* *(he laughs)*

ISIDORE:

“Father, please refrain from such triflings, you agitate my
soul! And now... good night.”

* ÉPHIGANTIE: an anagram of GIPHANTIE, punning on the work by Charles François Tiphaigne de la Roche.

* Text freely inspired by François-Marie Poultier’s L’Ami des Lois, Nr. 955, January–March 1798.





*Je désapprouve, je condamne
L'artiste dont la main profane
Expose, à nu dans un tableau,
Les attraits d'une courtisane.*

*Sexe aimable, sexe amoureux,
Vous qui parfumez d'ambroisie
La coupe amère de la vie.*

I disapprove and I condemn
The artist's hand profane
Portraying all the nakedness
Of the pretty courtesan.

O amiable, lovely sex,
Your sweet ambrosial perfumes make
Life's bitter cup be less an ache.

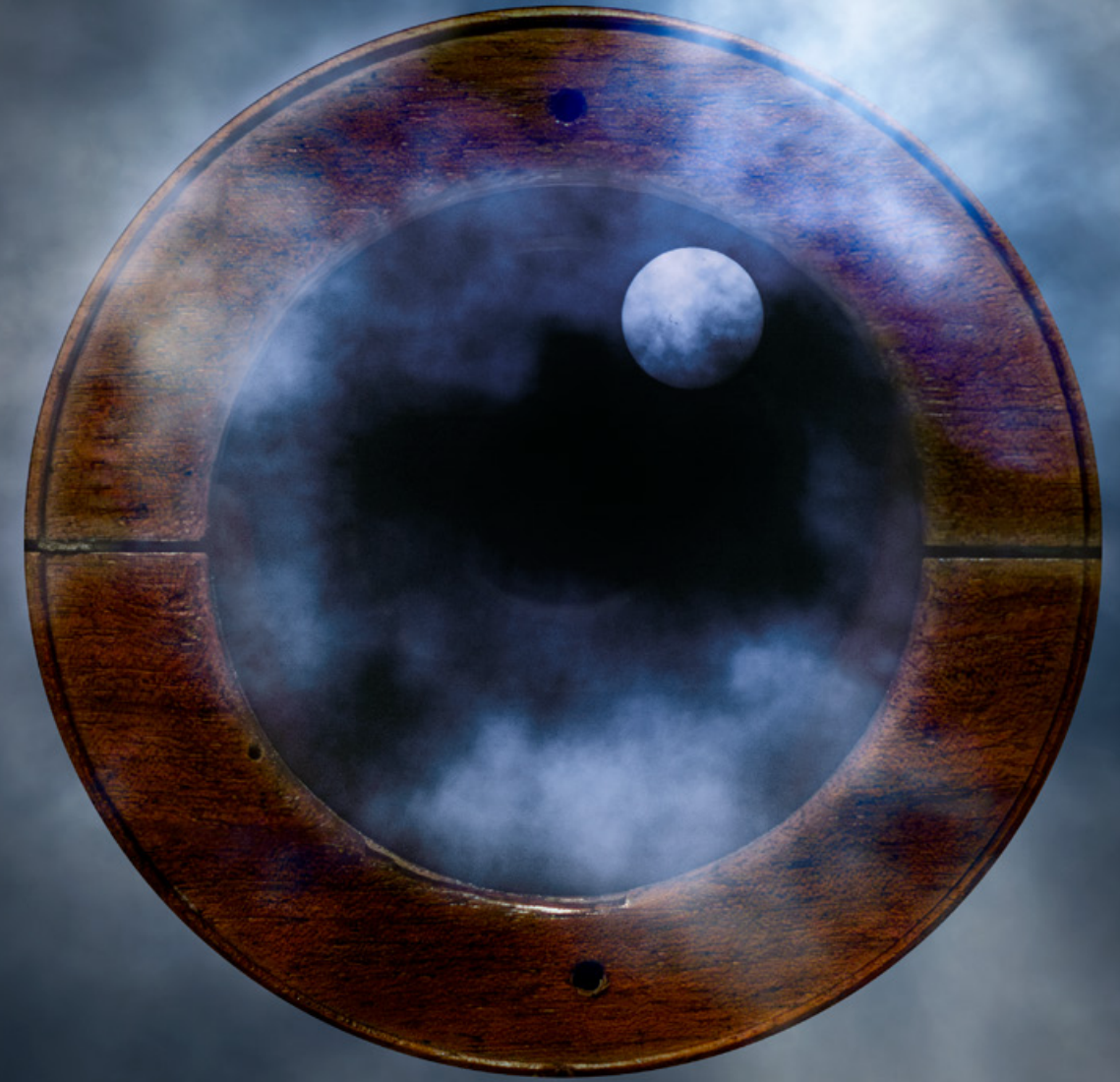
Excerpt from *Épître sur la Pudeur* par J. Nicéphore Niépce à Mademoiselle X... surnommée Rose
[Epistle on the Pudenda by J. Nicéphore Niépce to Mlle X... also known as Rose].

Moon, 2026.

Dream, 2026 →

Concrete wine vats No. 1, 2026 →

Ocean, 2025 →





“He conducted me into a hall of a middling size, and not much adorned, where I was struck with a sight that raised my astonishment. I saw, out of a window, a sea which seemed to me to be about a quarter of a mile distant. The air, full of clouds, transmitted only that pale light which forebodes a storm: the raging sea ran mountains high, and the shore was whitened with the foam of the billows which broke on the beach.

“By what miracle (said I to myself) has the air, serene a moment ago, been so suddenly obscured? By what miracle do I see the ocean in the center of Africa? Upon saying these words, I hastily ran to convince my eyes of so improbable a thing. But in trying to put my head out of the window, I knocked it against something that felt like a wall. Stunned with the blow, and still more with so many mysteries, I drew back a few paces.

*“Thy hurry (said the Prefect) occasions thy mistake. That window, that vast horizon, those thick clouds, that raging sea, are all but...”**

* Charles François Tiphaigne de la Roche, *Giphantia*, translated from the original French (London: 1761), Part I, Chapter XVII: “The Storm,” pp. 93–94.



://: My Father Hurrying in Transit^{*}

My father has a compass. An inner compass giving him constancy.

One day, he found himself on a straight, indelible route. He told himself that he had two options: to wait patiently for someone happening by, or to move in either direction. He decided to move.

First, he looked this way and that, wondering which horizon to choose. He decided to make one step. He bent his head, as though asking which one of his feet felt like rising first? That took some time. At long last, his right foot volunteered.

When he allowed his weight to move in space, he felt a slight discomfort. But he quickly learned how to regain his balance, and by and by, he started to move at such a pace as he had never even known he was capable of. He thus discovered the world and was discovered by it.

Urgency grew. He hastened to arrive, he hastened to move on, he hastened to forget.

But one day he stopped. At the point where he arrived, his brother was waiting for him. And he turned back towards his point of departure alone.

Since then, he has been making a systematic inventory, strictly selectively. He learnt to watch the dust and the flashing flares.

I once observed him through the door of his room. He was focused. With his back to me, he busied himself drawing black marks on the white paper.

^{*} How could one separate the two meanings of the word, the first relating to the “state of human being” and the other to the “creator”?

My presence surprised, nay, startled him.

I have kept his gaze in my memory, with his blinking that no one could possibly imitate. As though he had returned from afar and needed time to become accessible again. And then his face suddenly changed.

He smiled, stood up, and hugged me tightly. We stayed together. I caressed his face and knocked on his temple with my fingers – as if to the rhythm of a secret music. I still feel that bodily sensation. It is indelible.

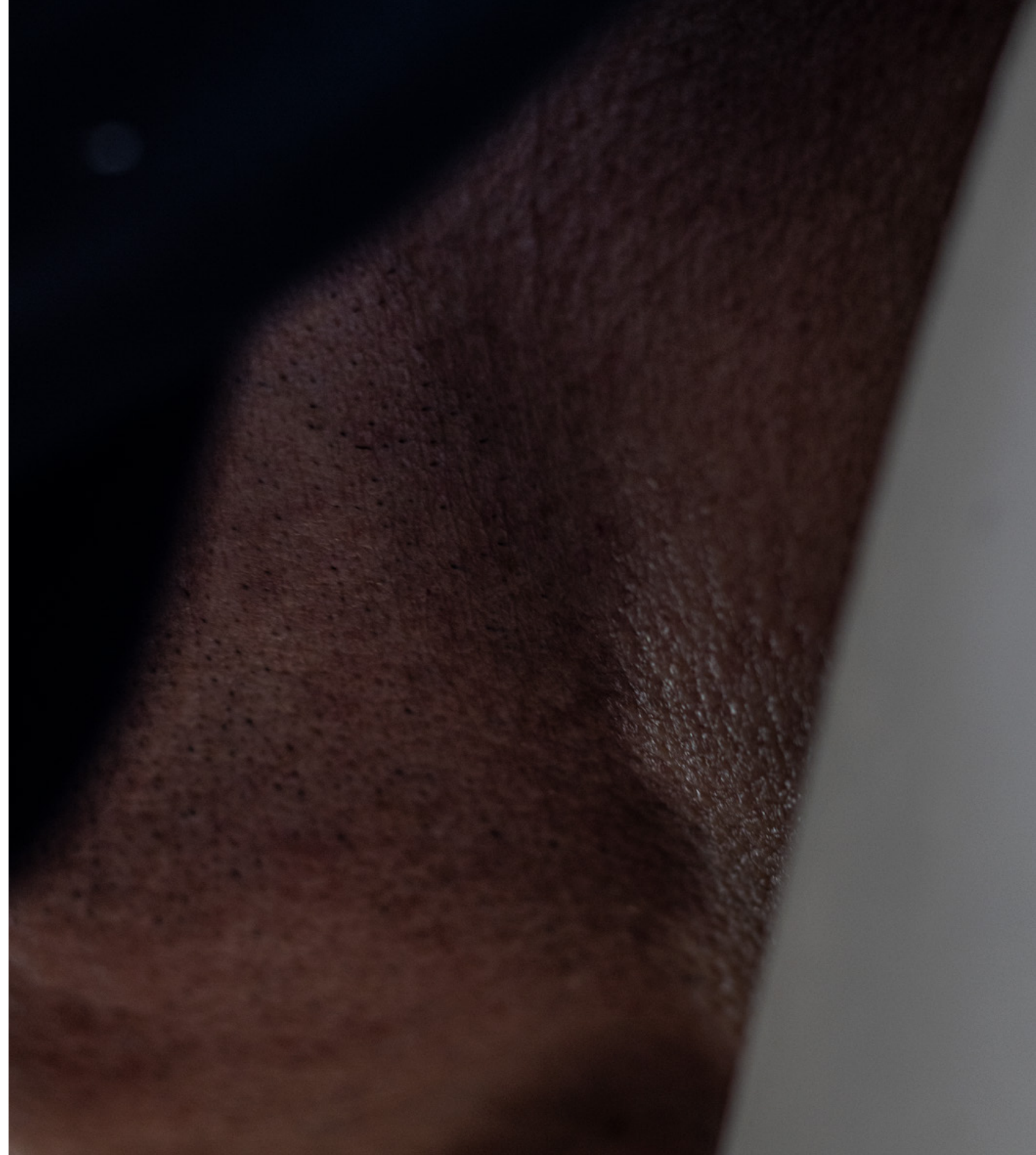
Temples

Let us picture a straight route passing between the two temporal bones across the skull, through intersecting yet separate zones.

In this region, the temporal cortex contributes to the recognition of faces, forms, and sounds, as well as linguistic comprehension. These operations are not isolated: they are connected to other regions of the brain, which relate to memory, perception, and emotions.

Everything is shaped in continuous interaction, without sharp boundaries.

In this movement, meaning emerges gradually and solidifies into recognition. Nothing is given in a single block: everything is formed through the process, in the relation that emerges between what is seen, heard, recognized, and experienced.



For Klára Tőry, the photography professor of us all.

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