

Three Early Architectural Drawings of San Pietro in Tuscania (VT)

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In 1989, the Getty Research Institute (GRI) acquired “Record Drawings of Ancient Monuments, 1825–1833,” an album of early nineteenth-century architectural drawings ascribed to the French architect Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux (1801–71).¹ The presence of some drawings addressing medieval monuments, some initialed by different artists, and others executed on paper with watermark dates as late as 1843, suggests that a more accurate title for this previously unstudied album might be Constant-Dufeux et al., “Drawings of Ancient and Medieval Monuments, ca. 1825–1850.” Nevertheless, the album stands as a valuable witness to early nineteenth-century drawing practices and to the intertwining of neoclassical and romantic interests on the part of academic travelers. These two threads intersect on folio 4, which presents a plan and two sections of an unlabeled medieval church. In technique and formal structure, the drawings on folio 4 epitomize nineteenth-century French architectural draftsmanship; in content, they provide the earliest-known technical documentation of the eleventh-century church of San Pietro in Tuscania (Viterbo), Italy.

Born in Paris, Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux studied architecture at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, and traveled to Italy in 1829 as a recipient of that year’s *Grand Prix de Rome*. He spent the next seven years engaged in the study and recording of monuments in Italy. His final *envoi*, a design for a *Chambre des Députés* submitted in his fifth year, was poorly received, in part because of a use of color judged insufficiently classical in taste.² Upon returning to Paris in 1836 from what seems to have been his only journey to Italy, Constant-Dufeux established an architectural studio and undertook a wide range of projects, including the design of bronze doors, interior furnishings, funerary monuments, and buildings. In 1845, he was named *Professeur de Perspective* at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, where he continued to teach after his 1850 appointment as an official architect within the state apparatus. This latter post involved Constant-Dufeux in such projects as the restoration of the neoclassical *Panthéon* and the late Gothic church of *Saint-Laurent* in Paris as well as of Roman structures in the *Midi*.³

The drawings of San Pietro are presented on an imperfectly cut sheet of wove paper measuring 43.5 × 28.5 cm and tipped into the album (fig. 1). Comprising a plan, a transverse section toward the occidented apse, and a longitudinal section toward the north aisle, the drawings conform to a technique used by early nineteenth-century

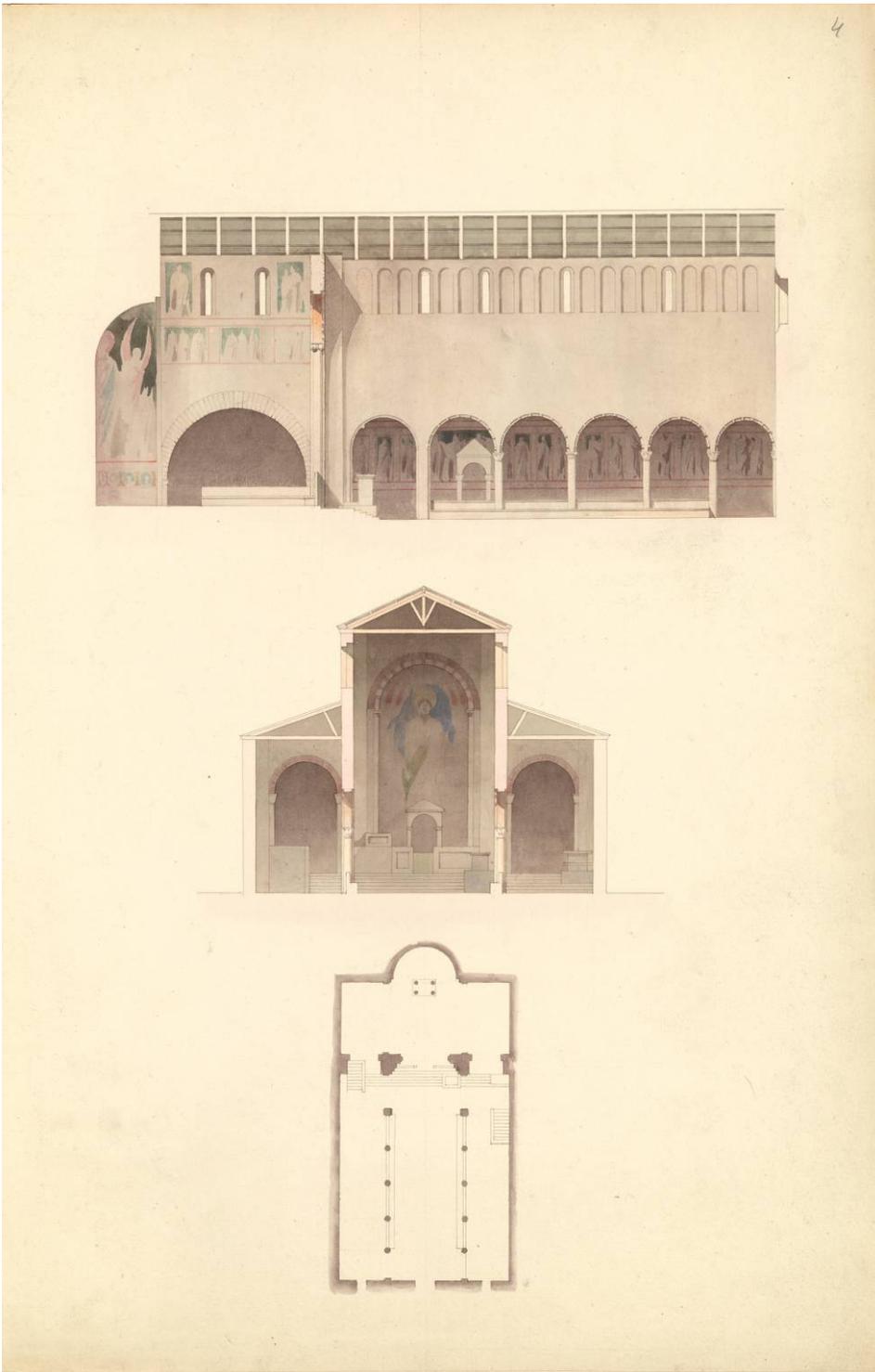


Fig. 1. Attributed to Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux (French, 1801–71). Plan and two sections of an unlabeled medieval church [San Pietro in Tuscania], ca. 1825–50, ink and watercolor on wove paper, sheet: 43.5 × 28.5 cm. From Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux, “Record Drawings of Ancient Monuments, 1825–1833,” fol. 4. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute (890252).

architects in their studies of ancient monuments. The first step was the creation in ink of measured drawings, with indications of scale and dimensions of selected elements. Muted watercolors were then applied to establish the forms, brighter colors to indicate diverse materials, and shading and highlights to communicate depth. Preferred types of drawings included plans, sections, and elevations, sometimes presented in suites, as well as overviews of archaeological excavations and details of architectural features.⁴ Although the GRI's folio lacks indications of scale or dimensions, careful examination of the drawings suggests that they were measured and correspond to a scale of approximately 20:1 for the sections and 40:1 for the plan. Their artist, plausibly though not necessarily Constant-Dufeux, demonstrates virtuosity at handling watercolors in such passages as the finely delineated shadows adding dimension to the sections and the delicate blush wash defining the pictorial areas of the same.

Positioned at the bottom of the sheet, the plan depicts a three-aisled basilica with a single apse on axis with the main nave aisle and a deep, continuous, and nonprojecting transept separated by steps from the level of the nave (fig. 2). Arcades comprising a pier and four columns divide the central nave from the side aisles, while two sets of stairs communicate with a lower level: one toward the head of the right aisle and the other within the transition from left aisle to left transept. The plan also establishes the location of the church's liturgical apparatus. A ciborium on a platform rises within the apse, chancel barriers divide transept from nave along the church's central axis, two platforms interrupt the steps leading from nave to transept, and benches run the length of the nave arcades.

The plan is sufficiently precise to permit its subject's identification as San Pietro; indeed, in its broad strokes and details, the plan corresponds well to the structure of the church as recorded in early photography and as it appears today (see fig. 5). San Pietro's distinctive features include a deep transept elevated above the nave, nave colonnades comprising four columns and one pier, and a crypt with entrances at either side of the church but in varied positions with respect to the transept. The liturgical apparatus recorded in the drawing also remains in situ. At the same time, the plan is not without errors. Most significant is the mispositioning of the northern crypt stairwell. The drawing omits an altar in the north aisle, the barriers flanking the central transept, and a liturgical platform on the left side of the central transept entry. It also indicates as open two smaller facade portals that remained blocked into the twentieth century.

The sections exhibit similar combinations of precision and error. Taken at the middle of the second nave bay, the transverse section presents a building with a central nave significantly taller than its side aisles, an elevated transept, and a timber roof (fig. 3; see fig. 5). Rendered within the apse is an enormous standing figure flanked by smaller winged creatures, which can be recognized as a fresco of Christ ascending among angels. (The fresco was destroyed by an earthquake in 1971.) Omitted, however, are the frescoed apsidioles that terminate the south and north transepts. The section records the parapet surrounding the stairwell to the crypt in the south aisle, the chancel barriers and pulpits at the entrance to the central transept, the pyramidal ciborium and block altar of the apse,

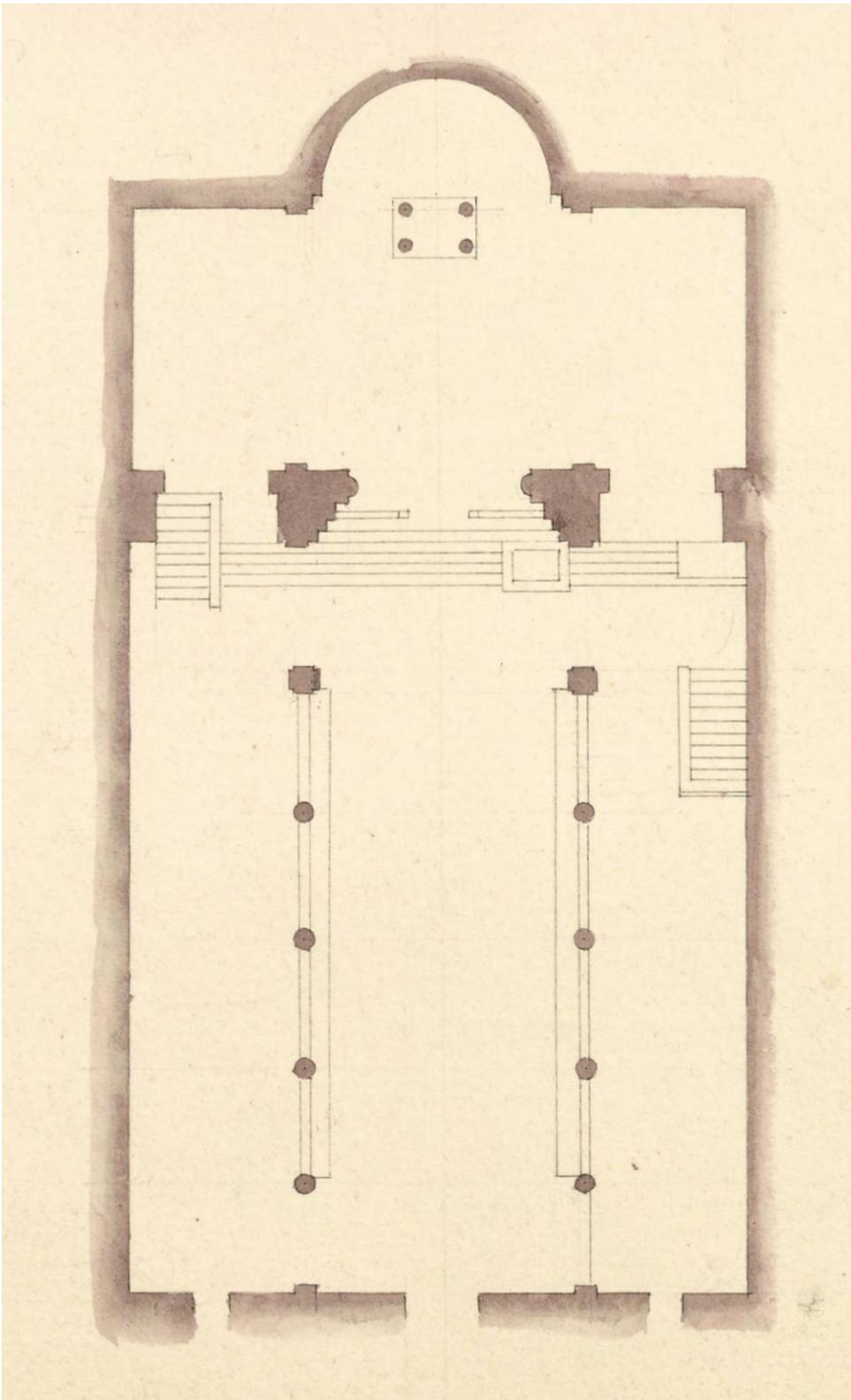


Fig. 2. Plan of San Pietro in Tuscania (detail of fig. 1).



Fig. 3. Transverse section of San Pietro in Tuscania (detail of fig. 1).

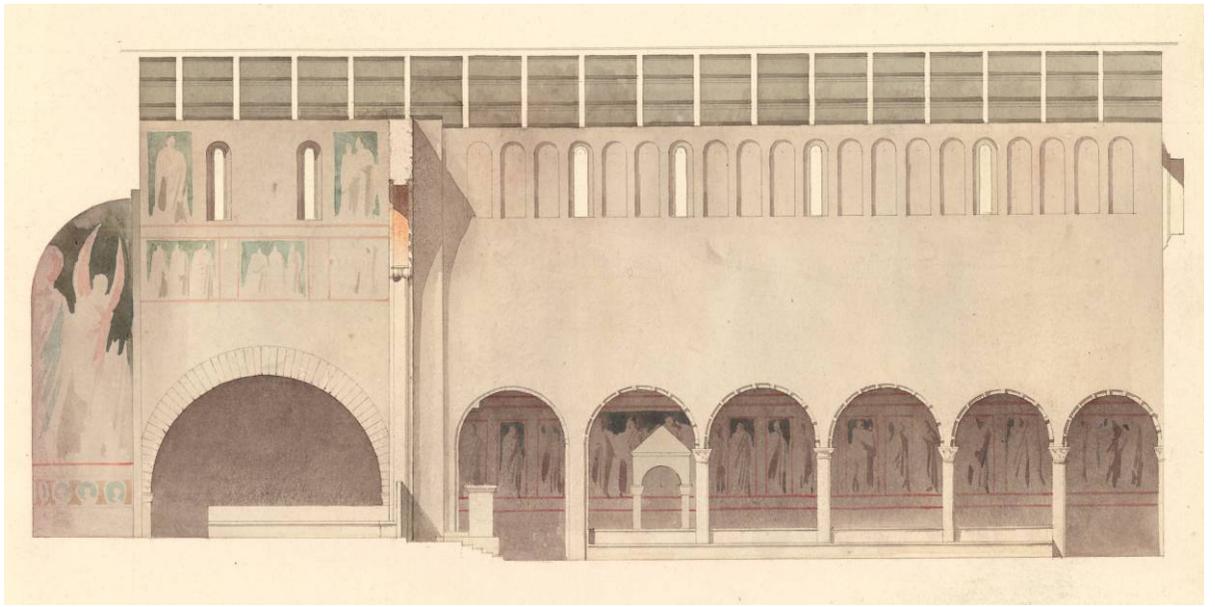


Fig. 4. Longitudinal section of San Pietro in Tuscania (detail of fig. 1).

Fig. 5. San Pietro in Tuscania, interior view toward apse, after 1971. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute (86.P.8, neg. 151). Photo: Max Hutzell.

and the altar at the entrance to the north transept. Yet it does not record the arched barrier behind the latter.

The longitudinal section documents the apse, the central transept and nave, and the north aisle (figs. 4, 5). The long masonry arch shown within the transept is another diagnostic feature of San Pietro. Among the architectural details recorded only in this drawing are the unusual dentellations of the nave arcade and the blind arcades and four windows of the clerestory, although one window has been mispositioned. The section also offers further details of the liturgical furnishings, including the chancel barriers in the central transept and the altar and ciborium in the north side aisle. The drawing includes the large figure of Christ flanked by angels, now seen to be placed above busts of prophets within roundels, but it suppresses the intermediary row of apostles witnessing Christ's ascension. The central transept is shown as frescoed in two registers, its imagery divided into discrete scenes. This is accurate, except that the artist has substituted standing figures for the narrative scenes of the upper register. The depiction of standing figures running the length of the aisle wall is of particular interest, as today only vestiges of the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century frescoes of individual saints remain in place.

Despite some inaccuracies, the GRI's drawings present a great deal of information about the appearance of San Pietro in Tuscania in 1825–50. If they are in fact by Constant-Dufeux, then their date can be refined to the early 1830s. San Pietro was the subject of drawings and watercolors by some of Constant-Dufeux's contemporaries, including Franz Johann H. Nadorp and Johann Anton Ramboux, but the GRI's folio preserves the earliest-known technical architectural renderings of the church's interior.⁵

The papacy's specific interest in promoting Italy's medieval heritage and the development of modern restoration practices led to the modification of many churches in and around Rome during the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, most of these restorations were minimally documented and the scope of work is recoverable only by careful observation and research into prephotographic descriptions and renderings. San Pietro is no exception. An inscription within the church indicates that it was "restored and adorned from the pavement to the vaults and the roof" with funds allocated by Pope Pius VII (1800–23),⁶ and a renovation to the facade is noted in 1870.⁷ In documenting the church shortly after the earlier restoration, the GRI's drawings indicate that other than the loss of the frescoes from the north aisle, little else changed within the church from the date of their execution to the arrival of photography in Tuscania at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Notes I would like to thank Sarah Costello of California State University, Channel Islands, and Elisa Tagliaferri of Florence for their research assistance, and Louis Marchesano of the GRI for facilitating access to the album.

1. Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux, "Record Drawings of Ancient Monuments, 1825–1833," acc. no. 890252, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. "Constant Dufeux / Dessins Originaux" is written on

the spine of the album, but I have used the title provided in the GRI's catalog record.

2. Pierre Pinon and François-Xavier Amprimoz, *Les envois de Rome, 1778–1968: Architecture et archéologie* (Rome: École Française, 1988); and Karen Bowie, "Constant-Dufeux, Simon-Claude," in *Grove Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com>.

3. Bowie, "Constant-Dufeux."

4. Luigia Attilia and Fedora Filippi, *I colori dell'archeologia: La documentazione archeologica prima della fotografia a colori (1703–1948)* (Rome: Quasar, 2009), 12–13.

5. Drawings include Franz Johann H. Nadorp's *St Pietro a Toscanella aug 31 -830 [sic]*, from *Album mit Ansichten aus Rom und Umgebung...*, fol. 41, in C. G. Boerner, *65 Zeichnungen, 1380–1880* (Düsseldorf: C. G. Boerner, 1986), 82–87; and Johann Anton Ramboux's drawings at the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf (nos. RV 265 [conch and triumphal arch] and 265a [lower register]). See Colin J. Bailey, "Nadorp, Franz (Johann Heinrich)," *Grove Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com>; Elisa Tagliaferri, "I rapporti tra la pittura laziale romanica e la committenza nell'età della riforma gregoriana: San Pietro a Tuscania ed i cicli pittorici minori dell'alto Lazio" (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2004–5), 55–57, 68, figs. 52, 52a; and *Johann Anton Ramboux: Maler und Konservator, 1790–1866*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 1966).

6. "a solo ad fornecem tectumque restitutum et exornatum." Inscription recorded in Secondiano Campanari, *Tuscania e i suoi monumenti* (Montefiascone: Tipografia del Seminario, [1856]), 334–35 (translation mine).

7. Joselita Raspi-Serra, *Tuscania: Cultura ed espressione artistica di un centro medioevale* (Milan: Banco di Santo Spirito, [1973]), 171–75.