



Futures & Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert

Nina L. Dubin

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In this timely and provocative study, Hubert Robert's paintings of urban ruins are interpreted as manifestations of a new consciousness of time, one shaped by the uncertainties of an economy characterized by the dread-inducing expansion of credit, frenzied speculation on the stock exchange, and bold ventures in real estate. As the favored artist of an enterprising Parisian elite, Robert is a prophetic case study of the intersections between aesthetics and modernity's dawning business culture.

At the center of this lively narrative lie Robert's depictions of the ruins of Paris—macabre and spectacular paintings of fires and demolitions created on the eve of the French Revolution. Drawing on a vast range of materials, *Futures & Ruins* understands these artworks as harbingers of a modern appetite for destruction. The paintings are examined as expressions of the pleasures and perils of a risk economy. This captivating account—lavishly illustrated with rarely reproduced objects—recovers the critical significance of the eighteenth-century cult of ruins and of Robert's art for our times.

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