

FOREWORD BY EDOUARD PHILIPPE

Le Havre is, before being a city, a gateway to faraway lands. In 1517, first the port and then the city were built for this very purpose, to be a bridge to distant horizons and unexplored continents. The story and destiny of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur illustrate this mission. The man who was born in Le Havre in 1778, and who died in Sainte-Adresse in 1846, reached these distant horizons.

At the end of the eighteenth century, in a changing Europe excited by scientific progress, this son of Le Havre participated in the Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands from 1800 to 1804, led by Captain Nicolas Baudin. He came back with hundreds of drawings, a testimony to the symbiosis of art and science, bearing witness to what *Terra Australis* looked like in the early nineteenth century.

Shortly after this journey, and thanks to his mentor Georges Cuvier, Professor of the National Museum in Paris, Lesueur met geologist William Maclure and accompanied him to America to conduct a geological survey of the northeastern United States. Charles-Alexandre Lesueur intended to stay for two years but remained in America from 1816 to 1837. After finishing his work with Maclure, he contributed to the earliest American studies on natural history and became a curator of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. Lesueur eventually joined the utopian community of New Harmony, founded by philanthropist Robert Owen.

Lesueur was the draughtsman of the expedition that identified the greatest number of new species, and he was also a curator of one of the oldest scientific institutions of the United States in the city of Benjamin Franklin. Emblematic in many respects, he became a professor of drawing in a utopian town. Lesueur was adventurous but discreet in

these major experiences. He wrote little but observed and sketched. After his return to Le Havre, the traveling artist founded its Natural History Museum, donating part of his collections, and was deservedly appointed the first curator of that establishment in 1845.

Several studies have been undertaken to define Charles-Alexandre Lesueur; a collective effort of which Ritsert Rinsma's work is an integral part. They seek to honor the oeuvre of this humble and little-known naturalist, this silent adventurer whose legacy survives in a universe of drawings. Our city can be proud to have, in its archives, the largest collection relating to this scientist, who, in some biographical dictionaries, is considered to be an American. I am delighted that the present memoir reveals the immensity of this historical figure from Le Havre.

Edouard Philippe

Mayor of Le Havre,
from 2010 to 2017,
Prime Minister of France