The Revolutionary Muséum: The French Revolution and the Foundation of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, addresses the origins of the museum as a public institution, a modern type that was the unlikely product of the French Revolution. Of the state museums created during the Revolutionary Decade (1789-99), the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle was the first to be named by the National Convention, establishing its chronological and political priority. Founded by Louis XIII as the Jardin du Roi (King’s Garden) in 1630, the galleries and grounds of the renamed “Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle” enjoyed an unusual state of protection, which not only sheltered the historic site from vandalism but encouraged plans to raze the surrounding neighborhood in order to annex the “freed” lands for its gardens. The Muséum was located in one of the poorest quarters in Paris, wherefore it was argued that the destruction of its “hovels” would beautify the city while advancing the “greater good” of the nation by promoting Nature’s lessons. Under the directorship of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, author of the pastoral Paul et Virginie, 1788, these lessons were indebted to Rousseau, whose bust was placed in the Muséum’s gardens, accompanied by a “Swiss Valley” dotted with small cottages and farm animals, evoking Héloïse’s idyll. Bernardin’s tenure as the Muséum’s director was brief, and the plans for its expansion collapsed. Arguably, however, the failure was not so much due to the appointment of a novelist as head of the Muséum – a position which was entirely consistent with its initial conception as a place to contemplate man’s place in nature, rather than as a site to promote science -- as it was to the larger complex of circumstances promoting Napoleon’s rise to power. Culminating in the return to Empire, his ascent to the throne also accompanied the substitution of the Louvre as the preferred vehicle for state imagery, replacing the study of nature with the display of art as the most effective means to convey political ideology. This process was neither predictable nor smooth, but its consequences were lasting. Through a close examination of archival documents, architectural plans, rare books and Revolutionary pamphlets, this study argues that “nature” – as history, as law, and as secular spirit – briefly provided the political foundation binding together one land and one language inside the Muséum’s gardens.