Leo von Klenze was born in 1784 in Schladen, Germany. From 1800 to 1803, he studied public building finance in Berlin under David Gilly at the Berlin Bauakademie, as well as architectural history. In 1808 he was appointed second architect to the king of Westphalia, which collapsed under Napoleon in 1814. Klenze fled first to Munich, then Paris. In 1816, after the Napoleonic Wars, the philhellenic Ludwig Crown Prince of Bavaria summoned him back to Munich to help shape the city into a new cultural capital of the new German Confederation, with the ambition to succeed the splendor of ancient Greece. Ludwig awarded Klenze a number of monumental buildings, including Munich Glyptothek (1816-30, restored 1972), designed in the fashionable Greek Revival style, in which he arranged ancient artworks in chronological order, from Egyptian to Greek and then Roman civilization, following Winkelmann’s historiographical model. Work on the Glyptotek brought Klenze into contact with some of Europe’s most important restorers, including the neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen who restored the Aegina Marbles. Klenze believed ancient works were best displayed in rooms evocative of their period. For instance, he designed a Greek revival interior for the Aegina sculptures. After Ludwig’s son Otto was crowned King of Greece, Klenze was sent to Athens both on a secret diplomatic mission and on a public assignment to inspect Schinkel’s plans for the new royal palace on the Acropolis, and to oversee the work of Schinkel’s pupils Eduard Schaubert (1804–60) and Stamatis Kleanthes (1802–62) who were restoring the temples on the Acropolis and drawing urban plans for the expansion of the capital. Against Schinkel, Klenze argued that the Acropolis should be brought back to the time of Pericles, and that the new royal palace (now the parliament) should be built on a different site—it was eventually designed by Gärtner in 1836–41. Klenze ordered the demolition of everything on the Acropolis that was not ancient, including buildings that today would be considered historically significant, such as the Frankish church and battlements and the Ottoman neighborhood of houses tightly built around and within the ancient ruins. In so doing, Klenze pioneered the extension of architectural restoration to entire neighborhoods, conceiving of their character in terms of stylistic integrity. After Ludwig’s abdication in 1848, Klenze continued to carry out privately financed commissions for him. He died in Munich in 1864.

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