



# FRENCH ROYAL FURNITURE IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This publication was made possible through the generosity of the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art established by the cofounder of *Reader's Digest*.

Additional support has been provided by the Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh Publications Fund.

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*  
Winter 2006  
Volume LXIII, Number 3  
(ISSN 0026-1521)

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Cover: detail of the top of the *bureau brisé*, 1685 (see figs. 4, 6).

Much like the Wrightsman Galleries in which they are so handsomely housed, the Metropolitan Museum's holdings of French royal furniture give witness to one of the most spectacular chapters ever to unfold in the history of the decorative arts. From the reign of Louis XIV through the time of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the French crown demanded and obtained the best possible results from supremely gifted and specialized makers. The glamour of this furniture is finely compounded with its utilitarian purpose, incorporating many a novel invention, in such a way that the pieces bring those conspicuous monarchs home to us more forcibly than any other art form. Encased in rare woods with golden webs of bronze, they reflect attitudes and events from Louis XIV's propagandistic invocations of the sun god Apollo to later fascinations with the Orient, ancient Egypt, and even the hot air balloon, a specifically French achievement.

It is no exaggeration to call this the largest, best, and most representative ensemble of its kind outside France. I note only one purchase amid the impressive total of twenty-nine royal works. All the rest have come from perspicacious individuals eager to share their passion with a greater public.

An enterprise such as this *Bulletin* is by its very nature collaborative. The adroit commentary by Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide calls for particular commendation, as do the wonderful new images produced by Joseph Coscia Jr. and The Photograph Studio. If space allowed, one would also gratefully acknowledge all staff members past and present, curators and conservators, cataloguers and housekeepers alike, who have contributed to the furniture's documentation and its maintenance in generally superb condition.

The descriptions of the pieces of furniture made for Versailles are based on an article by Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide that appeared in the French publication *Versalia: Revue de la Société des Amis de Versailles*, no. 8 (2005).

Philippe de Montebello  
*Director*

## INTRODUCTION

Although they are well known to furniture historians, the twenty-nine masterpieces of French royal furniture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art have never before been published together. The Museum acquired the first of these pieces a century ago, in 1906, as gifts of the American financier J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), its president at the time. A series of carved oak panels, a fragment of a console table, two painted door panels, and an elaborately carved and gilt walnut armchair had all been part of the large collection of eighteenth-century woodwork, furniture, and gilt bronze formed by the Parisian architect, ceramicist, and interior decorator Georges Hoentschel (1855–1915). In 1906 no one knew the exact provenance of these objects, but Pierre Verlet, Bruno Pons, and other French scholars have since established their true history. The carved panels (figs. 1, 9), for instance, are composed of sections of the interior shutters that were created in 1710 for the salon adjoining the chapel at Versailles. The console table (see fig. 12) was ordered as part of the redecoration of the bedchamber of Marie Leszczyńska, Louis XV's wife, in the château in 1729–30, and the comte d'Artois, Louis XVI's brother, commissioned the "Turkish" door panels (fig. 26) in 1781 for his private apartment at Versailles. The armchair (fig. 58) was ordered in 1788 for the gaming room at the Château de Saint Cloud just outside Paris, the favorite summer residence of Marie Antoinette.

Since the Morgan gift in 1906, many more impressive pieces of furniture and furnishings commissioned not only for Saint Cloud and Versailles but also for the châteaux of Bellevue, Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and the Tuileries have been added to the Museum's collections. Some of these objects were bequests or purchases, but mostly they were gifts of well-known American collectors and patrons such as William K. Vanderbilt, Jules Bache, Susan Dwight Bliss, Ann Payne Blumenthal, and, more recently, Jack and Belle Linsky. In 1958 the Samuel H. Kress Foundation donated a collection of porcelain-mounted furniture that included several pieces thought to have belonged to Marie Antoinette or to Madame du Barry, mistress of Louis XV. The unsurpassed generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman over the years has nearly doubled the Museum's holdings of furniture with a French royal provenance. Most of these unique pieces are displayed, together with Savonnerie carpets, gilt-bronze wall lights, and Sèvres porcelain also commissioned or acquired by members of the French royal family, in the permanent galleries most fittingly named for the Wrightsmans.



## Château de Versailles

Under Louis XIV (1643–1715) (fig. 2) the modest hunting lodge at Versailles that had belonged to his father, Louis XIII (1601–1643), was transformed and enlarged into a grand and imposing royal palace (fig. 3). The architect Louis Le Vau (1612–1670) enclosed the earlier brick structure on three sides with a taller stone building with a flat roof, the so-called envelope, and in 1678 Jules Hardouin Mansart (1646–1708) added the grand Galerie des Glaces, or Hall of Mirrors, that connected the State Apartments of the king and queen on the park side. André Le Nôtre (1613–1700) designed the formal gardens laid out around two central axes. The gardens, with their majestic views, large parterres, fountains, sculptural groups, and even a grand canal, provided the setting for royal pageantry and fêtes. After 1682, when Versailles became the official French royal residence and seat of the court, the palace itself served as an elaborate stage, with the powerful Sun King at its radiant center.

The Hall of Mirrors, with its arched mirrors reflecting the seventeen large windows opposite, epitomizes the Baroque grandeur of the interior of the majestic palace. The shimmering surfaces, marble-paneled walls, and gilt decoration stunned and dazzled all who saw them. Like the painted decoration in the State Apartments, the painting on the hall's vaulted ceiling served as royal propaganda, seen daily by many visitors. The ceiling, celebrating Louis XIV's military triumphs culminating in the Treaty of Nijmegen in 1678, was painted between 1681 and 1684 after designs by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), who had been named *premier peintre du roi* in 1662 and director of the Manufacture Royale des Meubles de la Couronne in 1663. Le Brun supervised the manufactory's workshops at the Hôtel des Gobelins in Paris, which produced tapestries, mosaics, silver, mirrors, furniture, and other sumptuous trappings for Versailles and Louis XIV's other palaces. Decorated with silver, tortoiseshell, ivory, exotic woods, and semiprecious stones, the furniture and furnishings created by French and foreign artists and craftsmen at Gobelins set the tone of fashion for courts all over Europe. Especially admired were the solid silver tables, gueridons, chandeliers, large ornamental ewers, and other ostentatious pieces made for Versailles. When Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1654–1728)

1. (opposite) Detail of carved panel (fig. 9)

2. Hyacinthe Rigaud (French, 1659–1743).  
*Louis XIV*, 1701. Oil on canvas, 109 × 76<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
(277 × 194 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris.  
Photograph: Réunion des Musées Nationaux /  
Art Resource, N.Y.



3. Jean-Baptiste Rigaud (French, active 1752–61).  
*Diverses vues du Château de Versailles: Vue prise de la grande avenue entre les deux écuries* (Diverse Views of the Château de Versailles: View from the Grand Avenue between the Two Stables).  
Etching, sheet 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (24.6 × 46.9 cm).  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.1260)



4. Marquetry by Alexandre-Jean Oppenordt (Dutch, ca. 1639–1715, active in France) after design by Jean Bérain (French, 1640–1711). *Bureau brisé*, 1685. Oak, pine, and walnut veneered with tortoiseshell and engraved brass, ebony, and pewter; Brazilian rosewood; gilt-bronze mounts and steel locks, hinges, and latches; 30 1/4 x 41 3/4 x 23 3/8 in. (77 x 106 x 59.4 cm). Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1986 (1986.365.3)

visited the palace in 1687 he was so impressed he counted the silver furnishings in the reception rooms, all 167 of them.

Not long after Tessin's visit, all this glorious silver was lost. On December 3, 1689, the king decreed that the silver furniture was to be melted down to finance his military campaign against the League of Augsburg, and within a year it had all been sent to the mint. Many pieces of furniture made at the Gobelins and other royal workshops during the Sun King's reign fared no better, so the Metropolitan Museum is especially fortunate to have in its collection a writing desk (fig. 4) that was commissioned for Louis XIV in 1685, one of a pair intended for the king's *petit cabinet*, a small private room in the north wing of Versailles. This kind of desk, called a *bureau brisé* (literally, broken desk), originated in 1669 and continued to be

used until the early years of the eighteenth century, when it was replaced by the more convenient and practical *bureau plat*, or writing table.

The folding top of the Museum's *bureau brisé* opens to reveal a small writing surface veneered with Brazilian rosewood (fig. 5). The exterior is decorated with marquetry of tortoiseshell and engraved brass known as *boulle* work, after the French royal cabinetmaker André-Charles Boulle (1642–1732), who excelled in the technique, which involves gluing together layers of metal (usually brass, and sometimes also pewter) and tortoiseshell, cutting a design, and then separating the layers again. The design of tortoiseshell inlaid with brass on the Museum's desk was called the *première partie*; the matching desk would have been decorated in *contre partie*, brass inlaid with tortoiseshell, using the leftover materials. Among the royal symbols on the top of the Museum's desk (fig. 6) are the crossed *L* monogram surmounted by a crown and the mask of Apollo, the sun god to whom Louis XIV likened himself. In the four corners are openwork fleurs-de-lys, symbolizing the French state, with lyres, the musical instrument of Apollo, between them. Jean Bérain (1640–1711) was responsible for the design of this sumptuous marquetry, which was executed by Dutch-born cabinetmaker Alexandre-Jean Oppenordt



5. *Bureau brisé* (fig. 4), opened

6. Top of the *bureau brisé* (fig. 4)



(ca. 1639–1715). (Oppenordt was paid 240 livres on July 25, 1685, “for marquetry decoration done on the two desks of the king’s small cabinet.”) The relatively unknown Oppenordt, who became a naturalized French citizen in 1679, received lodgings in the Galerie du Louvre in 1684 and was named *ébéniste ordinaire du roi*.

The pair of *bureaux brisés* were discarded long before the French Revolution, when many of the royal furnishings at Versailles were dispersed at large-scale sales. Probably because they were considered old-fashioned, they were auctioned off in July 1751 as two lots and appear to have been separated ever since. Their subsequent histories remain largely a mystery. The Museum’s desk found its way to a collection in Texas. Its importance was not yet recognized when it was purchased by a French dealer at a New York auction in 1984, but by 1986, when Jayne Wrightsman acquired this exceptional piece for the Metropolitan Museum, its provenance and significance had been established. Its pendant, much altered, was sold from an English estate in 1963, but its present whereabouts are unknown.

Life at Versailles was dictated by strict etiquette and regularity. As absolute monarch and the personification of the state, Louis XIV lived in full view of his subjects and literally amid his nobles. The public nature of his life was expressed in rituals such as the *lever* and the *coucher*, resembling the rising and setting of the sun. Each morning members of the royal family and other invited courtiers would gather in the State Bedchamber to pay respect to the sovereign during his ceremonious awakening, the *lever*, and every night they would return for the monarch’s equally official retiring, the *coucher*. Following his morning prayers and toilet, Louis would leave his chamber and proceed through the State Apartments to the Chapel Room, a salon on the second floor that gave access to the royal tribune in the chapel where the king attended Mass. The Chapel Room was paved with marble. Corinthian columns and sculptures in niches enlivened the walls, and allegorical stucco decoration representing the four parts of the world filled the corners of the vaulted ceiling. The three large windows (see fig. 7) were fitted with interior shutters carved in 1710 by the sculptor Jules Degoullons (ca. 1671–1737) and his partners, who worked for the Bâtiments du Roi, the department in charge of the royal palaces, after designs by architect Robert de Cotte (1656–1735). Sometime after they were removed from Versailles during the nineteenth century, the shutters were split through the middle into much thinner panels, presumably so that the carving on the fronts and backs

7. Jean-Baptiste Rigaud. *Vue particulière de la Chapelle du Château de Versailles: Prise du Côté de la Cour* (View of the Chapel at the Château de Versailles: From the Courtyard Side). The Chapel Room, with its three large windows, is just to the left of the chapel. Etching, sheet 9 5/8 × 18 1/2 in. (24.4 × 46.9 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.1262)



could be used separately. The panels were subsequently mounted on a new oak substrate, framed with moldings, and made into doors that were matched with over-door carvings from another source.

When Georges Hoentschel acquired two sets of these double doors carved with state and royal symbols (see fig. 8), they were thought to have come from the Château de Marly, a country residence built for Louis XIV by Jules Hardouin Mansart. After they arrived at the Museum in 1907 it was realized that the frames



8. Shutter panels installed as doors in the building that housed the collection of Georges Hoentschel at 58, boulevard Flandrin, Paris, ca. 1904. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson Library

9. Carved by Jules Degoullons (French, ca. 1671–1737) and associates after designs by Robert de Cotte (French, 1656–1735). Panel, 1710. Composed of three elements from the shutters formerly in the Chapel Room at Versailles. Carved oak, originally painted and gilt,  $91\frac{1}{2} \times 39\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{7}{8}$  in. (232.5 × 99.7 × 4.9 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1906 (07.225.145c)

were not of the same period and that the over-door carvings, not nearly as fine, did not belong to the doors. The discovery of an account by Degoullons describing in great detail each of the three vertical and alternating horizontal panels he and his associates carved for the shutters in the Chapel Room has more recently led to the recognition that the doors were arbitrarily made up from those very panels. Despite having been cut apart and remounted and stripped of their original paint, the exquisitely carved panels (figs. 1, 9) are valuable remnants of the splendor of Versailles.



10. Hyacinthe Rigaud. *Louis XV as a Child*, 1715–24. One of a number of replicas of Rigaud's original painting, now at Versailles. Oil on canvas, 77 × 55½ in. (195.6 × 141 cm). Purchase, Mary Wetmore Shively Bequest, in memory of her husband, Henry L. Shively, M.D., 1960 (60.6)

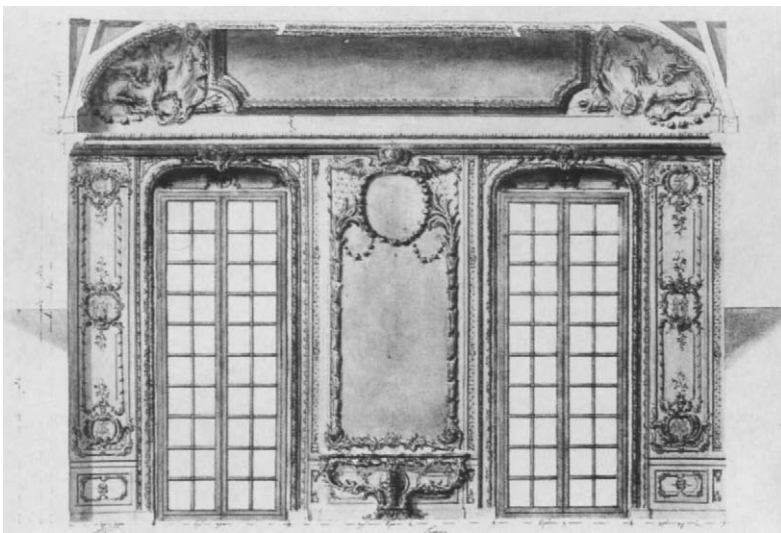


11. Louis Tocque (French, 1696–1772). *Marie Leszczyńska*, 1740. Oil on canvas, 109 × 75¼ in. (277 × 191 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photograph: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, N.Y.

Louis XIV was succeeded in 1715 by his great-grandson Louis XV (1710–1774), then only five years old (fig. 10). During the eight years that Philippe II, duc d'Orléans (1674–1723), served as regent (the Régence period), the court moved back to Paris, but in 1723, when the young king came of age, Versailles once again became the main royal residence. Two years later Louis XV married Marie Leszczyńska (1703–1768) (fig. 11), daughter of Stanislas I of Poland (r. 1704–9 and 1733–36), and she was given the quarters in the palace that had belonged to the queen consort of Louis XIV, Marie Thérèse (1638–1683). As part of the renovation of the queen's bedchamber after the birth of the dauphin in September 1729, a new pier glass and matching console table were made for the room by sculptors Jules Degoullons, Mathieu Legoupil (active 1714–35), and Jacques Verberckt (1704–1771) following Robert de Cotte's designs. The mirror, incorporating a portrait of the queen's father and surmounted by the Polish crown, is still in the room today. The matching table was removed in 1786 when the bedchamber was refurbished for Marie Antoinette. In a detailed memorandum of 1730 the sculptors described their work with such precision that French scholar Pierre Verlet was able to establish that a fragment in the Museum's collection (fig. 12) formed part of the table's stretcher, the only element that appears to have survived. A drawing made about 1735 showing the elevation of the window wall in the queen's bedroom (fig. 13) includes the mirror and the outline of the table. The unusually wide table was supported on three cabriolet legs. Part of the center leg is still visible on the plinth, and tenons on either end indicate where



12. Carved by Jules Degoullons, Mathieu Legoupil (French, active 1714–35), and Jacques Verberckt (Belgian, 1704–1771, active in France after ca. 1716) after designs by Robert de Cotte (French, 1656–1735). Fragment of a console table, 1730. Carved and gilt oak, 19 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 35 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (49.9 × 90.2 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1906 (07.225.192a–c)



13. Agence d'Ange-Jacques Gabriel, architect (French, 1698–1782). Elevation of the window wall in the queen's bedchamber at Versailles, ca. 1735. Watercolor. Archives Nationales, Paris (01 1774)

the other two legs were originally attached. The rich carved decoration of foliage, palm leaves, and floral garlands complemented the ornamentation on the mirror above. For the carved elements the artists charged 850 livres, 350 livres of which was for the figural composition, a group of four children and two entwined dolphins that clearly referred to the recent birth of the dauphin. Standing near this table or even leaning against it, Marie Leszczyńska held audiences with her subjects.

14. *Pliant*, French, ca. 1735–39.  
Carved and gilt walnut, blue silk  
velvet (not original),  $17\frac{3}{4} \times 23 \times$   
 $16\frac{1}{2}$  in. (45.1 × 58.4 × 41.9 cm).  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles  
Wrightsman, 1971 (1971.206.10)



15. Gilles Joubert (French,  
1689–1775). *Bureau plat*, 1759.  
Lacquered oak, gilt-bronze mounts,  
leather top (not original),  $31\frac{3}{4} \times$   
 $69\frac{1}{4} \times 36$  in. (80.7 × 175.9 × 91.4 cm).  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles  
Wrightsman, 1973 (1973.315.1)



Seating arrangements at the court were regulated according to strict protocol. Armchairs were reserved for the king and queen only, whereas side chairs were assigned to certain members of the royal family and important visitors. While most courtiers stood in the presence of the king, princes, dukes, and high-ranking dignitaries and their wives were allowed to sit on stools. Large numbers of stools, either tabourets or folding stools called *pliants*, are listed in the inventories of Versailles. A pair of gilt folding stools stamped with the palace's mark, an interlaced double V and a closed crown, were given to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman in 1971 (see fig. 14). Even though the authenticity of the mark has been questioned, the outstanding quality of the carving and the skillful recutting of the gesso leave little doubt that the stools must have been part of an important suite of furniture. (The king's State Bedchamber, lacking its original seat furniture, is furnished with *pliants* of this model today.) Although the overall appearance of such low stools depended to a large extent on the splendor of the original upholstery and the trimmings on the cushions, the curving Rococo outline of the frames of the Museum's two *pliants* is exquisitely embellished with bulrushes, basket-weave motifs, and partly openwork acanthus leaves. Large rosettes cover the bolts that allow the X-shaped stools to fold, making them easy to move about. The stools can be dated to about 1735–39, but as they lack an inventory number, when (or if) they entered Versailles cannot be determined. As they are not signed, they cannot be attributed to one of the talented *menuisiers*, or joiners, who worked for the crown during that period.

A splendid red-lacquered *bureau plat*, or writing table, in the Museum's collection (fig. 15) is fortunately much better documented. The number 2131 painted underneath its top connects the desk to an entry in the records kept by the Garde Meuble, the institution responsible for furnishing the royal residences. According to the *Journal du Garde Meuble*, Gilles Joubert (1689–1775), who became cabinetmaker to the king in 1763 and had a long and successful career that included many royal commissions, delivered the desk to Versailles on December 29, 1759, for Louis XV's *cabinet intérieur*. Finished in imitation of the red and gold Chinese lacquer that became fashionable as veneer for furniture in France in the mid-eighteenth century, the *bureau plat* brought an exotic element into the Rococo paneled room where much of the king's daily business was conducted. The scrolled and pierced gilt-bronze mounts (fig. 16) protect and enhance the serpentine outline of the table, which originally had a black velvet writing surface. The *bureau plat* stayed in the king's private study even

16. Detail of the gilt-bronze mounts on the leg of the *bureau plat* (fig. 15)





17. Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (French, 1704–78). *Louis XV at the Age of Forty-seven*, 1757. Marble, h. 34 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (87 cm). Purchased from the estate of Madame de Pompadour by Louis XV, 1766. Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.244)



18. Louise Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (French, 1755–1842). *Madame du Barry*, 1781. Oil on wood, 27 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (69.2 x 51.4 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Thomas T. Fleming, 1984. Photograph: Art Resource, N.Y.

after the rolltop desk made by Jean-François Oeben (1721–1763) and completed by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806) arrived in 1769. Both pieces of furniture remained in the room until 1786 (the desk has now been returned to the study in Versailles), when Louis XV's grandson and successor, Louis XVI (1754–1793), passed Joubert's *bureau plat* on to his brother, the comte de Provence and future Louis XVIII (1755–1824). It was still in the comte's possession in 1792 and was probably among the royal property sold during the French Revolution. Nothing is known about its subsequent fate until Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman acquired it in the 1960s. The table, which the Wrightsmans gave to the Museum in 1973, has been aptly described as "one of the finest and most important pieces of French eighteenth-century furniture to be found in America."

Louis XV's mistress Madame du Barry (1743–1793) may have purchased several pieces of furniture mounted with Sèvres porcelain plaques that were a gift to the Museum from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in 1958. The beautiful commoner Marie-Jeanne Bécu, better known as Comtesse du Barry after her nominal marriage to Guillaume du Barry, first attracted the attention of Louis XV in 1768 (figs. 17, 18) and shortly thereafter became the official royal mistress. She soon began to acquire paintings and luxury furnishings for her apartment at Versailles. An account of her private rooms at the palace, which she occupied until a few days before the death of the king in May of 1774, lists in her cabinet "a very pretty stepped table with French porcelain on a green ground with floral cartouches." This was most likely the small writing table with a raised section at the back that was supplied to Madame du Barry by Simon-Philippe Poirier (ca. 1720–1785), a *marchand mercier*, or dealer in luxury goods, on November 18, 1768. Poirier, the principal purchaser of porcelain plaques from the Sèvres Manufactory until his partner Dominique Daguerre (d. 1796) succeeded him in 1777, provided the king's favorite with a variety of porcelain-mounted furniture, which he himself may have helped to design.

This type of elegant lady's writing desk was introduced about 1760. Why it was called a *bonheur-du-jour*, literally, "happiness of the day," is not clear; possibly the name refers to the joys of letter writing. Of the eleven tables of this model known today, four are at the Metropolitan Museum (see fig. 19). Seven of the eleven are signed by Martin Carlin (ca. 1730–1785), a German-born cabinetmaker who settled in Paris by 1759 and who specialized in the production of this kind of precious and fashionable furniture, and the other four have been attributed to him. The tables differ little from one another in their design and execution. Supported on four slender cabriolet legs, each one has a single drawer in the frieze with a hinged writing surface and a compartment to hold an inkwell, a sponge trough, and a box for sand, and each of them is mounted with seventeen porcelain plaques embellished with floral decoration within a green border that were specially created for this purpose. None of the eleven known *bonheurs-du-jour* bear a Versailles stamp, but the letters on the backs of the porcelain plaques stand for dates ranging from 1765 to 1774, helping to establish the sequence in which Carlin made them. The letter *P*, for the year 1768, is painted on twelve of the plaques on the earliest of the Museum's four *bonheurs-du-jour* (fig. 19) along with a mark attributed to the painter Denis Levé. It could therefore be the same one Poirier supplied to Madame du Barry that year.



During the nineteenth century Charles Mills (1792–1872), a London banker with a considerable art collection and a penchant for Sèvres porcelain and furniture with Sèvres plaques, purchased this small writing table. His collection remained intact until the 1930s, when the lords Hillingdon, descendants of Mills, sold it to the well-known art dealer Joseph Duveen (1869–1939). In 1947 businessman and philanthropist Samuel H. Kress (1863–1955) acquired a group of these works, including seventeen pieces of porcelain-mounted furniture, all of which came to the Museum in 1958 as a gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

19. Attributed to Martin Carlin (German, ca. 1730–1785, active in France from ca. 1759), twelve plaques painted by Denis Levé (French, active 1754–1805). *Bonheur-du-jour*, 1768. Oak veneered with tulipwood, amaranth, and stained sycamore and mounted with seventeen Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaques and gilt bronze; mahogany drawers; green velvet (not original);  $32\frac{1}{2} \times 25\frac{7}{8} \times 16$  in. (82.6 × 65.7 × 40.6 cm). Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (58.75.48)



20, 21. Works by Claude Siméon Passemant (French, 1702–1769). Barometer and thermometer, 1769, with detail showing Sèvres porcelain plaque with an inscription on the book. Oak mounted with gilt bronze, three Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaques, glass, and enamel dials,  $40\frac{3}{4} \times 11 \times 3\frac{3}{8}$  in. (103.5 × 27.9 × 8.6 cm). Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (58.75.59)

Twice during the eighteenth century, in 1761 and 1769, the planet Venus crossed the sun, a rare astronomical event that roused considerable interest in French scientific circles. The French court observed the second transit of Venus on June 3, 1769, from the terraces of the Château de Saint Hubert. Louis XV himself explained the phenomenon to Madame du Barry as she looked through a telescope, and his public display of favoritism was eternalized in a popular poem. The occurrence itself inspired the decoration of Sèvres plaques with astronomical motifs. The case of a combined barometer and thermometer in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 20) is richly mounted with gilt bronze and decorated with three porcelain plaques depict-

ing children playing with astronomical instruments. Although several such examples are known, it has been suggested that the Museum's instrument is the one that Poirier delivered to Madame du Barry on December 20, 1769. Not only do its porcelain plaques bear the letter Q for 1769, but one of them is inscribed "Passage de Venus sur le disque du . . . Juin 1769" (see fig. 21). Even more to the point, the dial of the barometer is signed by *ingénieur du roi* Claude Siméon Passemant (1702–1769), the inventor, optician, and author of treatises on microscopes, telescopes, and optics who is known to have made Madame du Barry's combined barometer and thermometer. The royal mistress kept her instrument in her apartment at Versailles until the king's death in May 1774, when she was banished from court. It was among the furnishings she took with her to the pavilion at Louveciennes, which Louis XV had bequeathed for her use during her lifetime. After Madame du Barry's execution in 1793, the combined thermometer and barometer was recorded among her possessions at Louveciennes that were confiscated and returned to Versailles. During transport the mercury escaped from its tube, affecting the gilding on some bronzes by the famous bronze worker Pierre Gouthière (1732–1813) that were packed in the same crate.

In 1770, the year of her marriage to the future Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette (1755–1793) (fig. 22) received, probably as a wedding present, a jewel casket on stand by Martin Carlin that was embellished with thirteen porcelain plaques of different shapes and sizes. Marie Antoinette's coffer, now back at Versailles, may well have been the prototype for eight other jewel caskets on stand that can be dated between 1770 and 1775, three of which belong to the Metropolitan Museum (see fig. 23). Intended for a clientele of fashionable and distinguished aristocratic ladies, these luxurious objects not only held jewelry and other valuables, but they also served as small desks, as the drawer in the stand was fitted with a writing surface and compartments to hold writing paraphernalia (see fig. 24). Interlaced trelliswork marquetry of tulipwood and stained sycamore decorates the back of one of the Museum's caskets and its stand, and realistic gilt-bronze imitation fringe surrounds the shaped porcelain plaque painted with love symbols on its front. The fine gilt-bronze moldings that hold the porcelain in place emphasize both the rectilinear shape of the casket and the elegant flowing lines of the stand. Seven of the thirteen plaques on this coffer bear the letter R, for 1770, on their backs. It may therefore be the casket Poirier is known to have delivered toward the end of that year to the king's mistress at Versailles. Although it does not appear in any of Madame du Barry's inventories, she could have commissioned it as a generous gift for someone else.

On December 30, 1773, Poirier sold Madame du Barry "a secretary with French porcelain on a green ground highly decorated with gilt-bronze mounts." That description fits a secretary from the collection of Charles Mills and now at the Museum (fig. 25) that has porcelain plaques bearing the letter U for 1773. Madame du Barry had already ordered a secretary from Poirier the previous year, so she may have wanted this one as a wedding gift for Louis XVI's younger brother

22. Lié-Louis Perin (French, 1753–1817). *Marie Antoinette*, ca. 1773–75. Oil on canvas, 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (64.5 × 54 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims. Photograph: Scala / Art Resource, N.Y.





23. Attributed to Martin Carlin, eight plaques decorated by Jean-Jacques Pierre the Younger (French, active 1763–1800). Jewel casket, 1770. Oak veneered with tulipwood, amaranth, stained sycamore, holly, and ebonized holly and mounted with thirteen Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaques; gilt-bronze mounts; green velvet (not original);  $37\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$  in. (95.3 × 55.3 × 36.8 cm). Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (58.75.41)

24. Jewel casket (fig. 23), opened



Charles-Philippe, comte d'Artois and the future Charles X (1757–1836), and Marie-Thérèse of Savoy (1756–1805) or for one of the other royal couples who were married in 1773. A similar piece of furniture was listed among the comtesse d'Artois's belongings at Versailles in 1795. Although the record is very detailed and even includes dimensions that correspond to those of the Metropolitan's secretary, it fails to mention the color of the borders on the Sèvres plaques. It could thus as easily refer to a closely related secretary now at Waddesdon Manor in Aylesbury, England, which has plaques with blue borders.



The visit of the second Turkish delegation to Paris in 1742 stimulated the French elite's taste for exotic interior decoration known as *turquerie*. The comte d'Artois, for instance, was clearly fond of such fantasy décors, for he had two rooms in his apartment in the south wing of Versailles furnished in the "Turkish" manner. The second of these rooms, an intimate cabinet that doubled as a library, was created between April and November of 1781. It had pilasters painted with arabesques and was elaborately draped with costly fabrics. The eminent chair maker Georges Jacob (1739–1814) provided matching seat furniture in the Turkish style. Jean-Siméon

25. Martin Carlin; plaques decorated by Nicolas Bulidon (French, active 1763–92), Guillaume Noël (French, active 1755–1807), and Marie-Claude Sophie Xhorouuet (French, active 1775–88). Secretary, ca. 1773. Oak veneered with tulipwood, amaranth, holly, and ebonized holly and mounted with ten Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaques; gilt-bronze mounts; marble top; green velvet (not original); 47 × 31<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (119.4 × 80.7 × 45.1 cm). Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (58.75.44)



26. Attributed to Jean-Siméon Rousseau de la Rottière (French, 1747–1820) and Jules-Hugues Rousseau (French, 1743–1806). Pair of panels, 1781. Painted oak, 37 × 28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (94 × 73 cm), 33 × 28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> (83.8 × 73 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1906 (07.225.458a,b)

Rousseau de la Rottière (1747–1820) and his brother Jules-Hugues Rousseau (1743–1806), who worked in a number of French royal palaces, most likely painted the lighthearted arabesques, fanciful turbaned figures, naiads with entwined fish tails, floral garlands, and strings of pearls on the room's four doors. Two panels that came to the Museum as part of the 1906 Pierpont Morgan gift (fig. 26) have only recently been identified as pieces of those particular doors, though they had long been thought to have come from Versailles. A cameolike medallion is painted in monochrome against a blue marbled fond and framed by simulated gilt molding on the larger of the two panels, which originally formed the upper half of one of the doors in the comte d'Artois's Turkish Cabinet. In the medallion a sultan or pasha sits on a throne surmounted by a crescent moon while two odalisques offer him a long-stemmed pipe.

An exquisite mechanical table (fig. 27) made by Jean-Henri Riesener, a cabinetmaker from Westphalia, caused quite a stir at the 1932 sale of the contents of George Blumenthal's Paris residence. Despite the Depression, the auction broke records for purchases of eighteenth-century art, and the table achieved the highest single price of any of the offered lots. The table can be identified by the number 2964 painted underneath the top, which corresponds to an entry in the *Journal du Garde Meuble*, as one of many pieces of splendid furniture that Marie Antoinette (see fig. 22) ordered from her favorite cabinetmaker. It was delivered to Versailles on December 12, 1778, a week before the queen gave birth to a daughter, Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte (1778–1851), in her bedchamber in the palace.

The diverse functions of the mechanical table are clearly outlined in the ledgers of the *Journal du Garde Meuble*. It could be used for eating, dressing, and writing, in a standing or seated position. At each end of the table a rectangular gilt-bronze plaque, finely decorated with interlaced rose and laurel branches, hides the mechanism made by Marie Antoinette's *mécanicien* Jean-Gotfritt Mercklein (1733–1808). Born in Dresden but active in France after 1758, Mercklein was known for various inventions such as the mechanical headboard (the forerunner of the modern hospital bed) he supplied to relieve the dying Louis XV's suffering. A similar headboard was ordered for the queen's lying-in along with the mechanism for this table, which allows the top to be raised nineteen and a half inches above its initial position by means of a detachable crank (see fig. 28). The four slender, tapering legs are hollow, to accommodate the four ratcheted metal shafts that move up or down as the top is raised or lowered. The central panel of the top can also be lifted to form a lectern and reversed to form a dressing table mirror. Pressing the buttons along the front edge of the table releases the lids of six compartments lined with blue velvet that would have held the queen's toiletries and her writing equipment. On



27. Jean-Henri Riesener (German, 1734–1806, active in France), mechanism by Jean-Gotfritt Mercklein (German, 1733–1808, active in France from 1758). Mechanical table, 1778. Oak veneered with *bois satiné*, holly and ebonized holly, amaranth, barberry, stained sycamore, and green-lacquered wood; gilt-bronze mounts; mirror glass; blue velvet (not original); 31 × 44 ½ × 27 in. (78.7 × 113 × 68.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.12)



28. Mechanical table (fig. 27) with the top and book stand raised



29. François II Foliot (French, 1748–?1839) after designs by Jacques Gondouin (French, 1737–1818), carved by Mme Pierre-Edme Babel, gilded by Marie-Catherine Renon. Armchair, 1779. Carved and gilt beech, silk lampas (not original), 39 × 25½ × 19¾ in. (99.1 × 64.8 × 50.2 cm). Gift of Susan Dwight Bliss, 1944 (44.157.2)

Gondouin (1737–1818), who had been named *dessinateur du mobilier de la couronne* (designer of furniture to the crown) in 1769, provided the designs for the silk hangings and seat furniture. One of the armchairs he designed, part of a set delivered to Versailles on December 20, 1779, is now in the Museum's collection (fig. 29).

François II Foliot (1748–?1839), a member of an important family of Parisian chair makers, cut the beech to shape for the chairs' frames and assembled them. According to the strict French guild regulations, Foliot was not allowed to embellish the frames with more than plain moldings or simple ornament. More elaborate decoration was reserved for a specialized carver, in this case Madame Pierre-Edme Babel, who was responsible for the floral borders, inverted cornucopias serving as arm supports, and spirally fluted legs surmounted by leaf capitals (see fig. 30). The dense pattern of blossoms carved on the seat rails and backs must have helped enliven the queen's private room during the dreary winter months. Marie-Catherine Renon, widow of the *doreur*

the table's top, intricate latticework marquetry of *bois satiné* framed alternately with holly and ebonized holly fillets in simulated relief encloses sunflowers of aptly chosen yellow barberry wood against a stained sycamore ground. The green-lacquered wood in the friezes on the front and back provides an additional touch of color that contrasts splendidly with the gilt-bronze acanthus scrolls.

When the Swedish king Gustavus III (1746–1792) visited Versailles and the Trianon in June 1784, Marie Antoinette placed this and another smaller mechanical table also now at the Museum at his disposal, having had Riesener restore them both for the occasion during the preceding months. Sold during the Revolution in the 1790s, this table was in various English collections before it was purchased by George Blumenthal (1858–1941), a German-born investment banker and art collector who was a trustee of the Metropolitan and served as its president from 1934 to 1941.

Marie Antoinette's *grand cabinet intérieur* at Versailles was a private sanctuary where the queen could escape the crowds of visitors at the court and its strict etiquette. When the room was refurbished in 1779, the architect Jacques



30. Detail of the armchair (fig. 29)

Gaspard-Marie Bardou, gilded the chairs, and Claude-François Capin (d. 1789) upholstered the seats and backs, matching the fabric of the wall hangings.

The Museum's chair has lost its original off-white silk show covers woven with a colorful design of arabesques enclosing applied medallions with pastoral trophies. It has, however, kept the original webbing marked with the crowned double V of Versailles and various inventory numbers. This chair and other pieces of the set did not stay long in the queen's *grand cabinet intérieur*. They were removed in 1783, when the room was redecorated yet again, this time with white and gold paneling carved by the brothers Rousseau (see fig. 31), and were later used to furnish a small room on the floor above. The furniture was sold during the French Revolution to the American statesman Gouverneur Morris (1752–1816), who served as minister of the United States in France from 1792 to 1794. Morris later shipped the pieces to his family home, Morrisania, then a country estate in the Bronx. Among the first pieces



31. Marie Antoinette's *grand cabinet intérieur* at Versailles, with white and gold paneling carved by Jean-Siméon Rousseau de la Rottière and Jules-Hugues Rousseau in 1783. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles. Photograph: Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y.

with a French royal provenance to enter the United States, they remained with Morris's descendants and were later dispersed.

Designed for the queen's *grand cabinet intérieur* as well was a smaller mechanical table (fig. 32) that is now on display in the Crillon Room at the Museum. The table, also made by Riesener, was delivered on January 26, 1781, and in 1785 it was sent to the Château de Saint Cloud. Marie Antoinette kept it in her dressing room, for it included not only a surface for writing but also a book stand that could be reversed to show a mirror. The exquisite marquetry top (fig. 33) honors an eighteenth-century description of the technique as "painting in wood." Judging from the beautifully preserved marquetry on the lids of the interior compartments and on the outer sides of the drawers, which are visible when the table is open, the design on the top

was originally very colorful, due to the clever selection of contrasting woods and the natural dyes used to enhance the tones of the wood. The central medallion displays a trophy with the motto *Numine afflatur* (inspired by the divine rod), which appears to symbolize French supremacy in science, commerce, and learning. The surrounding areas are embellished with a striking trelliswork pattern of circles and diamond-shaped reserves enclosing sunflowers. Marie Antoinette must have liked this particular marquetry design, as it is repeated on other pieces Riesener made for her. The table is further richly adorned with gilt-bronze moldings along the top, on the lower part of the frieze, and running down the tapering legs. Plaques in relief are mounted in the center of the frieze on each side.

Among the best-known pieces of royal furniture outside France are a black lacquer secretary and commode (figs. 34–37) that Marie Antoinette commissioned, together with an *encoignure* (corner cabinet, now lost), from Riesener in 1783 for her *grand cabinet intérieur* at Versailles. In this room the queen displayed the collection of lacquer boxes she had inherited from her mother, the empress Maria Theresia (1717–1780), on a pair of lacquer corner étagères with tiered shelves and in a lacquer vitrine that Riesener had supplied in 1781 for this purpose. She must have directed Riesener to embellish the new secretary, commode, and *encoignure* with Japanese lacquer to match both her mother's boxes and the display pieces he had created two years before.

Because Europeans were not able to make true lacquer, existing Asian lacquer was reused as veneer for new pieces of furniture. Lacquer was made from the sticky resin of a sumac tree, the *Rhus vernicifera*, which was not indigenous in Europe, and once the resin was exposed to the air it would quickly harden, rendering it unsuitable for export. In the eighteenth century European cabinetmakers usually obtained Asian lacquer objects—often chests or cabinets that had been imported during the seventeenth century and were now considered outdated—from a *marchand mercier*. For the queen's commode and secretary Riesener cut the lacquer from its wooden substrate with great skill, and he even managed to carefully bend it to the curved surfaces of the new furniture without splitting it. The lustrous ebony veneer and the



32. Jean-Henri Riesener. Mechanical table, 1781. Oak veneered with *bois satiné*, amaranth, holly, barberry, and various stained marquetry woods; gilt-bronze mounts; mirror glass; green velvet (not original); 28½ × 30¾ × 19 in. (72.4 × 78.1 × 48.3 cm). The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.117)

33. Detail of the top of the mechanical table (fig. 32)





34. Jean-Henri Riesener. Secretary, 1783. Oak veneered with ebony and black and gold Japanese lacquer; interior veneered with tulipwood, holly and ebonized holly, and amaranth; gilt-bronze mounts; white marble top (not original); red velvet (not original); 57 × 43 × 16 in. (144.8 × 109.2 × 40.6 cm). Bequest of William K. Vanderbilt, 1920 (20.155.11)

black and gold Japanese lacquer provide a stunning background for the extraordinary gilt-bronze mounts incorporating highly naturalistic flowers draped in swags or interlaced as garlands and, on the drawer in the frieze, delicate ribbon-shaped handles and the queen's monogram (see fig. 37). The maker of these fine mounts is not known, although they are frequently attributed to the outstanding bronze worker Pierre Gouthière.

The lacquer secretary, commode, and corner cabinet remained at Versailles only a few years before all three were shipped to a furniture depot at the Trianon. The sec-

retary and commode were sent on to the queen's *cabinet intérieur* at Saint Cloud in 1788 and were then sold during the Revolution. The passionate English collector George Watson Taylor (1771–1841) acquired them for his country house in Wiltshire, Erlestoke Park, and they were sold from there following his bankruptcy in 1832. Alexander Hamilton Douglas (1767–1852), tenth duke of Hamilton, purchased both pieces for his dressing room at Hamilton Palace, near Glasgow, where they remained for the next half century. When the twelfth duke of Hamilton decided in 1882 to give up the house and sell the collections in a series of legendary auctions, the black lacquer furniture was undoubtedly a high point of the sales. The London *Times* predicted that “the pieces of Marie Antoinette have a claim upon the purses of millionaires,” and indeed, it was Alva Vanderbilt (1853–1933), wife of William K. Vanderbilt (1848–1920), grandson of the railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794–1877), who acquired the queen's secretary and commode. Mrs. Vanderbilt bought the furniture for her New York mansion at 660 Fifth Avenue, which had recently been built by the architect Richard Morris Hunt (1828–1895). The secretary and commode must have witnessed some spectacular social events in the white and gold salon of the Vanderbilts' French Renaissance-style residence, where they stayed until they came to the Museum as part of the bequest of William K. Vanderbilt in 1920. The Museum's *Bulletin* that year described the “magnificent character” of these celebrated pieces “as comparable to the greatest treasures of furniture in the Louvre and the Wallace Collection.”

A list drawn up in 1794 of furniture stored at Versailles that the new regime considered suitable for exchange or sale includes a detailed description of a secretary mounted with a large Sèvres plaque and fifteen Wedgwood medallions. The description matches a porcelain-mounted secretary given to the Museum by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation (fig. 38) that might have been the last piece Daguerre, a well-known dealer in luxury goods, delivered to Marie Antoinette at Versailles. In fact, a porcelain-mounted secretary was among the treasured possessions the queen entrusted to Daguerre for safekeeping in October 1789, shortly after a mob invaded the palace of Versailles and the royal family was forced to return to the Château des Tuileries in Paris.

Although it is not signed, the secretary has many characteristics typical of the work of Adam Weisweiler (1744–1820), a successful Parisian cabinetmaker born in the Rhineland. The interlaced stretchers, inverted bulbous legs, and gilt-bronze female term figures used as corner mounts (see fig. 39) all reappear on other pieces by Weisweiler. The ribbon-tied bouquet on the large rectangular porcelain plaque on the secretary's fall-front was painted, probably about 1782, by Edme-François Bouillat *père*



35. Secretary (fig. 34), opened. The fall-front of the compartment for the strongbox at the lower right is open as well



36. Jean-Henri Riesener. Commode, 1783. Oak veneered with ebony and black and gold Japanese lacquer, gilt-bronze mounts, white marble top (not original),  $36\frac{3}{4} \times 56\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{2}$  in. (93.4 x 143.5 x 59.7 cm). Bequest of William K. Vanderbilt, 1920 (20.155.12)



37. Detail of the drawer mounts in the frieze of the secretary (fig. 34), showing the initials of Marie Antoinette

38. Attributed to Adam Weisweiler (German, 1744–1820, active in France), some mounts by Pierre Rémond (French, 1747–1812), porcelain plaque decorated by Edme-François Bouillat *père* (French, active 1758–1810). Secretary, ca. 1787. Oak veneered with burl thuya, amaranth, mahogany, satinwood, holly, and ebonized holly; painted metal; gilt-bronze mounts; large Sèvres soft-paste porcelain plaque; fifteen Wedgwood jasper medallions; white marble top; brown leather (not original); 51 × 27 × 16 in. (129.5 × 68.6 × 40.6 cm). Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1958 (58.75.57)



39. Detail showing Wedgwood medallions and a gilt-bronze female term figure on the secretary (fig. 38)



40. David Roentgen (German, 1743–1807), marquetry scenes after designs by Januarius Zick (German, 1730–1797). Commode, ca. 1779 with later alterations. Oak and pine veneered with tulipwood, stained sycamore, boxwood, amaranth, and other woods; mahogany and cherry drawers; gilt-bronze mounts; red brocatelle marble top (not original);  $35\frac{1}{4} \times 53\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{1}{4}$  in. (89.5 × 135.9 × 69.2 cm). The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982 (1982.60.81)



41. Detail of the commode (fig. 40), opened

(active 1758–1810), one of the best flower painters at Sèvres. The ten blue and white jasper cameos flanking the Sèvres plaque are framed with gilt-bronze garlands that lend them a jewel-like quality (see fig. 39). In his catalogues for 1779 and other years Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1792) advertised a group of “Bas-Reliefs, Medallions, Cameo-Medallions, Tablets, &c chiefly classical subjects [which] may be applied as Cabinet Pictures or for ornamenting Cabinets, Book Cases, Writing Tables &c.” Some of the “classical subjects” were based on antique gems. The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche depicted on the cameo at the top right on the Museum’s secretary, for instance, was taken from a Graeco-Roman sardonyx then in the possession of the duke of Marlborough. Other designs, like the Sacrifice to Hymen on the top left cameo, have been attributed to John Flaxman (1755–1826). The roundels on the sides of the secretary are from Wedgwood’s so-called Domestic Employment series. The compositions of mothers and children engaged in domestic pursuits created by Lady Elizabeth Templetown (1747–1823) and Emma Crewe (active 1787–1818) were modeled into bas-reliefs by William Hackwood (ca. 1757–1829). The series was first advertised in Wedgwood’s catalogue of 1787, suggesting a possible date for the secretary. That same year Daguerre signed an agreement with Wedgwood to distribute his wares in Paris, so he would have had easy access to these charming jasper cameos.

A marquetry commode branded twice on the uprights of its back with the crowned double V mark of Versailles (fig. 40) entered the Museum’s holdings as part of the outstanding collection of fine and decorative arts formed by Jack and Belle Linsky. In April 1779, the same year that the celebrated German cabinet-maker David Roentgen (1743–1807) was named *ébéniste-mécanicien* to the king and queen, Louis XVI paid him the large sum of 2,400 livres for a commode. It is tempting to identify the Linsky commode as this piece of furniture, but discrepancies with a description of 1792, when the king’s commode was transferred to Paris, rule this out. There is no doubt, however, that the commode was made in the Roentgen workshop, and as Roentgen is known to have supplied numerous pieces to the French court, it could well have belonged to one of the other members of the royal family.

The elaborate mechanism that allows the key in the frieze drawer to lock or unlock all three doors below is characteristic of Roentgen’s furniture. The slightly curved left- and right-hand doors have spring-operated hinges, and the upper drawers swivel open to give access to hidden drawers when a button underneath is pressed (fig. 41). The mosaiclike quality of the commedia dell’arte scene on the central panel of the commode is also typical of the marquetry Roentgen’s shop produced. Almost painterly effects were created partly by staining the wood in different shades and partly by using minute pieces for small details like the eyes, eyebrows, lips, locks of hair, and shadows on the faces of the characters Columbine, Anselmo, and Harlequin (see fig. 42). The commode was originally even richer in color; the striped tambour covers of the top drawers have kept their blue green stain, and some of the faded



42. Detail of the marquetry commedia dell’arte scene on the front of the commode (fig. 40)



43. Jean-Baptiste Rigaud. *Vue du Chateau de Belle-vue prise du côté de la cour* (View of the Château de Bellevue from the Courtyard Side). Etching and engraving, sheet 9 1/2 x 18 1/4 in. (24 x 46.4 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953 (53.600.1205)

been altered during the Revolution to obliterate portraits of the king and queen. The fine gilt-bronze floral and foliage scrolls on the frieze were also later additions, replacing heavier German mounts that may not have conformed to the latest French taste. The commode was probably sold from Versailles during the revolutionary sales. It became part of the furnishings of Mentmore Towers, a large country manor built for Baron Mayer Amschel de Rothschild (1818–1874) in Buckinghamshire, and remained there until it was auctioned off in 1964.

### *Château de Bellevue*

In 1749 Louis XV transferred the ownership of the Château de Bellevue (fig. 43), then almost completed after plans by the architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782), to his official mistress and later his confidante, the marquise de Pompadour (1721–1764) (see fig. 46). Situated between Meudon and Saint Cloud, with beautiful views over the Seine, the country residence was modest in size, but its interiors were richly furnished by the king's favorite, who was born Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson. Between 1750 and 1757 Madame de Pompadour acquired outstanding pieces of furniture, wall lights, lacquer boxes, porcelains, and other art objects for Bellevue from the dealer Lazare Duvaux (ca. 1703–1758). In 1750 and 1756 Duvaux charged the marquise for two night tables with tulipwood veneer and gilt bronze, one of which was very likely the elegant night table from the Wrightsman collection that is now in the Metropolitan (fig. 44). Stamped with the crowned BV mark for the Château de Bellevue and painted with the inventory number 59, the Museum's table was recorded in an inventory of Bellevue of 1763. At that time Louis XV was once again the owner of the château, having purchased it, complete with its contents, from Madame de Pompadour in 1757. Louis XVI left Bellevue and all its furniture to his three unmarried aunts, the princesses Victoire, Adélaïde, and Sophie. The table remained at the château until the Revolution, when everything was sold in 1794. The building itself was demolished during the nineteenth century.

Introduced about 1720, night tables were practical pieces of furniture used in the bedchamber. At night a table like the Museum's would have stood by the side of the bed, with a chamber pot on the shelf inside. Handles on the sides facilitated moving

blue green sycamore veneer remains on the frieze.

The marquetry on the side doors has been altered, so that it now shows an empty stage. The left and right front panels on two closely related commodes by Roentgen (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich) depict theater boxes filled with spectators, with medallions with portraits of a Roman emperor and empress hanging on the wall behind them. The marquetry on the Museum's commode might have



the table to an adjacent room, where it was stored during the day. Night tables were often finished with costly veneers and their tops and inside shelves lined with marble to protect the wood against spilling. An opening in the back provided extra ventilation. The Museum's night table has been attributed to Bernard II Vanrisamburgh (after 1696–ca. 1766), a skilled cabinetmaker known for his fine stylized floral marquetry of dark end-cut kingwood against a lighter tulipwood ground. For this table the tulipwood veneer was carefully cut to create an attractive striped pattern. Also typical of Vanrisamburgh's work is the narrow molding of gilt bronze running along the lower part of the table's body and down the insides of the slender legs, emphasizing their subtle curves. The design is in fact a synthesis of sinuous lines, most eloquently expressed in the undulating railing along the table's top.

44. Attributed to Bernard II Vanrisamburgh (French, after 1696–ca. 1766). Bedside table, ca. 1750–56. Oak veneered with tulipwood and kingwood, gilt-bronze mounts, Sarrancolin marble, green silk moiré (not original),  $30\frac{3}{4} \times 20\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$  in. (78.1 × 52.1 × 36.2 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1985 (1985.313.1)



45. Jean-François Oeben (French, 1721–1763) and Roger Vandercruse (French, 1728–1799). Mechanical table, ca. 1760. Oak veneered with mahogany, kingwood, and tulipwood with marquetry of mahogany, rosewood, holly, and various other woods, some stained; imitation lacquer; gilt-bronze mounts; blue silk (not original);  $27\frac{1}{2} \times 32\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{3}{8}$  in. (69.8 × 81.9 × 46.7 cm). The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982 (1982.60.61)

Jean-François Oeben, a cabinetmaker renowned for his floral marquetry, supplied many pieces of furniture to Madame de Pompadour, one of his most important clients. An exceptionally beautiful mechanical table he made for the marquise toward the end of his life (fig. 45) is in the Museum's holdings. It is not known if the table was intended for Bellevue or for one of Madame de Pompadour's other residences. A similar mechanical table, surely Oeben's work as well, is visible in the portrait François Guérin (before 1751–after 1791) painted of the marquise and her daughter Alexandrine in about 1763 (fig. 46). None of the other furniture Oeben made for the king's mistress appears to have been as customized as this table, which has corner mounts in the shape of gilt-bronze turrets, the main charge of Madame de

Pompadour's coat of arms. A ducal coronet, referring to the title of duchesse she was granted in 1752, is depicted on the body of the vase in the center of the tabletop (fig. 47). The superb marquetry composition depicts painting, music, architecture, and gardening, the various interests of Madame de Pompadour, who was a great patron of the arts. The top was originally even more colorful than it is today; to achieve a realistic "picture" Oeben used a wide variety of timbers and enhanced some with natural dyes, which have unfortunately faded. The pierced legs, which must have been created with great difficulty, do not recur on any other of Oeben's pieces. The mechanical devices the cabinetmaker used are also highly sophisticated. The entire top of the table slides back, nearly doubling the surface and revealing a stand with a small ledge to support a book that can be raised by means of a ratchet. The central panel of the stand can be flipped: one side, now lined with modern blue silk, would have served as a writing surface; the other side is covered with imitation aventurine lacquer. The vivid green and other brilliant colors of the marquetry are much better preserved on the lids of the compartments flanking the stand (see fig. 48). The tangentially cut and partly bookmatched tulipwood veneer on the insides of the lids, with its lively grain resembling a beautiful moiré silk, is particularly fresh and striking.

Little is known of the history of the table. It may have been completed after Oeben's death by his brother-in-law, Roger Vandercruse (1728–1799), whose stamp appears along with Oeben's on the underside of the top. The table cannot be identified in the inventory of Madame de Pompadour's possessions that was compiled after her



46. J. Chauvet. *Madame de Pompadour and Her Daughter Alexandrine*. Heliograph after painting by François Guérin of ca. 1763 (private collection). Reproduced from *Gazette des beaux-arts* 28 (October 1902), opposite p. 308

47. Top of the mechanical table (fig. 45)





48. Detail of the top of the left compartment in the mechanical table (fig. 45)

death, nor is there any proof that it entered the collection of her younger brother, Abel-François Poisson de Vandières (1727–1781), marquis de Marigny, who was her main heir. Judge Elbert H. Gary (1846–1927) acquired the table for his collection at an unknown date, and it was subsequently part of the estate of Martha Baird Rockefeller (1895–1971), second wife of the philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. (1874–1960). In 1982 it came to the Museum as one of the star pieces of the Jack and Belle Linsky collection.

### *Château de Saint Cloud*

In 1785 Louis XVI purchased the Château de Saint Cloud (fig. 49) in Marie Antoinette's name from the duc d'Orléans. The château, situated on a hillside overlooking the Seine not far from Paris, became the queen's favorite summer residence. Built in the sixteenth century and rebuilt during the seventeenth, the palace was in need of renovation. The architect Richard Mique (1728–1794) enlarged and altered it, and appropriate furnishings were ordered for the queen's apartment.

Many pieces of furniture were commissioned from Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené (1748–1803), a member of an important dynasty of Parisian chair makers who received a royal appointment in 1784. Sené provided a set of seat furniture for the queen's dressing room, called her *cabinet particulier* or *cabinet de toilette*, that is described in the 1789 inventory of Saint Cloud. The daybed, the *bergère* (a comfortable chair upholstered between the arms and the seat), and the fire screen from the set are now in the Museum's collections (figs. 50–57). They were the gift of Ann Payne Blumenthal, the second wife of George Blumenthal. The painted and gilt frame of the low daybed (fig. 50) is embellished with floral motifs. Six short tapering and fluted legs surmounted by Ionic capitals support the piece. The front stiles of the head- and footboard, which are of equal height, are carved with female half-figures wearing Egyptian headdresses (fig. 51). The *bergère* (fig. 52), which has a medallion with Marie Antoinette's initials on its top rail (fig. 53), is decorated in a similar manner. A decade before Napoléon's North African campaign was to inspire the fashion known as *égyptomanie*, the queen appears to have had a taste for ornament derived from ancient Egyptian art. Seated classical female figures, rather than Egyptian caryatids, decorate the feet of the fire screen (figs. 54, 55), and a woman who once held a cornucopia reclines on its top. The carver is not known, but Louis-François Chatard (ca. 1749–1819) was responsible for painting and gilding the frames. According to the 1789 inventory the set was originally upholstered in a white-twilled cotton with rows of individual flowers embroidered by the queen herself. When the

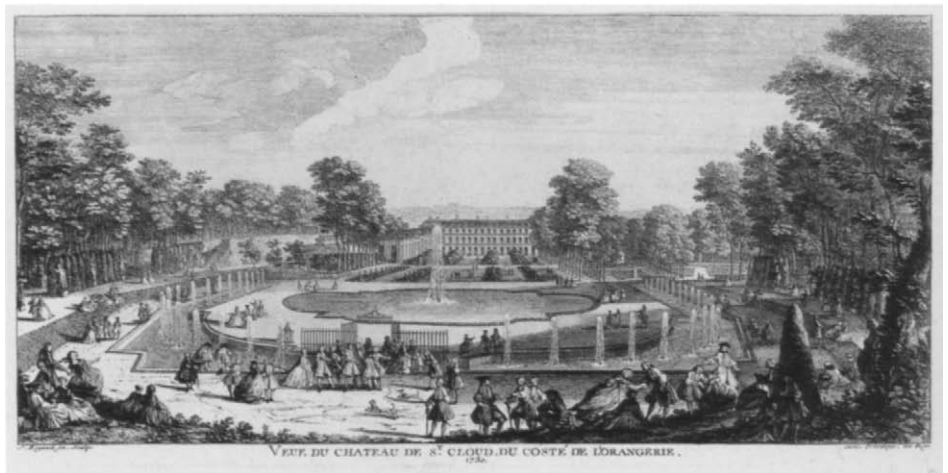
three pieces came to the Museum in 1941 only the fire screen's show cover (fig. 56) had survived. Although the cotton ground is much discolored, Marie Antoinette's interlaced initials, composed of blossoms embroidered in satin stitch, are in remarkably good condition (see fig. 57).

The same 1789 inventory mentions a much larger set of furniture that had been commissioned from Georges Jacob two years before for the Salon des Jeux du Roi, or King's Gaming Room, at Saint Cloud. Jacob, one of the most successful chair makers of the eighteenth century, supplied sixty-two pieces of furniture, including sixteen identical armchairs, for this room where fortunes were won and lost at the gaming tables. According to the detailed account, Jacob charged 24 livres per armchair for cutting the walnut to shape and joining the various parts together. The carving, by an unidentified carver, cost 180 livres, and the gilding, by Louis-François Chatard, amounted to 240 livres. A paper label pasted underneath the frame of an armchair in the Metropolitan (fig. 58) identifies it as having been ordered in February 1788 for the gaming room at Saint Cloud. The notches cut underneath the frame next to the maker's stamp indicate that it is the third of four chairs that were ordered from Georges Jacob at that time, to supplement the set he had supplied the previous year. These formal chairs with straight backs, called *fauteuils meublants*, would have been placed along the walls of the room together with the settees and *bergères* of the set. The rectilinear frame of the armchair, with its curved front seat rail, scrolled arm supports, and turned straight legs all carved with guilloches, rosettes, and stylized leaves, is the epitome of neoclassicism. The 1789 inventory describes the upholstery on the set as a gray blue brocaded *gros de Tour*, or ribbed silk. Much of the gaming room seat furniture, including twelve of the armchairs, was still recorded at the palace in the spring of 1798. The Museum's chair was eventually acquired by Georges Hoentschel. The 1908 catalogue of his collection lists its Saint Cloud provenance but not its maker or date.

## Château de Compiègne

Situated at the edge of a vast forest seventy-five kilometers northeast of Paris, Compiègne had long been a favorite hunting lodge of the French kings. During the reign of Louis XV the architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel transformed the old complex. Louis XVI (fig. 59), who was passionate about hunting, later had the interiors of the palace redecorated and commissioned new furniture. For the king's study in the private apartments, Jean Hauré (active 1774–after 1796), a sculptor and *entrepreneur des meubles de la couronne*, directed the making of a drop-front secretary, a *commode en console*, and a writing table in 1786–87. The secretary (fig. 61), called a *secrétaire en*

49. Jacques Rigaud (French, 1681–1754). *Vue du Château de St. Cloud du côté de l'Orangerie* (View of the Château de Saint Cloud from the Orangerie Side), 1730. Etching, sheet 8¼ × 16⅞ in. (21.1 × 42.8 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1933 (53.600.1251)





50. Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené (French, 1748–1803), painted and gilded by Louis-François Chatard (French, ca. 1749–1819). Daybed, 1788. Carved, painted, and gilt walnut; silk-satin damask (not original);  $36\frac{1}{2} \times 68 \times 31\frac{1}{2}$  in. (92.7 × 175.3 × 80 cm). Gift of Ann Payne Blumenthal, 1941 (41.205.1)



51. Female half-figure wearing an Egyptian headdress on the headboard of the daybed (fig. 50)

*armoire* because the section below the drop front is fitted as a cupboard, was given to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman in 1971.

Due to strict guild regulations that enforced high standards of workmanship and stimulated a great degree of specialization, many different artists were involved in the secretary's production. The German-born cabinetmaker Guillaume Benneman (d. 1811), whose stamp is on the back, was responsible for making the carcass and the marquetry. The gilt-bronze mounts (see fig. 60) were modeled by sculptors Louis-Simon Boizot (1743–1809), Martin (possibly Gilles-François Martin [ca. 1713–1795]), and Michaud. They were then cast by one Forestier, probably either Étienne-Jean or his brother Pierre-Auguste. Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751–1843) and other bronze workers subsequently chased the mounts, burnishing certain areas and pouncing or graining others so that the light would reflect differently off the differently finished surfaces, giving the bronzes great vitality. As a last step, the mounts were gilded by an artisan named Galle. Jean-Pierre Lanfant (who became a master in 1785) supplied an Italian griotte marble top for the secretary, which has since been replaced. The marquetry of rosewood, kingwood, and partly green-stained holly was originally embellished with small rosettes of gilt brass. The order of March 4, 1786, for this



52. Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, painted and gilded by Louis-François Chatard. *Bergère*, 1788. Carved, painted, and gilt walnut; silk-satin damask (not original); 39 × 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (99.1 × 69.2 × 64.1 cm). Gift of Ann Payne Blumenthal, 1941 (41.205.2)



53. Marie Antoinette's initials on the crest rail of the *bergère* (fig. 52)



unusually tall secretary specifically stated that it and the other two pieces were to match an existing commode made for Louis XV by Gilles Joubert in 1770. Rather than adopting the trellis-work pattern composed of straight lines on Joubert's piece, however, Benneman opted for a curvilinear latticework design on the new furniture. Joubert had positioned gilt-brass rosettes at the crossings of the trelliswork; Benneman placed them on the enclosed lozenges of the lattice. The rosettes have since been lost or removed and the holes filled with tiny ebony plugs. Although this secretary was made to match a nearly twenty-year-old commode, the mounts, especially the large caryatids, and the interior, veneered with mahogany, were expressions of the latest neoclassical taste.

Following the French Revolution the secretary was used at the Palais du Luxembourg in Paris by members of the Directory, who apparently were not disturbed by its royal provenance. In 1808 Emperor Napoléon I (1769–1821) presented it to his chancellor, Jean-Jacques Régis de Cambacérès (1753–1824).

Nearly two months after the order for the secretary, on May 1, 1786, Hauré received a commission for a set of furniture comprising forty *pliants*, or folding stools, twelve regular stools, or *tabourets*, a folding screen, and a fire screen for Marie Antoinette's Salon des Jeux at Compiègne. Twenty-four of the X-shaped folding stools, all the *tabourets*, and both screens were then sent instead to the queen's gaming room at Fontainebleau. On September 3 of the same year Hauré was asked to supply

54. Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, painted and gilded by Louis-François Chatard. Fire screen, 1788. Carved, painted, and gilt walnut; salmon-colored silk satin weave (not original);  $44\frac{1}{4} \times 27\frac{3}{4}$  in. (112.4 × 70.5 cm), d. of base 17 in. (43.2 cm). Gift of Ann Payne Blumenthal, 1941 (41.205.3a,b)



55. Classical female figures on the foot of the fire screen (fig. 54)



56. Marie Antoinette. Embroidery panel from the fire screen (fig. 54), 1788. Twilled cotton embroidered with colored silk in satin stitch,  $31 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$  in. (78.7  $\times$  57.8 cm). Gift of Ann Payne Blumenthal, 1941 (41.205.3c)



57. Detail of the embroidery panel from the fire screen (fig. 56) showing Marie Antoinette's initials



58. Georges Jacob (French, 1739–1814), gilded by Louis-François Chatard. Armchair, 1788. Carved and gilt walnut, gold brocaded silk (not original),  $39\frac{3}{8} \times 29\frac{1}{2} \times 25\frac{3}{8}$  in. ( $100 \times 74.9 \times 65.1$  cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1906 (07.225.107)

an additional twenty-four *pliants*, twelve tabour-ets, a chamber screen, and a fire screen for Compiègne. Two of the *pliants* (see fig. 62) are now in the Museum's collection, a gift of the Wrightsmans, but whether they were part of the first or the second order and whether they remained at Compiègne or were sent to Fontainebleau is not known.

As was the case with the secretary, this large set of furniture was the fruit of a collaborative effort, and the record of the commission provides a roll call of the artists: The beechwood frames were provided by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, who was also paid for making a preliminary model. The sprigs and wreaths of ivy, beading, twisted-cord ornament, and lion's-paw feet were carved by the sculptor Nicolas Vallois (1738–1790) under

Hauré's direction. Louis-François Chatard painted the furniture an off-white color, highlighting the decoration in gold. A metalworker named Courbin supplied the iron bolts placed at the crossing of the legs so that the stools could be folded, and one Chaudron gilded the rosette-shaped bosses on the ends of the bolts. Claude-François Capin upholstered the stools and applied fringed borders. The firm of Pernon in Lyon wove the fabric for the original upholstery and the matching wall hangings, a ribbed silk *chiné* embellished with a bower of trees, floral garlands, and hollyhocks on a white ground.

### *Château de Fontainebleau*

Louis XVI was fond of hunting, and he traveled regularly with his court to Fontainebleau, where he could indulge in his pastime in the Forêt de Bière, one of the largest and most beautiful forests of France. French rulers had long visited Fontainebleau for this very reason, and over time their initially modest hunting lodges developed into a grand royal palace that was changed and enlarged in a variety of styles (fig. 63). For Louis XVI a new building was added in 1785 to house his private apartments, and for Marie Antoinette several rooms were redecorated during the winter of 1785–86.



59. Joseph-Siffred Duplessis (French, 1725–1802). *Louis XVI*, 1776. Oil on canvas,  $31\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{3}{8}$  in. ( $80 \times 62$  cm). Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles. Photograph: Giraudon / Art Resource, N.Y.



60, 61. Guillaume Benneman (German, d. 1811, active in France); mounts modeled by Louis-Simon Boizot (French, 1743–1809), Gilles-François(?) Martin (French, ca. 1713–1795), and Michaud, probably cast by Étienne-Jean or Pierre-Auguste Forestier, chased by Pierre-Philippe Thomire (French, 1751–1843), Bardin, Tournay, and others, and gilded by Galle. *Secrétaire en armoire*, 1786–87, with detail of female figure on corner. Oak veneered with rosewood, kingwood, holly partly stained green, ebony, and mahogany; gilt-bronze mounts; brèche d'Alep marble top (not original); green leather (not original); 63½ × 32 × 15 in. (161.3 × 81.3 × 38.1 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1971 (1971.206.17)



62. Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, carved by Nicolas Vallois (French, 1738–1790), painted and gilded by Louis-François Chatard. *Pliant*, 1786. Carved, painted, and gilt beechwood; pink silk (not original); 18¼ × 27 × 20¼ in. (46.4 × 68.6 × 51.4 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1977 (1977.102.9)

and wisps of ivy strung around the two uprights shaped like burning torches, though they are now much worn. The string of pearls pulled through an openwork spiraling ribbon carved on the screen's top (fig. 66) and lower rails also decorates the moldings of the paneling in the boudoir, and the same motif recurs in gilt bronze on the rolltop desk and the worktable. The original upholstery on the screen, a white *gros de Tour*, or ribbed silk, embroidered with colorful flowers, has been replaced with an eighteenth-century silk brocaded panel with a medallion enclosing a pastoral trophy in the style of the Lyon silk designer and manufacturer Philippe de Lasalle (1723–1805).

During the Directoire period, in the late 1790s, the screen and the seat furniture from Marie Antoinette's boudoir at Fontainebleau were used at the Château de Saint Cloud (whose name is stamped several times on the screen's frame).

### *Château des Tuileries*

A small crowd of onlookers gathered in June 1783 in the marketplace at Annonay, near Lyon, to watch a gigantic fabric and paper bag filled with hot air rise into the sky. Before it fell to earth and burst into flames, the airborne sphere had traveled a mile and a half. Joseph Montgolfier (1740–1810) and his brother Étienne (1745–1799), who ran the family's paper factory at Annonay, had been perfecting their *ballon* for months before staging its first public flight. When French physicist Jacques-Alexandre-César Charles (1746–1823) heard of their invention, he set out to build his own

Designed by the architect Pierre Rousseau (1751–1829) with large mirrors that reflect the light spilling onto the shimmering gold and silver background of the wall panels painted with delicate arabesques and flowers by the Rousseau brothers, the boudoir at Fontainebleau (fig. 64) is considered one of the most perfect interiors created for the queen. For this jewel box of a room Jean-Henri Riesener created a rolltop desk and a small worktable, highly unusual pieces veneered with lozenges of mother-of-pearl and fillets of polished steel. Both the worktable and the rolltop desk are today back in the palace (see fig. 64). Georges Jacob supplied a set of seat furniture and a fire screen that were clearly designed to harmonize with the rest of the gold and silver décor. The gilt frame of the screen, which is now in the Museum's collection (fig. 65), incorporates silvered highlights such as the pearls

balloon, fueled not with hot air but with hydrogen, which had only recently been discovered and with which he had often performed experiments. Charles constructed his balloon of rubberized taffeta, financing the work by selling tickets to the launching on the Champs de Mars in Paris on August 27, 1783, less than three months after the Montgolfiers' test. On the appointed day the untethered *charlière*, as it was called, rose quickly to fifteen hundred feet before disappearing into the clouds; it flew for fifteen miles before it burst and fell to the ground. Not to be outdone, the Montgolfiers were also building a new craft, funded first by the Academy of Science and then by the royal Ministry of Finance itself. On September 19, 1783, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were among the spectators at Versailles who watched the first aeronauts—

a rooster, a sheep, and a duck—ascend in a cage suspended beneath a royal blue hot air balloon elegantly decorated with large gold letter *Ls*. The first manned flights followed soon afterward: On November 21 François Pilâtre de Rozier and François Laurent, marquis d'Arlandes, piloted an even more elaborately decorated blue hot air *montgolfière* launched from the Bois de Boulogne, stoking its fire with straw and wool for twenty-five minutes as they sailed over Paris. And on December 1 Jacques Charles himself, along with his collaborator Marie-Noël Robert, manned a gondola suspended from the netting covering a yellow and red striped hydrogen balloon as it ascended from the gardens of the Tuileries before a crowd estimated at four hundred thousand (fig. 67). Among the witnesses that day was Benjamin Franklin. The craft landed safely several hours later, some thirty-one miles outside Paris.

The successful aeronautic experiments of 1783 caused much popular excitement and stirred great interest in the new science of aviation that fostered a veritable balloon mania. All kinds of objects, from ceramics to fans to textiles, were decorated with balloon motifs. It is rare to find in furniture a reference to a specific historic event, but this is surely the case with a pair of delicate side chairs (see fig. 68) that were a gift from the Wrightsmans to the Museum. With their balloon-shaped finials covered with netting that characterizes them as hydrogen *charlières* (fig. 69), these extraordinary chairs subtly celebrate Jacques Charles's triumph in December 1783. The royal couple must have been as fascinated with flying as the rest of the French public, for the chairs were supplied in February 1784 for the boudoir in the private quarters being prepared for Marie Antoinette at the Château des Tuileries (see fig. 67), the large palace on the right bank of the Seine that was begun by architect Philibert Delorme (ca. 1510–1570) for



63. Israël Silvestre (French, 1621–1691). *Veüe de la Cour du Cheval Blanc de Fontainebleau* (View of the Courtyard at Fontainebleau), 1667. Etching, plate 14 3/4 x 19 1/2 in. (37.5 x 49.5 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1940 (40.39.3[13])

64. Marie Antoinette's boudoir at Fontainebleau, with the worktable by Jean-Henri Riesener. Photograph: Giraudon / Art Resource, N.Y.





Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589) in 1564. According to the documents, Georges Jacob provided the chairs' basic walnut frames, which he described as "of a new shape," referring to either the balloon shape of the seat or the arched crest rail of the rectangular back, or possibly both. The brothers Rousseau, who were sculptors as well as decorative painters, were responsible for the carving, including the remarkable slender legs shaped like quivers, with the feathery ends of the arrows clearly visible at the top. Presle, *peintre et doreur du roi*, gilded the chairs in subtle tones of yellow and green. (The green hue is unmistakable on the myrtle branches spiraling along the rods on the seat rail.) The seats and backs were upholstered with embroidered show covers intended to match the brocaded wall hangings of the queen's boudoir.

It was at the Tuileries amid these furnishings that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were kept under house arrest during the French Revolution. Today only the park remains near the Louvre; the building itself was destroyed during the Paris Commune in 1871.

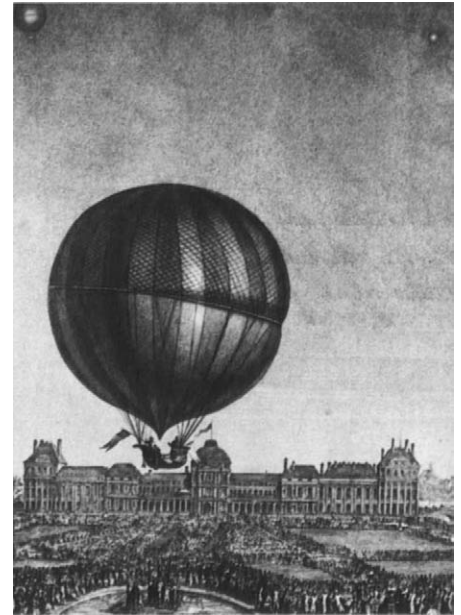
65. Georges Jacob. Fire screen, ca. 1786. Carved, gilt, and silvered beechwood; eighteenth-century silk brocade not original to frame; 42 × 26¾ in. (106.7 × 67.9 cm), depth of base 16¼ in. (41.3 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1971 (1971.206.16)



66. Carved decoration on the top rail of the fire screen (fig. 65)



68. Georges Jacob, carved by Jules-Hugues Rousseau and Jean-Siméon Rousseau de la Rottière, gilded by Presle. Side chair, 1784. Carved and gilt walnut; pink silk-moiré damask (not original); 34 × 18½ × 18 in. (86.4 × 47 × 45.7 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1977 (1977.102.13)



67. *À l'honneur de Messieurs Charles et Robert*, ca. 1783. Etching and engraving published by Le Noir, Paris, showing the successful ascent of the hydrogen balloon of Jacques-Alexandre-César Charles and Marie-Noël Robert from the gardens of the Tuileries palace in December 1783. 16 × 10¾ in. (40.5 × 27.4 cm). Colonel Richard Gimbel Aeronautical Library, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado



69. Detail of the side chair (fig. 68) showing the balloon-shaped finial

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