

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES DEVOTES A LARGE-SCALE EXHIBITION TO LOUIS XIV

DIRECTED BY NICOLAS MILOVANOVIC AND ALEXANDRE MARAL, CURATORS OF THE CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES, EXHIBITION CURATORSHIP.

« LOUIS XIV, THE MAN AND THE KING » BRINGS TOGETHER MORE THAN 300 EXCEPTIONAL WORKS COMING FROM COLLECTIONS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND NEVER SHOWN TOGETHER BEFORE.

PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES, OBJETS D'ART AND FURNITURE WILL BE EXHIBITED. THESE MASTERPIECES, SOME OF WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN PRESENTED IN FRANCE SINCE THE DAYS OF THE ANCIEN RÉGIME, WILL ENABLE VISITORS TO GET TO KNOW THE FAMOUS MONARCH BETTER IN BOTH HIS PUBLIC IMAGE AND THROUGH HIS PERSONAL TASTES.

LOUIS XIV, THE MAN AND THE KING

1 THE PORTRAIT OF THE KING

With Louis XIV, the portrait of the king attained an unprecedented richness. Since Alexander and Augustus, no sovereign had been given such learned and elaborate iconographic treatment. The greatest artists of the period were called upon to fix the portrait of the king for posterity. In 1665, Bernini came from Italy to design a heroic bust of the young sovereign treated in the baroque mode, a masterpiece to which Louis XIV always remained attached. Thirty-six years later, the portrait of the aged king by Hyacinthe Rigaud presents, in a different spirit, an image just as majestic. These two icons sum up the image of the king that posterity has preserved.

In another register, the artist of Flemish origin Adam François Van der Meulen highlights the king in his residences or on his military campaign with a very fine and subtle handling of colour and, above all, remarkable topographical precision.



2 THE GLORY OF THE KING

The royal manufactories were associated with the creation and dissemination of masterpieces designed to immortalise the glory of Louis XIV. Unfortunately, a large part of their products has disappeared: in particular, only two of the monumental cabinets made by Domenico Cucci and Pierre Gole for the king have survived. Exceptionally loaned by the Duke of Northumberland, the cabinet presented here testifies to their magnificence: it was on display in the Grand Appartement in Versailles and has now returned for the first time to the Château for which it was created.



In contrast, we can admire a much greater number of the hangings and carpets produced by the Gobelins and Savonnerie tapestry and dye workshops. The woven series on the theme of the history of the king was one of the most prestigious. These works are outstanding in their quality and their scale. The same goes for the large equestrian portraits and paintings at Marly, vestiges of a dazzling decor that has disappeared.

1. *Louis XIV as Apollo Triumphant over the Serpent Python*, Joseph Werner
2. *Portrait of Louis XIV*, Henri Testelin
3. *Apollo and Thetis*, Charles de La Fosse
4. *Louis XIV as Apollo Driving His Chariot*, Joseph Werner
5. *Mask of Apollo*, Anonymous

6. *Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Colbert*, Claude Lefèvre

7. *King Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins Tapestry Workshop...*, 13th piece of the *Tapestry of the History of the King*, after Charles Le Brun

8. A peer's very large study, Domenico Cucci

9. *Portrait of Louis XIV on Horseback*, Pierre Mignard

3 THE KING OF PEACE AND THE KING OF WAR

The image of Louis XIV always combines the twofold figure of the king of peace and the king of war. The king is the guarantor of the prosperity of the kingdom: this is the theme of numerous public monuments erected during his reign, notably the eastern façade of the Louvre for which numerous projects were studied. The grandeur of the kingdom is also manifested in the ambassadorial missions received from sovereigns in the far corners of the known world: the most famous were the embassies of Siam in 1686, and Persia in 1715, both of which were received in the Hall of Mirrors.

10. *The Reception of the Embassy of Persia*, Anonymous

11. *Louis XIV's Armour*, Francesco da Garbagnate

12. *The First Inductees of the Order of Saint Louis*, François Marot

13. *The King Governs Alone*, Charles Le Brun



4 THE VERY CHRISTIAN KING AND THE KING'S PHYSICAL BODY

Since the Middle Ages, the king of France was called the Very Christian King. He was also a miracle-working king, with the power to cure scrofula (the king's evil), as can be seen in the painting by Jean Jouvenet presented here. Like his mother Anne of Austria and his wife Maria Teresa, Louis XIV was always scrupulous in carrying out his religious duties. He manifested his piety by the construction of the Hôtel Royal des Invalides for his soldiers and, another exceptional monument, the royal chapel of the Palace of Versailles.

14. *The Holy Spirit Descending upon the Apostles*, Jean Jouvenet

15. *Louis XIV Offering his Crown and Sceptre to the Virgin*, Philippe de Champaigne

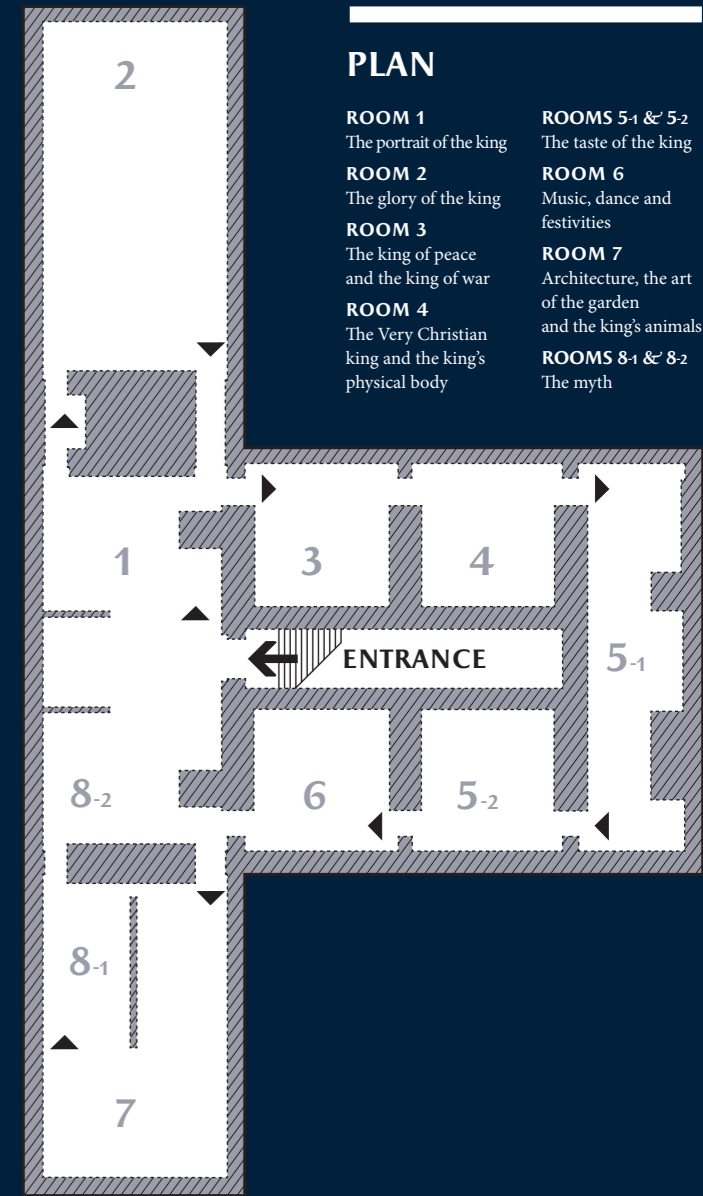
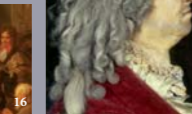
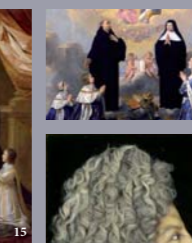
16. *Louis XIV Touching the Scrofula-Stricken*, Jean Jouvenet

17. *Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica Presenting Louis XIV, Anne of Austria and Philippe d'Anjou to the Holy Trinity*, Philippe de Champaigne

18. *Louis XIV, painted white beeswax relief, painted glass eyes, hair, lace, etc...*, Antoine Benoist



Louis XIV was also very much a man, in no way insensible to female beauty. Blessed with a particularly robust constitution, he was nevertheless marked by age and illness and never required his portrait artists to hide these effects. The extraordinary wax portrait by Antoine Benoist shows him with all the striking details of inevitable physical decrepitude.



PLAN

ROOM 1
The portrait of the king

ROOM 2
The glory of the king

ROOM 3
The king of peace and the king of war

ROOM 4
The Very Christian king and the king's physical body

ROOMS 5-1 & 5-2
The taste of the king

ROOM 6
Music, dance and festivities

ROOM 7
Architecture, the art of the garden and the king's animals

ROOMS 8-1 & 8-2
The myth



5.1 & 5.2

THE TASTE OF THE KING

The recent findings of art historians have revealed that Louis XIV was a fervent lover of art. This taste was partly inherited from Mazarin and covered decorated gems, rare, fine and precious stones set in magnificent surrounds. Louis XIV possessed a great number of them and liked to leave them on display on consoles in front of mirrors. For the first time, this type of presentation is evoked here in drawings of the period. The king also liked small bronze sculptures, which he mixed with the gems and paintings that he accumulated in the refined setting of his collector's apartment in Versailles. Among the treasures presented separately were miniatures, and notably the "vellums of the Museum", as well as the antique cameos and medals of the king's Histoire métallique.

6

MUSIC, DANCE AND FESTIVITIES

Throughout his reign, the king was a passionate lover of music. His encouragement was decisive for the career of Lully, creator of the French lyrical tragedy. The melody of a piece of music heard in his childhood and dictated from memory by the aged king constitutes a particularly moving document, apart from showing his exceptional talent. Louis XIV was also until 1670 an outstanding dancer. The ballet costume presented here is the only survivor of this period when French choreographic art flourished.



At the beginning of his reign, the king took part in the organisation and holding of dazzling festivities. Immortalised by miniatures and engravings, the most splendid were those held in Paris at the Carrousel des Tuileries in 1662 and, in Versailles, the festivities of 1664, 1668 and 1674.

19. Ship, lapis, enamelled gold, gilt silver, Italy, mid-16th century

20. A peer's chest of drawers (detail), André Charles Boulle

21. Indian Timpanist and Trumpets, François Chauveau and Jacques 1^{er} Bailly

22. The Pleasures of the Enchanted Island, 7, 8 and 9 May 1664. First Day. The King's and Queens' Feast, with Several Princesses and Ladies, Served All the Dishes and Presents Made by the Gods and the Four Seasons, Israël Silvestre and Jean Lepautre

23. The Pleasures of the Enchanted Island, 7, 8 and 9 May 1664. Third Day. Breaking of the Spell on the Palace and Island of Alcine Represented by Fireworks, Israël Silvestre and Jean Lepautre

24. The Entertainments of Versailles, July and August 1674. Second Day. Concerts Beneath Foliage in the Form of a Room, Decorated with Flowers, in the Trianon Garden, Jean Lepautre

25. The Entertainments of Versailles, July and August 1674. Fourth Day. Feast, with the Table Set around the Fountain in the Marble Courtyard of the Chateau de Versailles, above which a Column of Light Rises, Jean Lepautre

7

ARCHITECTURE, THE ART OF THE GARDEN AND THE KING'S ANIMALS

Versailles and its satellites, Marly and Trianon, testified to the king's taste for architecture and the art of the garden, two domains in which the king involved himself to the point of taking part in their design.

During his reign there was a prodigious development in the art of garden statuary. Among the most original of the groves, the Labyrinth of Versailles, now disappeared, held over three hundred animals cast in lead. Louis XIV also appreciated living animals which were taken care of in the Menagerie of Versailles. He had them painted also, such as his favourite hunting dogs.

26. View of the Courtyards and Stables of the Chateau de Versailles, Jean-Baptiste Martin



27. Portrait of Louis XIV, Hyacinthe Rigaud

28. Louis XIV on Horseback, François Girardon

8.1 & 8.2

LE MYTHE

The image of Louis XIV was also built up on the margin of or outside of the royal administration. The bronze statues of the sovereign erected in the centre of the principal towns of the kingdom provide the most spectacular illustration of this. Although they were destroyed during the Revolution, the reliefs that accompanied them have survived by chance: those of the Place des Victoires in Paris, executed by Desjardins, and those of the monument in Rennes by Coysevox. Among the royal busts presented here, the one by François Girardon is particularly remarkable for its depiction of the king in all his majesty and humanity. In the homes of his people, engraved Almanacs disseminated an image of the king often at odds with the official iconography.



The exhibition is organised by the public institution of the museum and the national estate of Versailles.

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OPENING TIMES

The Palace is open every day except Mondays, on certain French public holidays, or when official ceremonies are held:

high season
9am to 6.30pm,
last admission: 6pm.

low season
9am to 5.30pm
last admission: 5pm.

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CHATEAU DE VERSAILLES

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES PRESENTS

LOUIS XIV

THE MAN & THE KING

A STERLING EXHIBITION
20 OCTOBER 2009 - 7 FEBRUARY 2010