

LAUNCH OF THE RESTORATION OF THE SALON OF DIANA

Versailles, 20 November 2024
Press release

In October 2024, the château de Versailles began the restoration of the Salon of Diana. Major room in the king's Grand Apartment, the project focuses on the painted and sculpted decoration of its ceiling and is expected to last fourteen months. To avoid disrupting visitor's experience of the Grand Apartment, a tunnel has been installed to allow the public to continue their tour.



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THE DECORATION OF THE SALON OF DIANA

Located along the enfilade of the King's Grand Apartment, the salon of Diana was, until the destruction of the adjacent Ambassador's Staircase, one of the first rooms through which visitors entered the king's apartment. Under the reign of Louis XIV, this room hosted a billiard table during the *soirées d'appartement*.

The sumptuous decoration of the salon of Diana dates from the 1670s and is dedicated to the goddess of the hunt and the night. The walls are adorned with polychrome marbles and paintings set into the decoration (*The Sacrifice of Iphigenia* by Charles de La Fosse above the fireplace and *Diana and Endymion* by Gabriel Blanchard on the opposite wall).

The ceiling and arches are decorated with canvas murals and gilded sculptural motifs. At the center is *The Chariot of Diana* by Gabriel Blanchard, who also executed three of the four overdoor paintings: *Diana and Actaeon*, *Diana Protecting Arethusa from the River God Alpheus*, and *The Sacrifice Made to Diana*. The remaining overdoor, *Diana Receiving Offerings*, is by Claude II Audran.

Gabriel Blanchard also executed two of the four lunettes: *Caesar Sending a Colony to Carthage* and *Cyrus Hunting the Boar*. The other two lunettes, *Jason Arriving in Colchis* and *Alexander Hunting the Lion*, were painted by Charles de La Fosse.

The ceiling and lunette paintings are separated by gilded stucco and grisaille decorations, some of which, representing royal emblems, were removed during the Revolution in 1794 and returned in 1815.

The Salon of Diana is also famous for hosting the bust of Louis XIV by Bernini, created by the master of Baroque sculpture during his stay in France in 1665. It was installed here by order of the king in 1686, on a marble pedestal flanked by gilded bronze trophies and topped with two putti holding the royal crown.

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THE RESTORATION

The restoration of the Salon of Diana will focus on the painted and sculpted decoration of the ceiling and lunettes, as well as the four overdoor paintings. The paintings are in a concerning state of preservation and currently present an unsatisfactory aesthetic appearance. Significant adhesion problems between the paint layers and the canvas have caused flaking, tears, and distortions. The varnish layers are oxidised, soiled, and discoloured. The surfaces show lifting and losses, and large, discordant, and overextended retouches are visible, disfiguring the compositions.

The stuccoes are globally in poor condition, although they do not present any major structural concerns. Only a few isolated cracks have appeared, mostly small and fine. The gilding shows some deterioration; it is generally soiled and lacks uniformity, particularly due to visible repairs and the use of bronzing in previous restorations. Thanks to the work of the restorers, this decorative ensemble will thus regain all its former splendour!

The restoration, which began on 21 October 2024, is expected to last 14 months.

THE RESTORATION OF THE SALON OF DIANA IS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE PATRONAGE OF DIOR AND THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF VERSAILLES, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS DE VERSAILLES.



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