

Restoration of the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment





Contents

Press Release	p. 6
Preface by Laurent Salomé, Director of the National Museum of the Châteaux of Versailles and Trianon	p. 9
The King's Bedchambers at Versailles	p. 12
The Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment at Versailles	p. 13
The Reconstruction of the Bed in the King's Private Apartment: A Long-Term Project	p. 16
Art Houses and Master Craftsmen	p. 26
Practical Information	p. 28

PRESS CONTACT

Violaine Solari, Barnabé Chalmin Doré de Nion, Rosalie Mouzard
01 30 83 75 21 - presse@chateauversailles.fr
chateauversailles.fr/presse





RESTORATION OF THE BEDCHAMBER IN THE KING'S PRIVATE APARTMENT

Versailles, 13 April 2026
Press Release

At the Château de Versailles, the restoration of the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment, in its 1789 state, marks the culmination of several decades of research and expertise. This exceptional project restores the full coherence of an intimate space of royal power, where decorative refinement meets outstanding craftsmanship.

At the Château de Versailles, the Bedchamber of the King's Private Apartment, fitted out in 1728 for Louis XV, embodies a major evolution in the art of living at Versailles, favouring a more intimate space than the State Bedchamber. Designed by Jacques V Gabriel and Ange-Jacques Gabriel, and adorned by the sculptor Jacques Verberckt, it is distinguished by a rocaille décor of remarkable refinement. Conceived as a personal space while remaining fully within the sphere of royal representation, it also brings together exceptional furnishings — combining cabinetmaking, goldsmithing, and scientific instruments — reflecting the taste of Louis XV and Louis XVI for the arts and sciences.

Textile decoration plays a central role, structuring the entire room around the alcove and the bed, the true symbolic heart of the chamber. Alternating between summer and winter furnishings, in accordance with court practice, these ensembles of silks produced by the Lyon manufactories reflect the evolution of taste throughout the eighteenth century. Under Louis XV, luminous brocades and sumptuous velvets predominate, while under Louis XVI, a lighter, more neoclassical aesthetic emerges, characterised by brighter grounds and more ordered motifs, without relinquishing the precious quality of the materials.

Initiated in the mid-1980s, the restoration of the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment forms part of a broader effort to recover its last known historical state, that of 6 October 1789, the date of the royal family's definitive departure from Versailles. The project is based on close collaboration between historians, curators, and master craftsmen, all working to recreate, with the greatest possible fidelity, the décors and atmosphere of the eighteenth century. The textiles, in particular, have been the subject of especially exacting work. Thanks to the survival of original fragments, it has been possible to reweave the fabrics identically, using traditional

techniques, restoring the alcove, dorr hangings, and curtain motifs to their original brilliance.

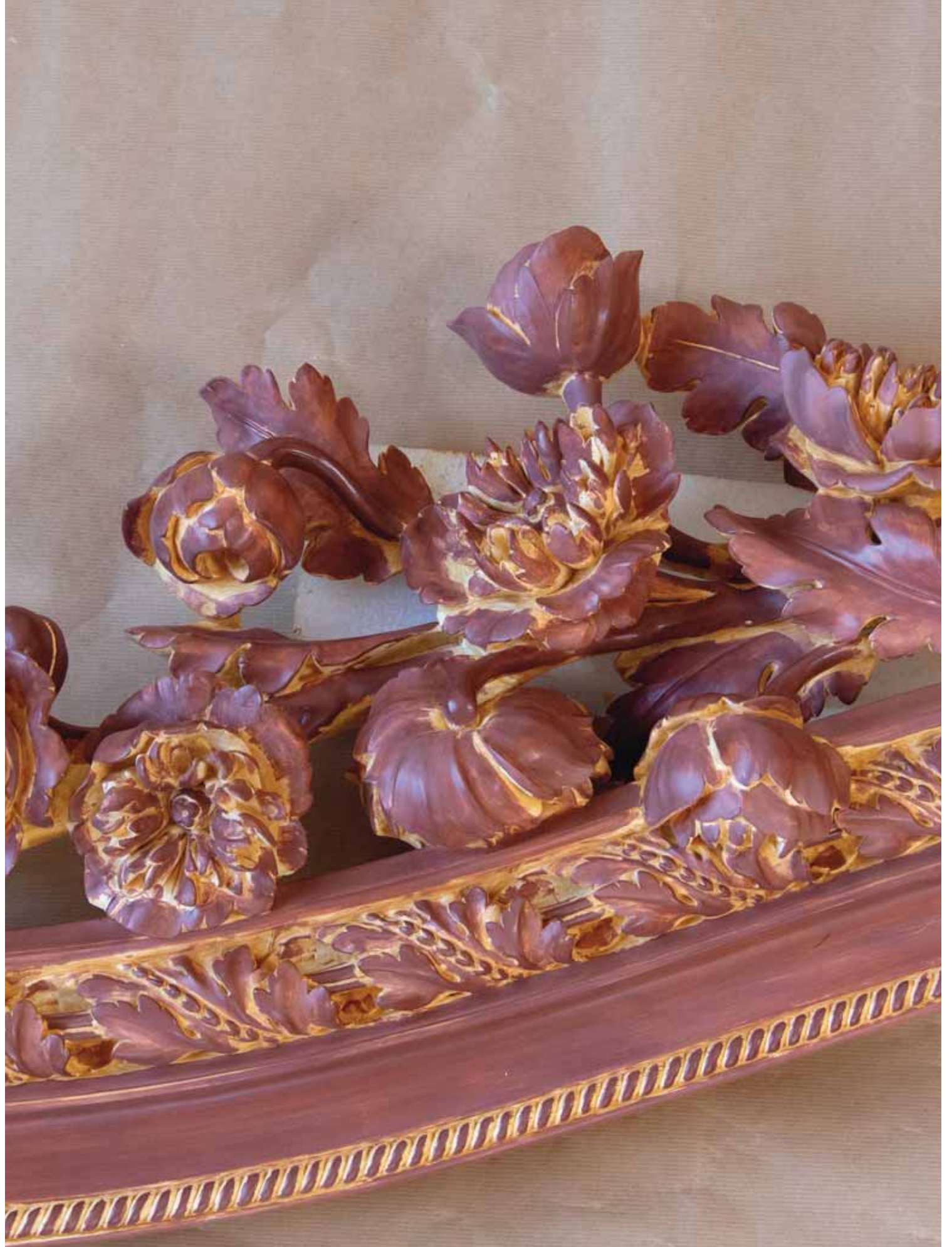
Despite these advances, the absence of the bed — the central element of the chamber — remained a major gap in the understanding of the space. A specific project was therefore undertaken in the early 2010s to restore its presence. In the absence of surviving preparatory drawings, craftsmen relied on highly detailed archival descriptions to reconstruct the forms, volumes, and decorative motifs of the bed lost during the Revolution.

This reconstruction required interpretation and execution, involving several thousand hours of carving in limewood, a material traditionally chosen for its fine grain. The carved elements were then gilded in the Château workshops using the traditional water-gilding technique.

By restoring the bed to its place at the heart of the alcove, the project not only re-establishes the decorative coherence of the ensemble, but also reinstates the function and symbolic significance of this space, both as the sovereign's living quarters and as a refined expression of monarchy on the eve of the Revolution.

The Bedchamber in the King's Apartment is open to visitors, either independently or as part of a guided tour, from 14 April 2026.





Preface

This is undoubtedly the latest in the series of major projects that have punctuated the perpetual renewal of the Château de Versailles since it became a museum — projects that remain difficult to define: restitution? restoration? refurbishing? re-creation? Louis-Philippe was the first to seek to restore both splendour and a degree of coherence to the Grand Apartment of the King, entirely emptied after the Revolution. It formed an essential part of his museum dedicated to all the glories of France: the royal layout remained central, and at its very heart, the State Bedchamber created for Louis XIV in 1701 became the first major refurbishing project at Versailles. Its bed, produced for the occasion by François-Honoré-Georges Jacob-Desmalter in an effort to imitate the original as closely as possible, now appears as a curious hybrid of the Grand Siècle and the Romantic era.

It was according to more rigorous scholarly standards than those applied under Louis-Philippe, though with far more limited means, that Pierre de Nolhac, at the end of the nineteenth century, initiated a genuine policy of restitution and refurbishing of the former apartments. Yet until the Second World War, no large-scale project combined architectural restoration, the reassembly of as many original objects as possible, and above all the reweaving of historical textile ensembles.

In the mid-twentieth century, a new threshold was reached in the museum's ambitions under the guidance of the tireless Charles Mauricheau-Beaupré. Already highly active from the 1930s in acquiring Versailles furniture, he became director of the museum in 1941. Between the end of the war and his accidental death in 1953, he multiplied initiatives. Among his achievements were the first restoration of Madame Du Barry's apartment, the restitution of the Council Cabinet with the reweaving of its spectacular blue and gold pineapple-patterned lampas, and the launch of the great undertaking that would culminate in the Queen's Bedchamber, inaugurated by Gérard Van Der Kemp in 1975.

Today, however, the rediscovery of the the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment calls to mind the great twentieth-century, particularly that of the Queen's Bedchamber. Indeed, this too is a twentieth-century project, long studied before work began in earnest in the early 1980s. The aim was to create a royal bed — no ordinary undertaking — and one requiring as much knowledge as boldness. It demanded audacity and determination, for the obstacles, considerable from the outset, could only multiply as the work progressed.

All the more so because, unlike the Queen's bed, the one made for the young Louis XVI shortly after the death of his grandfather is known though no surviving visual record. Not a single sketch of view of the room remains. Fortunately, the written sources — patiently assembled — are of such precision as to make the endeavour conceivable. Chief among them is the memorandum submitted in 1775 by the sculptor Pierre-Edme Babel, which describes in minute detail the bed ornaments and the dimensions of each element. Yet many other sources were required to reconstruct the ensemble, particularly for the embroidery and passementerie. In this domain, an exceptionally demanding exercise was undertaken, notably by Élisabeth Caude, who confronted the most fragmentary — even contradictory — data in order to deduce, from lengths of gold threads or scattered references, the composition of the trimmings and the arrangement of the textile motifs.

The process was irrevocably set in motion. The puzzle of contradictory references, pattern alignments, quantities of brocade available for cutting flowers and sprigs intended for applied embroidery, the positioning of the inner and outer valances, the arrangements of the cartisane heads — all had to be resolved. And beyond this, a bed worthy of Babel and of King Louis XVI had to be carved. Work on the textile décor continued until a new team of sculptors — bringing together exceptional expertise — rose to the challenge. They produced an *impériale* that not only follows Babel's description to the letter and respects the formal language of royal beds of the period, but also achieves that remarkable balance between majesty and simplicity, between the splendour of scrolling forms and the softness of poppy flowers.

This marks the culmination of an undertaking spanning more than forty years, one unlikely to find an equivalent in the years to come. It stands as an exceptional project of re-creation at a time when Versailles has entered a new phase of refurbishing. Far removed from the "disgusting, empty, lifeless" château that Gérard Van Der Kemp once described, with some exaggeration, upon his arrival in 1953, Versailles is now dazzling. The current priority is authenticity, with absolute emphasis placed on the return of furnishings belonging to the Crown or the Court

Yet this bedchamber, at the heart of the palace, at the corner of the Marble Court, stands as the finest testament to the alchemy of refurbishing — where historical objects inspire and illuminate reconstructions; and where a "true illusion" is achieved, because every detail is accurate and imbued with meaning.

Laurent Salomé
Director of the National Museum
of the Châteaux of Versailles and Trianon





The King's Bedchamber at Versailles

A quintessential locus of power under the Ancien Régime, the King's bedchamber at Versailles underwent multiple relocations as the château evolved. It is also important to distinguish between the bedchamber and proper — the sovereign's private space — and the State Bedchamber, the setting for the public ceremonies of the *lever* and *coucher*.

The State Bedchamber

At Versailles, the King's bedchamber did not always occupy a fixed location. In the first château of Louis XIII, it was situated to the south of the present Salon de l'Œil-de-Bœuf, before moving to the north during works carried out between 1631 and 1634. Under Louis XIV, it initially retained this position, then was relocated several times as the château was transformed — particularly during the construction of the envelope by Louis Le Vau and the Hall of Mirrors. A State Bedchamber was then formally established, before a new arrangement was fixed in 1684.

In 1701, for reasons of convenience, the King moved his chamber to the centre of the château, where it remains today.

The Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment

Upon his return to Versailles in 1722 and the Regency, Louis XV occupied the State Bedchamber but found it uncomfortable and difficult to heat. In 1738, he had a new, more intimate chamber fitted out nearby.

Enlarged with an alcove and a *cabinet de chaise* taken from the Cour des Cerfs, this new room became the central space of the King's private apartment. Its design brought together the leading figures of the Versailles building campaigns: Jacques V Gabriel and Ange-Jacques Gabriel, and the sculptor Jacques Verberck, responsible for its decoration.

The latter unfolds a rocaille scheme of extraordinary richness, yet marked by restraint. Until 1755, two sculpted palm trees, curving in an arch, framed the alcove opening. The mirrored overdoors, adorned with espagnolette-headed uprights, displays a particularly harmonious upper register: a winged cartouche edged with rocaille, with crossed quivers set against a mosaic ground. The panels flanking the alcove rank among the ensemble's masterpieces: an oval medallion depicting children at play in mock battle occupies the centre, surrounded by two rocailles linked by ribbon-bound reeds punctuated with acanthus leaves. On the ceiling, royal emblems — the King's cipher and the arms of France — affirm the official dimension of the space.



© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier



© Château de Versailles / D. Saulnier

The Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment: Décor, Textiles, and Furnishings

Textile Décor: An Expression of Royal Splendour

Within the private bedchamber, textile decoration constitutes the most immediate expression of monarchical splendour. Alternating between summer and winter furnishings, these ensembles set the tone, envelop the alcove, and enhance the bed, the symbolic centre of the space.

Under Louis XV: The Reign of Brocade and Velvet

As early as 1739, two sets were delivered. the summer furnishing, supplied by the upholsterer Sallior, was executed in Lyon brocade with a jonquil ground scattered with silver flowers, after a design by Jacques-Étienne Lallié. It included a bed, alcove and hangings, four door curtains, two armchairs, six folding stools, two loose cushions, a fire screen, and a folding screen. The curtains were made of jonquil *gros de Tours* with matching cords combining silk and silver threads, giving the room a luminous character.

The winter furnishing, delivered the same year, adopted a more solemn register: crimson velvet with a gold ground and scrolling patterns, enriched with extensive gold embroidery accented with green-gold ornament. Renowned for its exceptional cost, this textile enveloped the bed, seating, and wall hangings, remaining in use for over three decades.

In 1764, a new summer set renewed the ensemble: green *gros de Tours* brocaded with gold cornucopias. More extensive, it covered additional seating and featured curtains lined with white *gros de Tours*. The bed's wooden elements were adorned with feather plumes, recalling traditional royal ornamentation.



The Evolution of Taste under Louis XVI

Upon the death of Louis XV, the crimson velvet winter set was removed. In 1775, a new furnishing was installed: celestial blue velvet embroidered with oak leaves and floral garlands. The *lit à la française* was replaced by a *lit à la duchesse*, with a canopy fixed to the wall. Its front cresting featured a pelican feeding its young — a longstanding Christian and sacrificial symbol evoking the image of a ruler devoted to his people. The door hangings, wall textiles, curtains, and seating adopted this celestial blue, creating a lighter atmosphere.

The 1764 summer set remained in use until the mid-1780s, when it was replaced in 1785 by a new furnishing supplied by Camille Pernon: a white-ground *gros de Tours* brocaded with bouquets of flowers and ferns arranged within diamond patterns formed by gold garlands. The summer bed likewise adopted the *duchesse* form, sharing its carved structure and cresting with the winter bed, reflecting a desire for decorative unity.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the textile décor of the Bedchamber in the King's Apartment remained a key marker of the evolution of royal taste. It brought together the finest productions of the Lyon silk manufactories with a clear stylistic shift — from the opulent, gilded rocaille of the reign of Louis XV to a lighter, more neoclassical and symbolically restrained aesthetic under Louis XVI.



On the eve of the Revolution, the textiles alone were valued at nearly 260,000 livres. Beyond their cost, they reflect an evolution in the language of monarchy: majesty remained, but was now expressed in a more intimate and luminous register, without ever relinquishing in the preciousness of the materials.

Exceptional Furnishings: A Reflection of Royal Taste at Versailles

In the chamber fitted out from 1738 onward, the furnishings did more than accompany the décor: they asserted a new way of inhabiting Versailles. This room, conceived by Louis XV as a more personal space than the State Bedchamber, brought together some of the most precious objects in the château.

As early as 1739, the room was furnished with a spectacular bombe commode in kingwood, supplied by the cabinetmaker Antoine Gaudreaus and adorned with finely chased and gilded bronzes by Jacques Caffieri. A true centerpiece, it became the visual focus of the room beneath the mirror opposite the fireplace. Under the Ancien Régime, it was customary for the King's possessions to pass, upon his death, to his First Gentleman of the Bedchamber. Thus, at the death of Louis XV in 1774, the commode was given to the duc d'Aumont. It is now presented at the Wallace Collection in London, where it ranks amongst the institution's masterpieces. In 2022, on the occasion of the exhibition *Louis XV, passions of a King* at the Château de Versailles, the commode was exceptionally loaned and returned for a few hours to its original position in the room, which it had not occupied for nearly 250 years.

Over the years, under Louis XV, the decorative ensemble was further enriched; two gilt-bronze girandoles by Thomas Germain, two gold sugar bowls, a twelve-branch crystal chandelier, and a gilt-bronze fire grates adorned with mythological figures. These works, of considerable value, disappeared during the Revolution.

The King's interest in science was strikingly expressed in his bedchamber. In 1762–1763, two equation regulators—one solar, the other lunar—were installed on either side of the alcove. Among the most sophisticated clocks of their time, they reflect the strong interest that Louis XV took in the sciences. Time, measured with precision, was perceived as an element of royal power. Their cases, supplied by the cabinetmaker Gilles Joubert, are now preserved in the British Royal Collection.

Under Louis XVI, the ensemble evolved. A new commode by Jean-Henri Riesener was delivered in 1775, its more structured style marking the transition towards a neoclassical taste. Dispersed during the Revolution, it is now preserved at the Château de Chantilly following its acquisition by the duc d'Aumale. The girandoles, chandelier, and regulators remained in place, ensuring continuity. On the eve of the Revolution, the room also contained Sèvres porcelain vases—highly prized by Louis XVI—a barometer, a thermometer, and various personal objects belonging to the King.

By the end of the reign, the value of these furnishings reached exceptional levels: the gilt-bronze girandoles alone were estimated at over 100,000 livres. More than a simple bedchamber, this room emerges as a powerful expression of eighteenth-century royal luxury, where fine furniture, horology, and goldsmith's work interact to assert both the power and the taste of the King.



The Gaudreaus commode, temporarily reinstated in its original position in 2022
© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier

The Bed: The King's Other Throne

Within this chamber, the bed naturally remained a central element—not only by virtue of its position within the alcove, but also through its symbolic significance: it embodied the presence of the sovereign and structured the entire furnishing of the room.

In 1739, two lits à la française were delivered with the summer and winter furnishings. The summer bed, executed in Lyon brocade with a jonquil ground and silver flowers, rested on a frame carved by Jean-Baptiste Tillard. The winter bed, in crimson velvet with a gold ground and scrolling patterns, offered a more solemn version. All retained the traditional four-post form, with a suspended canopy and rich textile hangings. This style, inherited from the Grand Siècle, preserved the monumentality of the royal bed established under Louis XIV.

The lit à la française was maintained until the death of Louis XV. In 1775, it was replaced by the lit à la duchesse with its pelican cresting. This transformation altered the silhouette of the alcove: the volume became lighter and the décor gained in clarity. This new decorative vocabulary moved away from rocaille exuberance towards a more moral and affective iconography.



© Château de Versailles / D. Saulnier

The Restoration of the Bed: A Long-Term Project

The restoration of the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment in its Louis XVI state forms part of a programme initiated in the mid-1980s, aimed at recovering the room's last known historical condition as of 6 October 1789, when the royal family definitively left Versailles. This approach, collectively supported by the museum's leadership, marked a decisive turning point: to reconstruct a partially documented décor by bringing together historians and master craftsmen, in order to come as close as possible to the refinement and practices of the eighteenth century.

The first phase of the project, launched in the mid-1980s, focused on textiles, a fundamental element of royal display. From 1985 onward, extensive work was undertaken on the reconstruction of the summer furnishing (the white-ground brocaded silk) delivered two hundred years earlier to Louis XVI. Thanks to the preservation of original fragments in its archives, the house of Tassinari & Chatel was able to reweave these textiles identically. Work began with the alcove, whose weaving—carried out using traditional handlooms—extended over several years due to the complexity of the design. It was gradually complemented by the door curtains and hangings, woven subsequently.

Despite these significant advances, the chamber remained incomplete: the absence of the bed constituted a major gap in the understanding of the space. A provisional structure had been installed to suggest its volume, but it did not meet the standards required for a true historical reconstruction.

In the early 2010s, the decision was made to undertake a new project devoted to the reconstruction of the bed of Louis XVI. This undertaking followed on from the earlier work and required a rigorous methodology. As no drawings of the bed survive in the archives, curators and wood sculptors relied on highly precise contemporary descriptions of the carved elements, particularly the memorandum by the sculptor Pierre-Edme Babel. Unlike the textiles, whose recreation was based on surviving fragments, the bed required interpretation of written sources. At the same time, archival analysis and collaboration between curators and artisans were enriched by a rediscovery of the spirit and practices that made eighteenth-century France a pinnacle of craftsmanship and taste.

The reconstruction of the bed thus completes several decades of research and work. It restores the overall coherence of Louis XVI's bedchamber and fully reinstates the function and symbolic significance of this major space in court life.

Recarving a Lost Bed

The reconstruction of the bed's carved elements formed the first stage of the project, preceding the work of gilders, upholsterers, and passementerie specialists. Designed by Jacques Gondoin, architect and designer of furniture for the Crown, and delivered in 1775 for Louis XVI, the original bed disappeared during the Revolution. No preparatory drawings survive: the only remaining evidence consists of archival documents, foremost among them the memorandum written by Pierre-Edme Babel to justify payment for his work.

This document, of remarkable precision, describes in detail each carved element, its motifs, compositions, and dimensions. On this basis, the sculptors Charles Boulnois and François Gilles were able to reconstruct an overall design and restore the lost object in volume. The imperial canopy and the shaped framework were entirely recreated.

This process of re-creation followed a unique approach. Unlike standard practice—where sculptors work from preparatory drawings—this project relied solely on textual sources. It required extensive transcription and interpretation to translate eighteenth-century descriptions into coherent sculptural forms. The example of



Château de Versailles / T. Garnier



© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier

the side rail, described by Babel in great detail—with scrolling mouldings, split leaves, finials, garlands of flowers, and myrtle branches tied with ribbons—illustrates both the precision of the vocabulary and the complexity of its execution. The motif of the pelican feeding its young, placed at the centre of the inner rail, was conceived in reference to an eighteenth-century model.

In total, 2,500 hours of work were required by five sculptors from the workshops of Boulnois and Gilles to complete this exceptional undertaking. The elements were executed primarily in limewood, traditionally used for its fine grain, lightness, and ease of carving.

Carried out in close collaboration with the curatorial team, this reconstruction reflects a determination to restore the room to its original appearance. As the last bed installed before the Revolution, it now re-establishes the historical coherence of the chamber, restoring the richness of a lost royal furnishing. By its scale, its demands, and its unprecedented nature, this project demonstrates the capacity of the Château de Versailles to undertake restoration campaigns of exceptional ambition, in the service of heritage made accessible to all.



Preparatory watercolour for the canopy
© François Gilles

Gilding: A Versailles Craft Tradition

The carved elements were then entrusted to the gilders of the Château de Versailles, under the direction of Céline Blondel, who carried out all stages in their workshop using the traditional water-gilding technique (*à la détrempe*). This highly exacting work reflects a level of craftsmanship entirely mastered in-house.

The first phase consists of preparing the surface (*apprêts*). As gold cannot be applied directly to bare wood, the latter must be prepared to receive the precious metal. The gilders begin by degreasing the wood, then apply a preparation composed of rabbit-skin glue and garlic. This step, known as *sizing*, creates an adhesive surface onto which subsequent layers can be applied in a controlled manner. According to traditional practice, the addition of garlic improves adhesion and also provides antifungal and insect-repellent properties. Several layers of ground, composed of rabbit-skin glue and chalk, are then applied. These are sanded first with water and then dry.

The next stage is *reparure*, the refinement of the surface prior to gilding. This consists of sharpening details softened by the preparatory layers, restoring the crispness of the carved ornament, and smoothing the surface to ensure an even application of gold. It is carried out using small metal tools and abrasive paper and requires considerable experience.

A yellow ground is then applied, composed of yellow ochre mixed with water and a small amount of glue. This serves as a visual substitute in areas where gold leaf, being fragile, cannot be applied.

The application of the *bole* (*assiette*), specific to water gilding, follows. This thin layer, made of clay tinted with red ochre, water, and gelatin, creates a slightly absorbent surface that facilitates the adhesion of the gold leaf. Its warm red tone enhances the depth and brilliance of the gilding and allows for subsequent burnishing.

The gilding itself constitutes the central stage. The surface is moistened, and the gold leaf—cut beforehand—is applied using a specialised brush known as a gilder's tip. It adheres instantly to the damp surface. This delicate operation requires many years of training.

After drying, the gold is burnished with an agate tool, producing a highly reflective surface. Matte areas are then created through the application of glue (matage), producing subtle contrasts of finish.

Finally, a patina is applied using gouache mixed with water and ox gall. This step softens the brilliance of the gold, giving it an aged appearance. The gilders then gently rub the surface by hand to reveal the burnished areas and “yellow” less visible parts of the wood to ensure overall harmony across the sculpture.



Château de Versailles / D. Sautnier

The Reweaving of the Textiles: A Technical and Heritage Challenge for Tassinari & Chatel

The textile décor of Louis XVI's bedchamber, delivered in 1785 by the Lyon silk manufacturer Camille Pernon, is characterised by a brocaded gros de Tours combining coloured silks and gold threads, used for the entirety of the room's textile furnishings—wall hangings, bed, seating, curtains, and door hangings.

The reconstruction undertaken from the 1980s onwards was based on several sources: a surviving original fragment, records from the Garde-Meuble, and re-editions produced in the early twentieth century, themselves derived from models closely related to the original.

The weaving of these textiles is highly complex. The principal motif, composed of bouquets of roses and ferns, requires a large number of weft threads—up to around thirty different colours, in addition to metallic threads. Executed on a handloom (a manually operated loom controlled by the weaver), this work demands exceptional expertise and proceeds at an extremely slow pace: barely ten centimetres can be woven in a single day.

Several weaving campaigns—particularly between 1983 and 1989, and again between 2008 and 2012—were therefore necessary to progressively recreate the full decorative scheme.

In the 2010s, the project to reconstruct the bed revived the need for additional textiles. However, as handloom weaving capacity had become extremely limited, part of the production was adapted for mechanical looms. This adaptation introduced significant constraints: the original brocading technique allows each colour to be used only where required within the design, whereas mechanical weaving requires threads to run across the full width of the fabric.

Since mechanical looms can accommodate only a limited number of colours, the design had to be reworked to recreate, through combinations of threads, the richness of the original motif. This delicate process, requiring precise control of thread intersections, made it possible to produce textiles faithful to the spirit of the original model despite technical limitations.

Production itself remains slow and demanding: the density of the threads requires a carefully controlled weaving pace in order to avoid any distortion of the fabric. Moreover, certain adaptations—particularly in the use of metallic threads—were introduced to account for present-day constraints (technical and economic), while preserving the visual appearance of the décor.

Finally, the work extended beyond the principal motif. Borders, variations for seating, and the adaptation of designs to different dimensions required numerous studies and adjustments, reflecting the scale of the design work preceding the weaving process.

This project thus demonstrates both the complexity of reweaving Ancien Régime textiles and the ability of contemporary workshops to mobilise historic expertise in order to recreate a décor of remarkable fidelity.

Tassinari & Chatel, a Lyon-based silk house founded in the seventeenth century and now part of the Maison Lelièvre, continues a long tradition of textile production. It preserves a body of expertise combining artisanal techniques with contemporary processes, maintaining production in France. Integrated within the Art de vivre division of the C4 Industries, the manufactory contributes to heritage projects linked to the history of the decorative arts and the preservation of craftsmanship.



© Tassinari & Chatel



© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier





The different stages in the gilding of the pelican on the canopy of the bed
© Château de Versailles / D. Saulnier



The installation of the canopy in the bedchamber
© Château de Versailles / D. Saulnier

The Embroidery of the Bed: A Goldsmith's Work by Lesage Intérieurs

For the reconstruction of the King's bed, Lesage Intérieurs was entrusted with the execution of all embroidery, in keeping with eighteenth-century techniques. This intervention represented an unprecedented challenge: rather than creating a *décor ex nihilo*, the work had to be composed using textiles already rewoven for the wall hangings.

The process involved adapting these fabrics to the various parts of the bed—the shaped frame, quilt, bolster, base, as well as the festoons of the canopy—whose often curved forms required a complete recomposition of the design. The original motifs, notably bouquets of flowers arranged in diamond patterns, were carefully cut out and then reorganised into new compositions.

This technique, known as *appliqué* embroidery, was complemented by hand embroidery intended to connect and enrich the motifs. Executed in silk and metal threads, this “painting with the needle” faithfully reproduces eighteenth-century methods, both in materials and in gesture.

The entire *décor* was conceived as a continuous composition, requiring great precision in assembling each element. Every motif was numbered and positioned in advance to ensure perfect visual coherence. A team of highly skilled artisans was mobilised to carry out this work, which required 30,000 hours of embroidery, with constant attention to harmony and fidelity to the historical model.

This project illustrates the complexity and exacting nature of embroidery, where technical mastery serves a reconstruction that is both rigorous and sensitive to the original *décor*.

For over thirty years, Lesage Intérieurs has imagined, designed, and hand-embroidered decorative arts projects for historical, classical, and contemporary settings. The House works in close collaboration with an international clientele of museums, decorators, architects, designers, upholsterers, and collectors. Whether creating a screen by a contemporary designer, wall panelling for a classically inspired architect, or reconstructing historic *décors*, each project invites the development of embroidery at multiple scales, entirely executed by hand.

Drawing on Franco-Indian expertise, Lesage Intérieurs relies on Vastrakala, its workshop of excellence based in Chennai, India. Founded in 1993 by Jean-François Lesage, the House joined the *Métiers d'Art* of Chanel in 2014 and has been based at le 19M since 2021.



© Lesage Intérieurs

Passementerie: The Art of Detail and Colour by Declercq

Declercq Passementiers designed all the passementerie elements for the King's bedchamber—tiebacks, fringes, and braids—drawing on the defining characteristics of the Louis XVI style.

Passementerie is distinguished by the diversity and precision of its components. The tiebacks are adorned with small tassels typical of the period, while the fringes alternate, according to a codified rhythm, between twisted cords and jasmins, composed of multiple elements—migrets, mirrored ornaments, and rosettes—forming a rich and nuanced decorative ensemble.

In the absence of surviving drawings, the work was based on written sources, particularly inventories, as well as on the study of preserved fragments. This research made it possible to recreate a fringe “in gold and silk” characterised by so-called *nué* strands of the eighteenth century, featuring a *cartisane* head (a decorative terminal element) in the form of an inverted leaf, punctuating the borders.

The production of these elements mobilised the workshops for nearly two years. Each stage—preparing the materials, dyeing, winding the threads, weaving the fringes and braids, and assembling the various components—required great precision. The threads themselves are made from extremely fine silk strands, worked using traditional techniques passed down through generations.

Through the finesse of its execution and the complexity of its processes, passementerie contributes fully to the richness of the décor, in a spirit comparable to that of the most precious decorative arts of the eighteenth century.



© Declercq Passementiers



© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier

Refurnishing the Bedchamber

Today, the Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment stands as one of the most compelling examples of the refurnishing policy pursued for several decades at the Château de Versailles. Far from being limited to the reconstruction of a fixed décor, this approach is based on a broader ambition: to recreate, with rigour and coherence, the true appearance of a royal interior at the end of the Ancien Régime, making it intelligible to the public.

In many cases, as original Versailles furnishings have disappeared or are held in inalienable collections, the refurnishing of the palace cannot rely solely on the return of original pieces. The curatorial approach therefore proceeds by equivalence: assembling works and objects of the same period, originating from other royal residences.

Thus, in the bedchamber, several elements come from ensembles created for other residences of the Crown, such as Saint-Cloud, the Tuileries (now lost), or Compiègne (refurnished at a later date). These works, often produced by the same craftsmen active at Versailles, reflect a shared decorative language and a level of quality worthy of the royal apartments. Their combination allows for the presentation of a coherent ensemble grounded in historical, stylistic, and social consistency.

The Bedchamber in the King's Private Apartment perfectly illustrates this approach through the use of royal equivalents. The so-called "doves commode," a masterpiece by the cabinetmakers Joseph Stöckel and Guillaume Benneman, restored by the Versailles workshops and displayed in the room, originally came from Château de Compiègne, where it stood in the bedchamber of Louis XVI. Likewise, the folding stools now at Versailles derive from two different but equivalent sets: one supplied for the gaming salon of Marie-Antoinette at Compiègne, and the other for the King's bedchamber at Saint-Cloud. The firedogs were originally delivered for the King at Compiègne, while the fire screen once belonged to the King's bedchamber at Saint-Cloud.

The room is thus a recomposed space, made up of elements that did not originally belong to it. Yet through meticulous research, careful selection, and thoughtful integration, Versailles offers the most accurate and coherent vision possible of a royal interior on the eve of the Revolution. The aim is not merely to reconstruct a décor, but to evoke the atmosphere of life at the Château de Versailles at the end of the Ancien Régime.



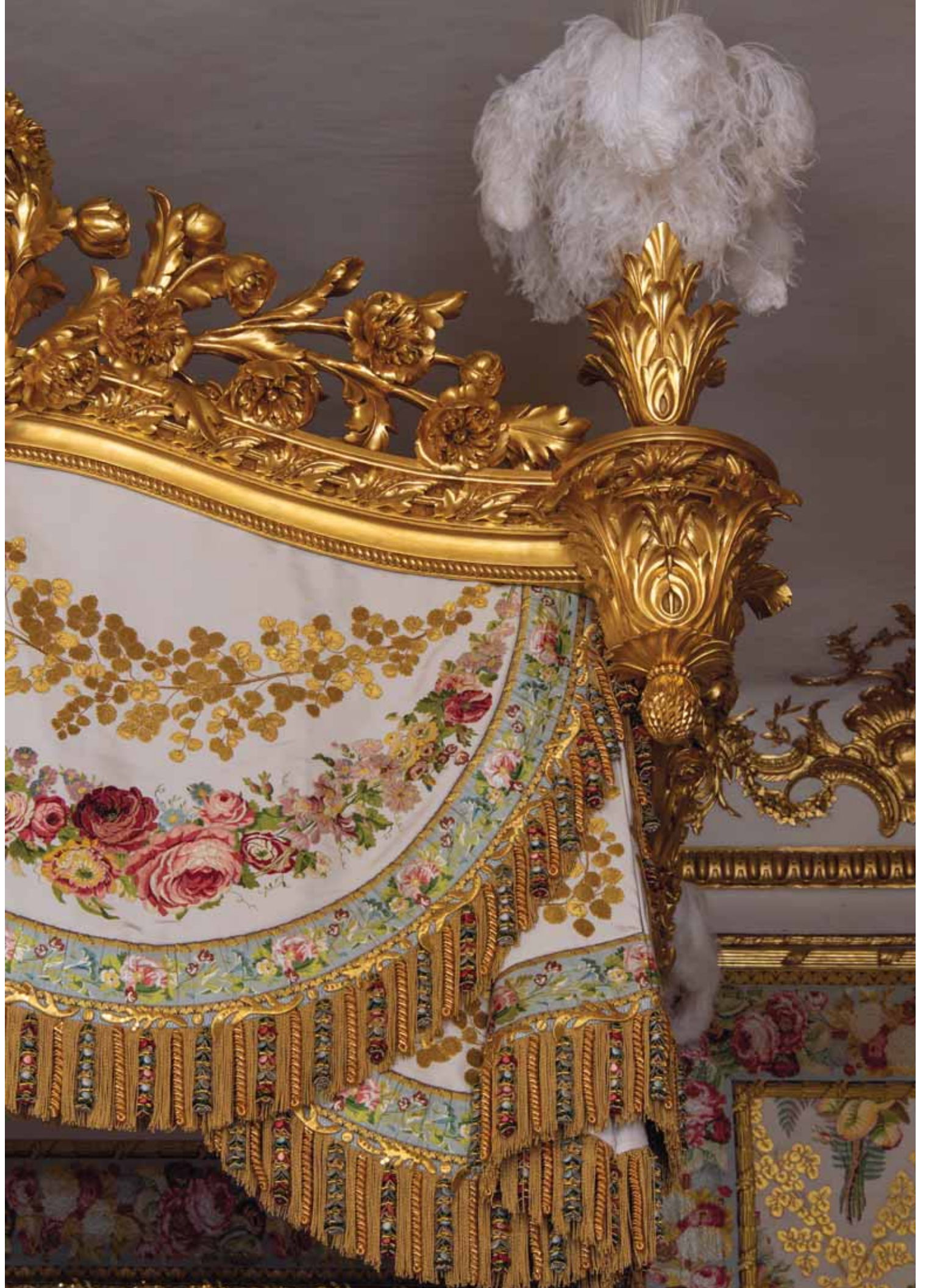
The fire screen by Jean-Baptiste Séné, originally supplied for the King's bedchamber at Saint-Cloud © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN © Christophe Fouin



The commode by Joseph Stöckel and Guillaume Benneman, originally supplied for the King's bedchamber at Compiègne © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN © Christophe Fouin



The pair of firedogs originally supplied for the King's bedchamber at Compiègne © Château de Versailles, Dist. RMN © Jean-Marc Manai



Art Houses and Master Craftsmen Involved in the Reconstruction of the Bed in the King's Private Apartment

Wood Carving

The workshops of Charles Boulnois and François Gilles

Gilding

The gilders' workshop of the Château de Versailles: Céline Blondel, Gabrielle Bourrier-Couvreur, Laura-Jean Triolet and Alice Tronche

Textile Weaving

Tassinari & Chatel

Passementeries

Declercq Passementiers

Upholstery

Sébastien Ragueneau and the upholsterers of the Château de Versailles: Jérôme Lebouc and Laurent Jannin

Embroidery

Lesage Intérieurs

Featherwork

Maison Février



Opening Hours

The Château is open every day except Mondays:

- 1 November – 31 March: 9.00 am to 5.30 pm
- From 1 April: 9.00 am to 6.30 pm

Admission

The Château can be accessed with the Passport ticket and the “1 Year at Versailles” subscription pass.

Admission is free for visitors under 18, for EU residents under 26, for visitors with disabilities, for jobseekers in France, and others (subject to proof of eligibility).

Versailles for All

Free admission to the Château (self-guided visits):

- for visitors with disabilities and their accompanying person, upon presentation of valid proof
- for recipients of social welfare benefits, upon presentation of proof dated within the last six months

Information and reservations: +33 (0)1 30 83 75 05

Château de Versailles App

Download the exhibition tour on the app available on the App Store and Google Play.
onelink.to/chateau

Getting to Versailles from Paris

RER Line C: direction Versailles Château – Rive Gauche

SNCF trains:

from Montparnasse station, direction Versailles – Chantiers

from Saint-Lazare station, direction Versailles – Rive Droite

RATP bus line 171 from Pont de Sèvres, direction Versailles – Place d’Armes

A13 motorway (direction Rouen), exit Versailles – Château

Practical Information

The Bedchamber in the King’s Private Apartment is accessible:

- Self-guided visit: from 14 April 2026
- Guided tour: as part of the “Private Apartments of the Kings” tour (available in French, English, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Italian, and Hebrew)

