

# RESTORATION OF THE HALL IN WHICH THE "TENNIS COURT OATH" WAS TAKEN

Rediscovering one of the French Revolution's iconic sites

Versailles, 4 February 2022  
Press Release

**Restoration work on the Royal Tennis Court (known in French as the *salle du Jeu de Paume*) in Versailles - an emblematic site during the French Revolution and a symbol of the birth of democracy - is drawing to a close. At the end of an eight-month restoration project, visitors will be able to discover, or rediscover, this site, often little known to the general public despite its pervasive presence in the collective imagination.**

## A LANDMARK EVENT IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Situated a few metres from the Palace of Versailles, the Royal Tennis Court was built in 1686 at the initiative of Nicolas Cretté, Louis XIV's first master of the *jeu de paume*. This ancestor of modern tennis was very popular at the time.

This sports hall entered history on 20 June 1789 when over 500 deputies - who were in Versailles for the meeting of the Estates-General convened by Louis XIV - gathered there and took a now-famous oath:

*We swear never to disperse, and to meet wherever circumstances so require, until the kingdom's Constitution is established and made firm by solid foundations.*

This founding act of French democracy is very present in the nation's memory, in particular because of the globally-recognised but unfinished work by the painter Jacques Louis David.

## A TUMULTUOUS HISTORY

Very soon after the oath was taken, the Royal Tennis Court came to be seen as a symbolic venue. It was bought by the Nation and declared a national domain as early as 1 November 1793 (11 Brumaire an II in the Republican calendar). It did not have any designated purpose, but was used in turn as a storehouse or a painters' studio (by Antoine-Jean Gros and Horace Vernet). In 1848, the building was listed as an Historic Monument. Under the Second Empire, the building was restored to its original purpose as an indoor court for playing the *jeu de paume*. 1880 marked a new phase in the venue's destiny when the Third Republic turned it into a museum of the French Revolution. It was inaugurated on 20 June 1883 by Jules Ferry (president of the Conseil and minister of public instruction).

After another period in which it was more or less forgotten, the venue returned to the spotlight during the commemorations of the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989.

Since then, it has been open to the public, thanks in particular to the Palace of Versailles' strong commitment to raising public awareness of the setting of this emblematic event in France's history.

## A NECESSARY RESTORATION

The building's condition in recent times necessitated another restoration to protect and showcase the building. The operations, which were managed by Pierre Bortolussi, the Historic Monuments Head Architect, were modelled on the museum's condition in 1883.

The roof, structure, woodwork, the painted decor in the hall and the floor were restored over a period of eight months. Work was also done on the monumental painting of the *Tennis Court Oath* by Luc-Olivier Merson (who completed the painting to David's plan) and on all of the hall's sculpted decor.

This extensive project was made possible by the mobilisation of the elected members of the French National Assembly - current or former deputies - and private sponsors. It also received funding from the France Relance plan.

The room will be open for guided tours and school visits from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

## A PODCAST

To coincide with the restoration, the Palace of Versailles is bringing out an original podcast to shine a spotlight on the venue's complex history. In fictional form, it retraces the creation of the museum of the French Revolution in 1883 and the work of the painter Luc-Olivier Merson, who was tasked by the III<sup>rd</sup> Republic with taking over David's plan to decorate the Royal Tennis Court.

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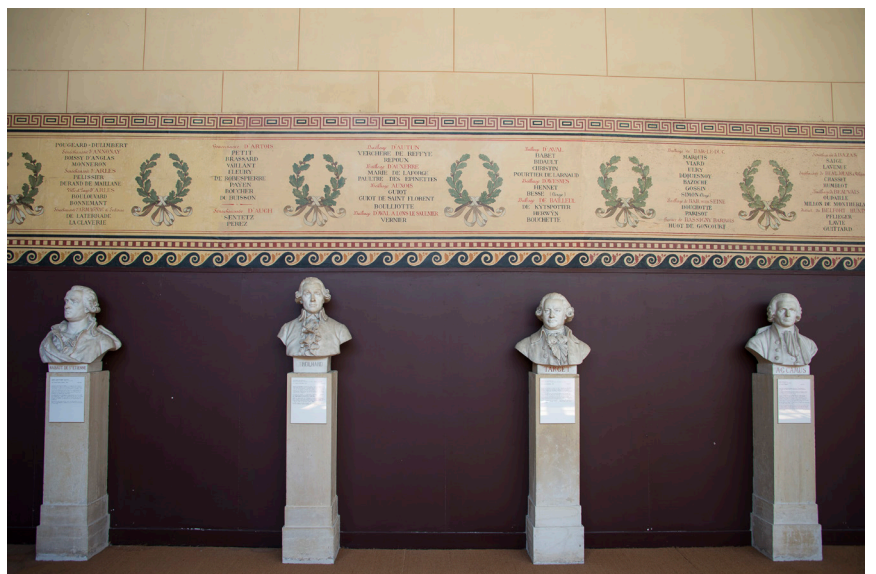


The Royal Tennis Court prior to restoration © Palace of Versailles, D. Saulnier



*The Tennis Court Oath*, Luc-Olivier Merson, 1883 (photo taken prior to restoration) © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles), G. Blot





Views of the Royal Tennis Court prior to restoration (facades, garden, galleries, etc.) © Palace of Versailles, D. Saulnier / © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier.



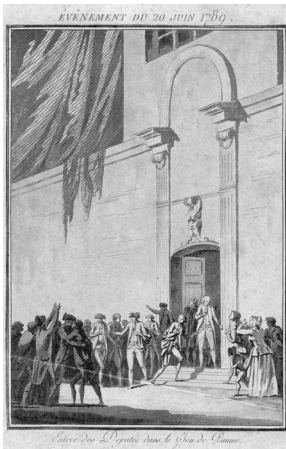
## 1789: THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT ENTERS HISTORY

### THE TENNIS COURT OATH

On 1 May 1789, Louis XVI called a meeting in Versailles of the Estates-General: the nobility, the clergy and the Third Estate (or non-privileged classes). They needed to resolve the serious financial crisis that had gripped the country since the summer of 1788.

The Third Estate deputies were hoping for reforms. When their hopes were rapidly dashed, they refused to submit to the royal authority. The Third Estate joined forces with a number of deputies from among the clergy and formally established itself as a National Assembly on 17 June. The king attempted to thwart the move by having the door to the Salles des Menus-Plaisirs, where they met, closed.

On the morning of Saturday 20 June, the president of the newly-formed assembly, the astronomer Bailly, learnt that the Salle des Menus-Plaisirs was being guarded by a detachment of French guards. He nevertheless went and stood at the entrance. In the street, the crowd was already gathering around the deputies. It was rumoured that the king wanted to disband the Estates General. Guillotin, the deputy for Paris, then suggested that they gather in a nearby hall used for playing indoor tennis (jeu de paume) and which was large enough to accommodate the deputies, who immediately went there. The meeting was opened at around 10.30am.



Historical engravings depicting the main events of the French Revolution.  
The deputies entering the Royal Tennis Court on 20 June 1789.  
Jean François Janinet (1752-1814). Engraving  
© RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles)

For fear of repression, some of those present suggested moving the meeting to the Assemblée in Paris. To prevent dispersal, Mounier, the deputy for the Dauphiné region, suggested they all take an oath. Barnave, also deputy for the Dauphiné, and Le Chapelier, the deputy for Rennes, then drafted the text of the oath, now known as the Serment du

Jeu de Paume, or Tennis Court Oath:

*The National Assembly, deeming itself called upon to establish the constitution of the realm, restore public order and uphold the true principles of the monarchy, and deeming that nothing may prevent it from continuing its deliberations wherever it is forced to establish itself, and that the National Assembly exists wherever its members are gathered; decrees that all members of this assembly should immediately take a solemn oath not to disperse, and to gather wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the realm is established and fixed upon solid foundations, and that said oath having been sworn, all members, together and severally, shall confirm this unwavering resolution with their signature.*

After reading the text, the president and the secretaries took oath: *We swear never to separate ourselves from the National Assembly, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the realm is drawn up and fixed upon solid foundations.*



The Tennis Court Oath, Luc-Olivier Merson, 1883  
(photo taken prior to restoration)  
© Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

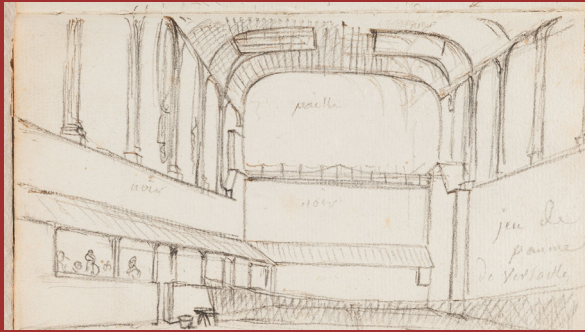
Bailly read out the new oath, standing on a table, then the deputies, most of whom belonged to the Third Estate and some to the clergy, signed the text. The meeting lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon. This oath consolidated the newly-formed assembly's existence and its united stance against arbitrary power. The assembly took on the task of establishing a constitution.

On 23 June, the deputies from the three estates met in the hall known as the Salle des Menus-Plaisirs. The king disregarded the new assembly and commanded the three estates to sit in separate sessions. The Third Estate deputies stood firm against the king.

When Dreux-Brézé, grand master of ceremonies in charge of the Salle des Menus-Plaisirs, asked the latter to withdraw, Mirabeau, the deputy for Aix, is said to have made the famous reply: *Go tell those who sent you that we are here by the people's will and will leave only by the force of bayonets.*

The deputies declared themselves a constituent assembly on 9 July, while the storming of the Bastille on 14 July saw the revolution gain momentum.

### THE HALL IN 1789



Sketch book, preparatory study for *The Tennis Court Oath*  
Jacques-Louis David © Palace of Versailles, C. Millet

During the events of the revolution, the hall was set up in the necessary configuration for playing the jeu de paume, the ancestor of modern tennis.

The floor was paved with white Caen stone. The ceiling was painted blue and scattered with gold fleur-de-lys. The walls were painted black and a waist-high net divided the hall in two.

A lean-to gallery covered in pine planks gave the balls bounce, while the spectators situated higher up were protected by nets; the outdoor balconies on which they stood were not glazed. The upper part of the hall was covered but open to the elements.

Spectators reached the balconies by going through the building adjoining it to the south, which also housed the jeu de paume master's home and the players' room.

Staircases on the sides provided access to the balconies and the galleries around the hall, so that the public could watch the game from the top of the hall, while protected by railings and nets. On the garden side, the overhanging exterior gallery is made of wooden boards on metal brackets. On the street side, the gallery is level with the street. Outbuildings to the south-east of the hall contain earth closets, along with areas used for the grooming and preparation of the players.

## JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID AND THE TENNIS COURT OATH

### AN UNFINISHED STORY

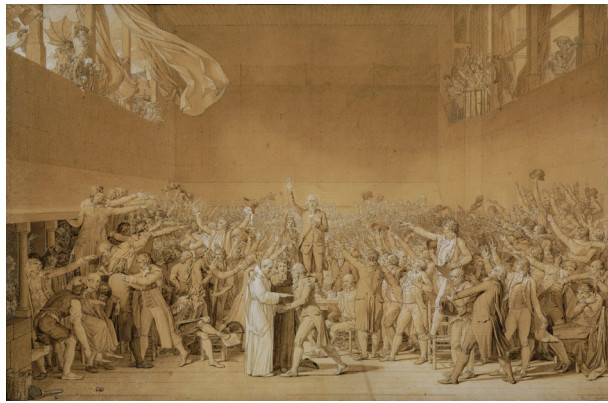
In 1789, David was already famous. After being awarded the Prix de Rome in 1774, he reaped his first major success in 1785 with *Oath of the Horatii*.

In October 1790, he presented a sketch to the Jacobin Club, along with a motion proposing that the Royal Tennis Court be *given over to silence* and that the scene of the oath be portrayed in a 20-foot high by 30-foot wide painting, which society would pay tribute to in the National Assembly, to decorate the meeting venue.

A subscription was opened in January 1791; the sale of an engraving inspired by David's work financed the project.

David borrowed many motifs from ancient history and historical painting, and set the scene in a classical tradition that lent it nobility. He drew inspiration from figures by Dürer, Michelangelo and Poussin. He also undertook extensive documentation and did nature studies. He was absent from Versailles on 20 June 1789, but probably went there to draw the interior of the hall and the roof of the palace's chapel, which can be glimpsed in the composition.

The Tennis Court Oath, preparatory drawing  
Jacques-Louis David © Palace of Versailles, JM Manai



David quickly completed a large-size (66 x 101cm) drawing of the composition as a whole in a camaieu of browns; he arranged the overall composition and preceded the work on canvas.

The work was exhibited in the artist's studio, in the Louvre, in 1791. There were numerous visitors.

David subsequently presented it at the 1791 Salon. It was hung underneath *Oath of the Horatii*, with which it forms a pair, in a way. Viewers appreciated the composition, but some found it too republican in spirit. It was this first image, reproduced several times by engraving, that brought David's plan to the public's attention and built its renown.

During the Salon, David called on the deputies, through the newspapers, to come and pose in his studio so that they could be represented in his final great painting. The announcement was worded as follows: *Mr. David requests the deputies who found themselves in Versailles when the Tennis Court Oath was taken, and whose face he had been unable to paint, to send him their engraved portraits, unless they make a trip to Paris during the time when he will be doing his painting, which he presumes will be two years. If so, would they be so kind as to come and find him in his studio in Les Feuillants.*

This is probably when the painter began in earnest to sketch out his painting. All the work of making detailed studies of the faces and clothing had yet to be accomplished. The portraits David made would then have to be incorporated into his large composition.

In the end, the subscription that had been launched was not as successful as hoped and it looked doubtful whether the painting would ever be produced. At the same time, a number of deputies tried to obtain public funding for the work, but to no avail.

Until his death in 1825, David tried many times to reach a wider audience with his work and reboot the project (in 1794, 1798 and 1799).

On being appointed court painter to the Emperor Napoleon I<sup>st</sup>, David devoted his time to a number of large paintings that are very famous today. In exile in Brussels after the fall of the empire, he returned, one last time, to the 1790 project. He assigned the right to engrave the 1791 drawing exhibited at the Salon to the engraver Jazet (in 1820-1821). This engraving drew interest from liberal circles in Paris and exiled revolutionaries. David was then working on a "guide to the Tennis Court Oath": a sort of legend identifying 50 of the people depicted in the painting, and published in 1823.



## DAVID'S SKETCH



The Tennis Court Oath, preparatory drawing, Jacques-Louis David  
© Palace of Versailles, JM. Manat

The 7 metre wide by 10 metre high canvas, intended for the *Tennis Court Oath*, had been prepared back in the summer of 1791, in the Eglise des Feuillants.

The painter's assistants copied the sketch exhibited in the 1791 Salon to the canvas, with the people clothed. David then redrew the deputies, this time naked, over the copy.

By drawing his figures naked before clothing them, as was the academic method, David gave his figures bodily substance, but he may also have wanted to underscore their character of Greek heroes. The painter had asked the deputies to come and pose for him, and had already painted four portraits on canvas - those of Mirabeau, Dubois-Crancé, Father Gérard and Barnave - when he abandoned his work.

The roughed-out painting initially remained in the Eglise des Feuillants church, until David deposited the rolled-up canvas at the Louvre in 1803. When the painter went into exile in Brussels in 1816, the work remained in France. It was cut up into three pieces in April 1826 at the time of the artist's first probate sale, but failed to sell. The whole was bought in 1836 for the Louvre, which deposited the main fragment in the Palace of Versailles in 1921. It is not known what became of the other two fragments. **The painting, exhibited since 1923, has been on display since 1988 in the Chimay Attic.**

**These rooms, which are devoted in part to the Revolution, were restored in 2020-2021 and the display was redesigned.**

## THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT SINCE 1789

### FROM 1789 TO 1883: A VARIETY OF PURPOSES

On 1 November 1793 (11 Brumaire an II in the Republican calendar), the Royal Tennis Court in which the oath was taken was bought by the Nation and declared a national domain.

It had no designated purpose, but in the late 18th century was used as a studio by the painter Antoine-Jean Gros, who painted his great masterpiece, *Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa*, there.

The hall underwent architectural remodelling at that time: the interior lean-to gallery disappeared, as did the adjacent building and the outbuildings; the high openings onto the street were fitted with glazing, while those on the garden side were boarded up. In 1833, under Louis-Philippe's reign, the room was fitted out as a warehouse and storeroom... while in 1838, it was made available to the painter Horace Vernet, who painted his largest paintings there for Versailles' historical galleries.

On 24 March 1848, the Royal Tennis Court was listed as a Historical Monument.

Under the Second Empire (1852-1870), the sport of *jeu de paume* came back into vogue and the hall resumed its original purpose. The construction of a dwelling, built against the main building to the south (but since demolished), and the restoration of the interior galleries probably date from this period.

### 1883: THE MUSEUM OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The hall, with its current architecture and decoration, dates from the late 19th century.



*Decor of the Royal Tennis Court (detail)*  
© Palace of Versailles, D. Saunier

Under the IIIrd Republic, as the centenary of the French Revolution drew near, Jules Ferry's government sought to bring the nation together around a common history and common emblems. In 1880, the 14 July was chosen as the date of the national holiday and the search began for a suitable site for a museum of the French Revolution. The choice fell on the Royal Tennis Court. In 1882, the architect of the Versailles and Trianon Palaces, Edmond Guillaume, was entrusted with restoring the interior of the building.

The lower section of the walls was painted red and finished with a moulded capping strip.

Above that, a decorative frieze alternating the names of the signatories to the oath and laurel crowns circled the hall's perimeter.

The upper part of the walls was clad with simulated cut stone with red dummy joints; the south wall bore large inscriptions related to memorable dates in the building's history.

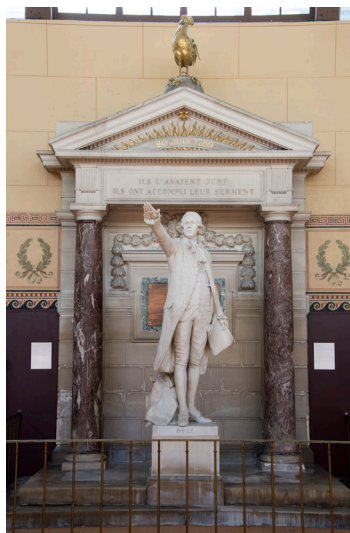
The ceiling was painted (probably in a colour similar to the current ochre shade). The floor was paved with black asphalt, with width-wise dummy joints. A central drain, covered by cast-iron plates and provided with three grids, circulated hot air from a gravity warm-air furnace installed in the garden.

A large number of works were also commissioned to decorate the museum.



## The sculpted décor

Structure dedicated to Bailly in the Royal Tennis Court  
© Palace of Versailles, D. Saulnier



A central monument dedicated to Bailly was erected. The statue of the president of the French National Assembly in 1789 was made by Charles-René de Paul de Saint-Marceaux (1845-1915), who took his inspiration from David's draft. The artist took his inspiration from David's plan. Bailly is depicted in action, raising his right hand and holding, in his

left hand, the text of the oath he has just sworn. A pile of documents at his feet calls to mind the list of grievances that Bailly helped draft for the Third Estate in Paris. The statue is the centrepiece of the commemorative decorations designed by Edmond Guillaume. It is surrounded by 22 busts of deputies who were present when the oath was taken (including Mirabeau, Abbé Grégoire, Le Chapelier and Mounier).

The architect designed an aedicule in stone and plaster to stand behind the statue; it not only magnified the statue, it also celebrated the oath-taking day in its iconography. Two columns in Red of Rance marble support a triangular pediment.

Above the architrave on which is engraved ***Ils l'avaient juré, ils ont accompli leur serment,*** (*They swore to do it; they kept their oath*)

the tympanum displays the date 20 June 1789, from which emerge rays and a star, symbolising the dawn of freedom.

Crowning the aedicule, perched on a globe decked with oak leaves, the emblematic French rooster's morning crowing accompanies the promise of a new, fraternal and equalitarian society. It was sculpted in a life-like style in a bronzy gold colour by Barbedienne, drawing on a model by Auguste-Nicolas Cain (1821-1894).

## The painting by Luc-Olivier Merson

The directors of the fine arts school in Paris commissioned a monumental painting of the *Tennis Court Oath*, which was glued to the wall. It was painted by Luc-Olivier Merson, based on David's preparatory work. It hangs on the north wall and is framed by painted friezes depicting plants.

The terms of the order are very precise, stipulating that Merson ***is to produce a painting that represents the Tennis Court Oath, based on David's drawing and rough sketch, which is in the Louvre museum.*** It also recommends that he use the grisaille method of painting in order to remain consistent with the monochrome grey of the drawing presented by David at the 1791 Paris art exhibition. Using the grisaille method would enable the monumental painting to blend in with the rest of the hall.



*The Tennis Court Oath*, Luc-Olivier Merson, 1883 (photo taken prior to restoration)  
© RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) / G. Blot

The composition is a departure from Merson's more customary symbolist work. It was produced *to the dimensions of the painting commissioned [from David] at the State's expense, by the National Assembly.*

Merson, working from Jazet's engraving, had *to stay as close as possible to the master's drawing* while at the same time redrawing certain features (such as clothing and faces) that had not been drawn in any detail by David. In an effort to be as true to life as possible, the artist looked in the national library for *all the authentic portraits he could find of members of the Assembly*, clothing and other details for inclusion in the composition.

The grisaille was finally brought to life by *a few light touches of colour.*

The production of this work by Merson and four assistants in a matter of months was a technical feat. The 1883 version of the Oath, which was at once a copy and an invention, completing the 1791 project, is possibly the finest tribute paid to David's work.

The museum was inaugurated on 20 June 1883 by Jules Ferry, then president of the Conseil and minister of public instruction.

*They pledged to free the earth, thought, man, citizens and the country. They kept this oath and the proof is that we are here.*

Excerpt from Jules Ferry's speech on 20 June 1883



*The Tennis Court Oath* (detail), Luc-Olivier Merson, 1883  
(photo taken prior to restoration)  
© RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) / G. Blot



The Royal Tennis Court after its restoration by Edmond Guillaume  
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN / © Christophe Fouin

## 1989: THE BICENTENARY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

After the celebration of the centenary of the oath in 1889, the Royal Tennis Court faded from memory and rapidly deteriorated, despite regular maintenance. In the wake of the Second World War, there was even talk of turning it into a table tennis hall for Senate quaestors, who lodged at the Palace at that time. The bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989 provided the impetus to restore the facilities.

The painted decors were reworked, together with the rendering on the upper section of the surrounding walls. The "stone coloured" decor with dummy joints was fully restored. The plant friezes framing Merson's painting were covered over. The foundations and some walls were painted in a wine-coloured shade. A floor covering in natural fibre was laid and glued down over the whole of the black cement floor.

On 20 June 1989, the President of the Republic, François Mitterrand, gave a long public speech, speaking live from the Royal Tennis Court.

It was one of the highlights of the events organised to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

*All took oath and signed; only one refused [...]. And thus this simple text was adopted: simple but decisive, since it marked the complete break with the old order and announced to the world that, from that moment on, the French people would be sovereign in its kingdom.*

Excerpt from François Mitterrand's speech on 20 June 1989



## **2021 - 2022: A NECESSARY RESTORATION**

In spite of a few occasional repairs in the years 2000, the building, which was then far more frequently open to the public, needed major restoration and refurbishment work.

After preliminary diagnoses and probes, the restoration of the weather-tight areas and the interior decors was conducted by Pierre Bortolussi, Chief Architect of Historic Monuments, and the project owner, under management by the Property and Gardens Department of the Palace of Versailles.

The project was undertaken over eight months from July 2021 to February 2022.

The benchmark period adopted for the restoration and development of the museum of the French Revolution is 1883.

The redevelopment programme consisted of the following:

- re-render the street-side façade in plaster and lime
- revise the structural framework and the slate roof
- restore and paint the sets of windows
- restore the decorative freize around the perimeter, the inscriptions on the south wall and the imitation stone-cut decor
- restore and reinstall the two lateral freizes with plant motifs situated on either side of the painting by Luc-Olivier Merson, missing since the restoration in 1989;
- paint the walls and the plinths under the decorative freize in Pompeian red, to match the colour in Edmond Guillaume's project in 1883;
- paint the gallery, the wooden structures, the panelling and the ceiling;
- restore the floor;
- redo the electrical installations and add event-management equipment
- replace the fire safety system
- install lighting to showcase the hall (freize, monument to Bailly, Merson's painting and the inscriptions)

To improve visitor facilities, the little garden that shares a wall with the hall will be redeveloped by the Versailles parks & gardens team; an access to the garden and washroom facilities suitable for visitors with reduced mobility will be created in the garden by autumn 2022.

### **THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES WORKED ON THIS PROJECT:**

- **Masonry – Cut stone**  
ENTREPRISE CHAPELLE
- **Timber frame**  
CRUARD
- **Roofing**  
COANUS
- **Woodwork**  
LES MÉTIERS DU BOIS
- **Painted decors**  
ATELIER MÉRIGUET-CARRÈRE  
MAISON DUREAU
- **Electricity / Low-current**  
DELESTRE INDUSTRIES
- **Ventilation / Plumbing - Bathroom**  
IDEX
- **Painting**  
S.A.S. LACOUR ENTREPRISE

The elected members of the National Assembly - both current and former deputies - contributed towards financing the restoration work. This one-off subscription, launched at the initiative of the President of the National Assembly, Richard Ferrand, highlights a historical link between the deputies meeting in the Royal Tennis Court on 20 June 1789 and the mobilisation of the deputies under the Fifth Republic in 2021.

The Palace of Versailles also thanks the private donors who contributed to the restoration of what is a symbolic site for democracy and for the history of France.

This restoration also received funding from the France Relance plan.



## THE RESTORATION OF THE WORKS DISPLAYED IN THE HALL

**The restoration of the large painting by Luc-Olivier Merson and all of the sculpted decor was conducted by the Management of the National Museum of the Versailles and Trianon Palaces.**

**The painting of the *Oath*** that was glued to the wall was damaged by the wall's movements since the painting was hung in 1883.

The cracks in the wall caused vertical tears in the painting, which were made increasingly visible over the years by the general accumulation of dirt and grime, in particular on the edges of the tears. This complicated efforts to read and interpret the work.

Moreover, the painting's general appearance was slightly clouded over as a result of surface mould (causing microcracking of the varnish) and dust caught in the varnish.

The restoration, which lasted about three months, was conducted in stages: general removal of the dust on the painting; testing and development of a protocol to clean the paint and to remove overpaints (previous restorations, in particular the last one in 1989); general cleaning; removal of overpaints and unsuitable restoration fillers (which had deteriorated); intermediate revarnishing of the whole; treatment of the cracks with filler; reincorporation of the occasional cracks and gaps using illusionist techniques, and attenuation of the most troublesome signs of wear.

The restoration made the very visible cracks disappear and removed grime to restore depth and visibility to the scene.

The operation was conducted under the guidance of Sophie Deyrolle. Ludovic Roudet and Eve Froidevaux worked on the support; Sophie Deyrolle, Claire Boual, Carole Clairon-Labarthe, Cécile Gouton-Dellac and Simona Vali worked on the pictorial layer.

Work was also done on **all of the items of sculpted decor** by the Palace of Versailles' sculpture workshop (Sébastien Forst and Claudia Rubino).

The 22 busts of the deputies, which were particularly grimy, were cleaned using compresses and steam in the workshop.

The statue of Bailly, on the other hand, was restored on site.

When the bronze rooster by Cain was taken down, the sculpture's powerful realism could be admired at close quarters. It, too, was cleaned, and its pedestal was consolidated.



## IFIND OUT MORE

### AN ORIGINAL PODCAST

To coincide with the restoration, the Palace of Versailles is bringing out an original podcast. In fictional form, it retraces the creation of the Museum of the French Revolution in 1883 and the work of the painter Luc-Olivier Merson, who was tasked by the IIIrd Republic with completing David's work on decorating the Royal Tennis Court.



The story plunges listeners into the Royal Tennis Court on 20 June 1883, the day the French Revolution Museum was inaugurated. In the course of an imaginary conversation between Luc-Olivier Merson and a journalist, we learn about how the painter was able to reproduce the painting begun by Jacques-Louis David and left as a rough sketch; and how he managed to remain true to the "Master's" intentions. Though nothing predestined him to follow in David's footsteps, Merson became a part of the history of the Royal Tennis Court by completing the painting for the new museum.

The two men's fictional conversation is followed by the speech Jules Ferry delivered at the inauguration of the Museum of the French Revolution: a speech that was showered with praise and extensively quoted in the press at the time.

**A Palace of Versailles production available on all of the podcast platforms: (Apple, Spotify, Deezer, Google Podcasts, etc.), on the programme *Le podcast du château de Versailles* on the Palace of Versailles' YouTube channel and on the Palace of Versailles' website: [www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr)**

### BEHIND-THE-SCENES VIDEO OF THE WORKSITE

A video released on the hall's reopening to the public will reveal the details of the work carried out over eight months: restoring the painted decors, cleaning the busts and the statue of Bailly, etc. There will be a special focus on Luc-Olivier Merson's painting, its history and its restoration.

Pictures of the worksite will be accompanied by interviews of the main people involved in the restoration, including the architect, curators and restorers.

**The video will be available on the Palace of Versailles Youtube channel.**

### DON'T MISS IT AT THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES

In addition to visiting the indoor tennis court, the public can also take a guided tour of the rooms in the Chimay Attic devoted to the French Revolution. This is where David's original sketch for the Oath is displayed, along with some of the studies for the deputies' portraits.

The Chimay Attic, situated above the Queen's apartment, was created when Louis-Philippe decided to turn the Palace of Versailles into a museum "dedicated to all of France's glories". This area exhibits famous works that illustrate the history of France from the Revolution to the Consulat. In 2020, these rooms were restored and the lighting and displays completed redesigned.

Calendar of guided tours, information and bookings:

<https://en.chateauversailles.fr/>

### VIRTUAL TOUR

A 360° virtual tour lets you explore the Chimay Attic as you wander at will through the rooms dedicated to the French Revolution and the National Convention period.

<https://www.chateauversailles.fr/resources/360/napoleon/index.html>

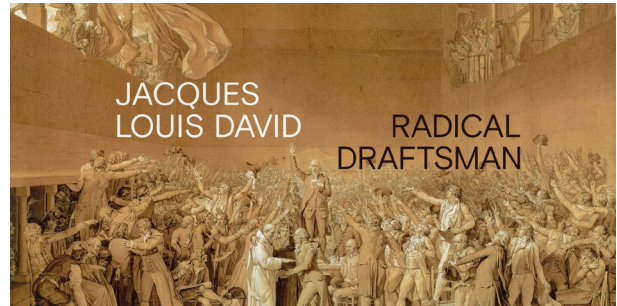
## THE TENNIS COURT OATH AND DAVID UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT IN NEW YORK IN 2022

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) is holding the first exhibition devoted to David's work as a draftsman.**

Nearly 100 works have been gathered together, drawn from the MET's collections and other public and private collections in the USA or abroad, some of which have never been on loan or have only recently been discovered. Works from many French museums (including the Louvre, Petit Palais, Musée Carnavalet and Musée de la Chartreuse in Douai) are on show, enabling visitors to explore this key aspect of the artist's creation.

In David's work, drawing precedes painting and allows him to clarify and set down his ideas for the creation of his major compositions. Visitors will be able to discover his creative process from the outset.

For this exhibition, the Palace of Versailles is lending several works from its collections more specifically linked to the *Tennis Court Oath*, a work that holds a special, almost legendary place in the artist's career. Visitors will be able to discover David's preparatory drawing (the one exhibited in the 1791 Salon), along with the sketches from his book of studies for the Oath.



***Jacques-Louis David: Radical Draftsman***  
**Exhibition from 17 February to 15 May 2022**  
**at the MET, New York**

**Find out more: [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org)**

**Press contact: [communications@metmuseum.org](mailto:communications@metmuseum.org)**