

## MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS





CONTENTS

Press release	p. 4
“A journey that raises countless questions about etiquette and privacy”	p. 7
“The precious illusion of entering a place that the Queen just left”	p. 9

**A SINGULAR APARTMENT** p. 10

**THE FIRST FLOOR: A SHOWCASE FOR THE FRENCH DECORATIVE ARTS** p. 13

Méridienne Room	p. 14
Library	p. 16
Gold Room	p. 17

**THE SECOND FLOOR: EXPLORING THE PRIVATE LIFE OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE** p. 21

Billard Room	p. 23
Dining Room	p. 23
Boudoir	p. 25
Principal Chambermaids' and Servants' Rooms	p. 26
Laquer Room	p. 29
Servants' (or Fersen's) Rooms	p. 30
6 questions to Hélène Delalex	p. 32

**EXCEPTIONAL SAVOIR-FAIRE** p. 37

The Triumph of Toile de Jouy	p. 38
Restoration Work in the Palace's Studios	p. 40
The Patrons	p. 41

**TAKING THE NEXT STEP** p. 43

Guided Visits	p. 44
Marie-Antoinette's Versailles	p. 45
Publications	p. 47
The Toile de Jouy Museum	p. 48

**MEDIA CONTACTS**

Hélène Dalifard, Violaine Solari, Elodie Mariani,  
Barnabé Chalmin

01 30 83 75 21 - [presse@chateauversailles.fr](mailto:presse@chateauversailles.fr)  
[chateauversailles.fr/presse](http://chateauversailles.fr/presse)



# REOPENING OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Versailles, 27 June 2023  
Press release

**As of 27 June 2023, visitors to the Palace of Versailles will once again discover a series of rooms shrouded in mystery within the former royal residence: the queen's private chambers. Several years of research and restoration have reawakened the richness and coherence of an eminently feminine suite of rooms spanning two floors of the Palace.**

Niched behind the gilded panelling and the silk wall hangings of the Queen's State Apartment there lies a two-storey suite of smaller rooms with windows looking out upon modest inner courtyards. Welcome to the queen's private chambers, decorated by Marie-Antoinette starting in 1774.

## MÉRIDIENNE ROOM, LIBRARY AND GOLD ROOM

The lower floor of these personal quarters comprises two rooms reserved for the sovereign. **A chamber known as the "Mérienne"** – in reference to the divan positioned in a mirror-clad alcove – was fitted out for Marie-Antoinette in 1781. The décor of this room, among the most precious in the Palace, evokes the joy of the royal couple upon the birth of their first son. Extensive research by curators made it possible to reproduce the final lilac-hued textile decoration, enriched with varied tones of green that adorned the room under Marie-Antoinette.

**The adjacent library**, which has recently been restored as well, exhibits a superbly delicate décor also dating from 1781: two-toned gilding, doors concealed by mock book jackets and ingenious shelves supported by a rack and pinion system exemplify the uniqueness of this room. The Méridienne Room and Library were restored thanks to the patronage of the Friends of Versailles.

**Next comes the great inner chamber or "Gold Room"**. In 1779, Marie-Antoinette had the walls covered with monumentally rich silk hangings embellished with flowers, arabesques and gold medallions, supplanted in 1784 by a new décor of sculpted wood panelling inspired by the budding fascination with ancient Egypt. Known as the "Gold Room" in reference to this décor, the chamber recently underwent a comprehensive restoration.

## AN AIR OF LIBERTY ON THE UPPER FLOOR

As of 1774, the queen laid out a series of smaller rooms directly above. These spaces were reserved for her personal use, as well as for her Principal Chambermaids and servants. The two storeys were connected by narrow staircases, including the Billiard Staircase, located behind the alcove in the Queen's Bedchamber. Following extensive archival research into the use and hierarchy of these rooms, as well as the appearance and production of the original Toile de Jouy fabrics during the reign of Marie-Antoinette, these rooms will all be restored, refurnished and embellished with new fabric adornments.



Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

Visitors will be invited to discover a new layout evoking the private life of Marie-Antoinette. The spaces include two rooms “À la Reine” – a **dining room** and a **boudoir** – a Billiard Room (an immensely popular game at Court since the time of Louis XIV) transformed into a Reception Room, **three rooms reserved for the Principal Chambermaids and three servants’ rooms**. Initiatives to reproduce the Toile de Jouy fabrics, a central feature of the refurbishment of the upper floor, served to promote preservation of artistic crafts by making extensive use of the traditional flatbed technique, thanks to the expertise and patronage of the Maison Pierre Frey. As such, the rooms “À la Reine” will exhibit decorative features such as Great Pineapple fabric, one of the finest creations of the Manufacture de Jouy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

These chambers will be refurbished with new acquisitions and a collection of restored and reupholstered furniture and *objets d’art*. Each space will evoke a facet of the queen’s life: **Madame Campan**, her Principal Chambermaid, **her entourage**, in particular the Princesses of Chimay and Lamballe, **the royal family and the close relationships she maintained with her children**. One room will exhibit specimens of 18<sup>th</sup> century textiles used for these chambers, while a final space will be dedicated to the memory of Marie-Antoinette.



Billiard Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

## MARIE-ANTOINETTE: A QUEEN WITH A NEED FOR PRIVACY

Shortly after her arrival in Versailles in 1770, Marie-Antoinette took as her own the first-floor apartment of Marie Leszczyńska, as well as several private rooms located on the other side. A bold young lady with unabashed tastes and keen appreciation of her rank as Archduchess of Austria and future Queen of France, she quickly ordered work to beautify her quarters. Her demanding and impatient nature even sparked disapproval from Ange Jacques Gabriel, First Architect to the King.

These successive refurbishments became more and more frequent, testifying to the desire for privacy felt by a vivacious young woman with an innate taste for independence. In these chambers, the queen’s true living quarters accessible only to the chosen few, Marie-Antoinette enjoyed respite from the trials and tribulations of court life and spent time with her children and her intimate circle of friends.

**She never ceased to transform, extend, refurbish and beautify her chambers until 1788, indulging her passion for interior design. She arrayed these rooms with especially elegant furnishings, illustrations of the harmony and perfection of the French decorative arts at the twilight of the Ancien Régime.**



Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Genest, Madame Campan, Joseph Boze, © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © F. Raux



Jewellery case; Martin Carlin, 1770 © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) G. Blot

### LIMITED-TIME EVENTS FROM 27 JUNE TO 9 JULY

For two weeks, the Palace of Versailles offers its visitors **12 guided visits per day** to discover the restored and refurbished queen’s private chambers.  
**Information and booking: [chateauversailles.fr](http://chateauversailles.fr)**







## "A JOURNEY THAT RAISES COUNTLESS QUESTIONS ABOUT ETIQUETTE AND PRIVACY"

When entering the Queen's Bedchamber, all shimmering gold, one would not notice the door concealed in the wall hangings, behind the huge jewellery cabinet. And yet, it is a legendary door, having opened onto Marie-Antoinette's joys of life and tragic destiny. It was through this door that, on 6 October 1789, the Queen escaped the fury of the revolutionaries. She would never return to Versailles, where that day saw the end of the monarchy, whose codes and paradoxes are reflected in a few hidden rooms. Indeed, it was through this door that, for a few fleeting years—barely ten—Marie-Antoinette withdrew from the Court and believed herself safe from its judgments and rumours.

Life with its pleasures and sorrows... The first floor leads us into the Queen's dreams. The Méridienne Room filled with the languid mood of a young mother; in the adjacent library, the books that were read to her, but whose eclectic selection tells us little about her real taste; the Gold Room where, if you listen carefully, you could almost hear a few notes played by her tutor, Gluck.

The curators of the Palace of Versailles persevered for many years to restore this perfect image and reconnect the Queen's public and private lives. But it is perhaps on the second floor, which is now being revealed to us, that we get an even greater sense of Marie-Antoinette's privacy where only a few friends and her close entourage were admitted. These rooms, so small that only groups of ten persons can visit them, display lightness. Once again, the curators have succeeded, through their careful attention to the smallest details, in restoring coherence to these rooms. But one could say that their expertise went even further and restored the very atmosphere of these apartments. This speaks to the passion that they share with the craftsmen who carried out this restoration. Reproduced thanks to the expertise and generous patronage of the Maison Pierre Frey, the Toile de Jouy fabrics evoke Marie-Antoinette's taste for décor and seem to be imbued with her mood at the time, always eager to set fashion trends.

These apartments bring together furniture and *objets d'art* relentlessly acquired over the last few years, while showcasing craftsmanship with breathtaking gilding and passementerie.

Transported by the words of their guide, our visitors are invited to discover a new evocation of the life of Marie-Antoinette. A journey that raises countless questions about etiquette and privacy. It mirrors the journeys through the gardens of the Petit Trianon, the Queen's Hamlet and the Queen's Theatre.

Each of them alone deserves a visit to Versailles.

**Catherine Pégard**  
President of The Public Establishment  
of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles







## "THE PRECIOUS ILLUSION OF ENTERING A PLACE THAT THE QUEEN HAS JUST LEFT"

The private space of Queen Marie-Antoinette, carefully preserved at the heart of the Versailles institution, is both the most compelling subject for anyone interested in the last days of the monarchy, and the most difficult one to recreate. It is indeed a question of recreating this world of absolute sophistication, since it had largely disappeared and, to further complicate the task, left very little trace in the archives. A lengthy process of cross-checking blueprints, suppliers' accounts, orders and various documents has provided a reliable picture of the layout of these apartments, of these "private chambers" whose very name fires imagination. The hoped-for reward is that visitors will have the precious illusion of entering a place that the queen has just left.

Connoisseurs of Versailles have long been familiar with the first floor, where the layout has been less altered, and a number of remarkable décors have survived. However, it was not until 2003 that the great inner chamber, or Gold Room, was refurbished to its current lavish state. The library underwent restoration in 2020, which revealed the sophistication of its fittings and two-colour gilded woodwork, and which continues to be gradually filled with books bearing the queen's coat of arms, as new acquisitions come in. As for the Méridienne Room, the most moving and undoubtedly the most beautiful room, with its décor fully devoted to rest, love and maternity, a major architectural restoration was carried out in 2015, followed by an ambitious programme to reconstruct its last piece of summer "furnishing," a fabric with either a lilac or violet background, depending on the source, with its flower pattern brocade and passementerie. It already looks magnificent and more appealing than the humble blue *grenadière* fabric of the previous reconstruction. The embroidery that will adorn the chairs, sofa and cushions still needs to be completed. Luckily, the extraordinary arabesque motifs of these embroideries are well known, as some of them were photographed before they were destroyed in Germany during the Second World War.

The second floor embodies the ultimate level of tranquillity and simplicity required by the queen. A first presentation, inaugurated in 2008, recreated the Billiard Room and gave visitors an initial glimpse of the printed Toiles de Jouy fabrics that adorned the chamber, with their large motifs of "strange flowers". Research carried out since then enabled us to restore the hierarchy of the décor of the rooms "À la Reine" and those of her "Maids," and to identify motifs from the archives of the Musée de la Toile de Jouy and of several other collections that precisely match the delivery dates. Lastly, the furniture has been considerably enriched through recent acquisitions and numerous restorations. Now key to evoking the queen's personality, taste and lifestyle, this floor has become a must-see.

**Laurent Salomé**  
Director of the National Museum  
of the Palaces of Versailles and Trianon



## A SINGULAR APARTMENT



LOCATION OF THE QUEEN'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS, SURROUNDING THE QUEEN'S AND DAUPHIN'S COURTYARDS



### PRIVATE AND STATE APARTMENTS CENTRAL TO THE WORKINGS OF THE COURT

Starting in 1661, Louis XIV undertook a radical transformation of his father's hunting lodge, initially intending to convert the modest edifice into a holiday manor outside of Paris. Although the plan to make Versailles the centre of royal power had yet to take seed in the king's mind, Louis XIV spared no expense to aggrandise and beautify this palace, his new passion. Versailles thus expanded, and as it grew, there emerged a need for spaces that would meet the requirements of etiquette. Indeed, the Court had to embrace the king's immutable routine: from the moment he awoke in the morning to the moment he retired in the evening, every courtier - and even anyone in France according to the Duke of Saint-Simon - would know what Louis XIV was doing at any given time.

This public life called for state apartments to host the different ceremonies punctuating the daily activities of the royal couple. To create such apartments, in 1661 Louis XIV called on architect Louis Le Vau to carry out a large-scale construction project encircling his father's château on the south, west and north sides while maintaining the east-facing inner courtyard. This "envelope" of Italian inspiration heralded the Versailles we know today. A balcony on the upper floor giving onto the gardens - later replaced by the Hall of Mirrors - connected the State Apartments of the king and queen, laid out respectively on the north and south end of the palace.

The sovereigns' public activities took place in the two royal apartments; however, the king and queen also maintained private rooms shielded from the daily throngs of courtiers. These spaces, aligned with the State Apartments, formed suites known as "private chambers", "interior apartments" or "personal apartments", depending on their function. For example, Louis XIV had his collections of paintings displayed in these rooms.



## THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS

Queen Maria Theresa's private chambers included five rooms overlooking both the Marble Courtyard and a large inner courtyard known as the "Queen's Courtyard". The décor of these rooms has been largely lost to history, but we do know that Maria Theresa reserved them for family use.

Between her death in 1683 and the arrival of the Dauphine Maria Anna of Bavaria in 1688, the chambers were unoccupied. However, upon the latter's untimely death in 1690, the new dauphine, Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, mother of Louis XV and Duchess of Burgundy, took possession of these rooms until her own death in 1712.

The chambers subsequently remained empty until 1725, when Marie Leszczyńska, wife of Louis XV, arrived at Versailles. No changes had been made since the death of the Duchess of Burgundy.

It was not until 1728 that the first significant alterations were carried out, proceeding in phases until 1748. In particular, Marie Leszczyńska took possession of the apartment once occupied by the Duke of Burgundy, who had passed away in 1712 mere weeks after the death of his wife. With this addition, the surface area of the queen's private chambers increased, and the rooms could gradually be enlarged and attributed new functions. In particular, a Small Gallery was created, later becoming the Chinese Room, its walls hung with Asian-inspired panels painted by the queen's own hand, as well as a Bathing Room and an Oratory.

Marie Leszczyńska died in 1768, leaving the Queen's State and Private Apartments once again unoccupied until the arrival at Versailles of young Marie-Antoinette in 1770.

### The first floor

The rooms on the first floor, located opposite the State Apartment, have always been reserved for the personal use of the queen or, when no queen was reigning, the dauphine. Maria Theresa and Marie Leszczyńska attributed diverse functions to these spaces, including an oratory, a painting room and a library, depending on their tastes and occupations. The queen's private areas were easily accessible from her State Bedchamber.

The current design of this floor reflects the space inhabited by Marie-Antoinette until 1789. Three staircases lead up to the second floor: the Billiard Staircase, the Fleury Staircase and the Dupes Staircase, the oldest in the Palace, dating from the time of Louis XIII.

### The second floor

Immediately upon taking up residence in the Queen's State Apartment, Marie-Antoinette hastened to enlarge her personal space in the Palace. In addition to gradually reconfiguring the first floor, she took over other rooms on the upper storey, previously reserved either for her own servants or those of the king.

Extensive historical and archival research has provided insight into the structure of the second floor, in particular the hierarchy of rooms. Complementing these investigations, Toile de Jouy fabrics were exactly selected from among several thousand historical samples to reflect the patterns adorning the walls and doors under Marie-Antoinette, as well as the curtains and chairs, all of which were reupholstered during the restoration work.



View from the first floor of the private chambers  
© Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier







# 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR THE FIRST FLOOR: A SHOWCASE FOR THE FRENCH DECORATIVE ARTS

Under Marie-Antoinette, the first floor of the Queen's Private Chambers gradually took on the appearance we see today.

Demanding, graced with indisputable taste, and as much an instigator as a follower of the fashions of the time, Marie-Antoinette transformed her private chambers into a stylish haven where she could seek refuge from the ordeals of public life.

To this end, the Office of the Superintendent of the Kings Buildings called on the finest craftsmen in the kingdom: Pierre Gouthière, a virtuoso bronzesmith, created the delicate eagles adorning the mirrors in the Méridienne Room, while the Rousseau brothers carved the woodwork in the Library and the Gold Room.

Today, the first floor of the Queen's Private Chambers stands out as a unique illustration of the refinement and excellence of the French decorative arts in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.



## 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR MÉRIDIENNE ROOM

In 1781, to mark the birth of the future dauphin, Marie-Antoinette fitted out a new boudoir directly behind the bedchamber of the Queen's State Apartments, replacing a disused staircase. This boudoir, which took the name Méridienne from the divan positioned in its mirror-clad alcove, offered Marie-Antoinette a space for herself, away from prying eyes. "A passageway connecting the queen's bedchamber to her inner study and library allowed servants to go about their business without interference, and without disturbing Marie-Antoinette".

**That same year, the Court was engulfed in expectant excitement: the queen was pregnant and the kingdom might soon have a dauphin.** The new room was decorated to reflect the upcoming event: dolphins, Jupiterian eagles, Juno peacocks and more served as reminders of the birth of an heir and the happiness of the royal couple. This hope proved well founded: Louis-Joseph was born on 22 October 1781, one month after the room was completed.

The design of the Méridienne Room was entrusted to Richard Mique, the queen's favourite architect. In addition to the decorations recalling the birth of the dauphin, other features accentuated the chamber's eminently feminine character: Cupid's bows atop the two main panels, garlands of flowers and rose petals interspersed with pierced hearts, mirrors embellished with symbols of Venus, etc.

Deliberate irregularities bear witness still today to the refinement and quality of the decorations created by the Rousseau brothers, ornamental sculptors who left some of their most brilliant masterpieces at Versailles. For instance, each flower is unique, distinguished from the others by discreet particularities visible in each petal: every piece was created entirely by hand with no mechanical duplication.



Detail of the cornice in the Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Detail of the Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Detail of the Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



## RESTORATION OF FABRICS

The furnishings of the Méridienne Room have a complex history. Commissioned by the Royal Garde-Meuble and designed by Georges Jacob, they originally included seven pieces, in addition to the divan. All that remains of this ensemble are two armchairs acquired by the Palace of Versailles in 1980. In 1781, the Royal Garde-Meuble recommended an ice-blue *grenadière*, i.e. simple light blue silk, to upholster the furniture and the divan and to create curtains for the room. The Queen refused this idea. A second proposal was made in 1782 for “satin embroidered with nuanced silk ribbons”, again rejected by the queen. In 1784 or 1785, doubtless weary of the interminable backs and forths, Marie-Antoinette called on her private Garde-Meuble, who suggested a luxurious lilac-coloured *gros de Tours* embroidered with flowers, foliage in a gradation of green hues, and beaded pearls. The Queen accepted this new textile – or “furnishing” – of which almost nothing remains today.

The modern textiles that adorned the Méridienne Room before its recent restoration recalled the ill-fated ice-blue *grenadière*. The Palace of Versailles thus decided to delve into historical research with a view to accurately reproducing the textiles ultimately chosen by Marie-Antoinette.

Several sources were compiled and compared. Firstly, remnants of the original textiles used on the armchairs were found under the modern upholstery of the armrests and on the outer backrests. They were compared with a number of old black-and-white photographic sources, some of which come from the Berlin Kunstgewerbemuseum and date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Detail of the silk curtains and passementerie in the Méridienne Room  
© Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

Another comparison was carried out between the remains of the original fabric and the silk chosen for the Queen’s boudoir at the Palace of Compiègne; the upholstery from the sofa and two chair backs is preserved at the Hermitage Museum. The silk fabrics from Versailles and Compiègne present compelling similarities, with a clear resemblance in floral decoration, colour harmony and other aspects. The only differences are the designs of the cartouches on the armchairs: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, chinoiserie were probably used at Versailles to complement the pekins on the armrests, while furniture at Compiègne likely displayed hunting scenes.



Pair of armchairs “À la reine”, Georges Jacob (cabinetmaker), Tassinari & Chatel (silk manufacturer), ca. 1781 © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin



Detail of the silk hangings in the Méridienne Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

## 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR LIBRARY

Marie-Antoinette had already been queen for five years when, in 1779, she requested the renovation of her library. The library she had had fitted out as dauphine in 1772 was first hastily enlarged, as can be seen from the design of the parquet floor, which still traces the outlines of the previous library. A new décor followed, richer and more in keeping with her rank: gilding in dual shades of green and yellow gold upon a surface painted a pale grey hue known as “blanc du roi”. Naturally, the Queen’s monogram is omnipresent. Decorations also include the French royal coat of arms and two-headed eagles, a reminder of Marie-Antoinette’s Habsburg roots.

The new library also featured some noteworthy technical innovations: a unique rack-and-pinion system made it possible to adjust the height of the shelves holding the books, a stove, refillable from the outside terrace, was concealed beneath a window, and the heavy *trompe-l’œil* doors were supported by reinforced hinges, the edges of the leaves coated with velvet to prevent dust from damaging the volumes.

Two years later, an annexe to this library was created from a room leading to the Gold Room that was once used by the queen’s chambermaids.



Library annexe © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Overview of the library © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Detail of a drawer in the library © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



## 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR | GOLD ROOM



Overview of the Gold Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

The wing housing the Gold Room is a 1699 addition to Le Vau's envelope, splitting the Queen's Courtyard and creating the Dauphin's Courtyard to the west. This wing was built to accommodate the apartment of the Duke of Burgundy, father of Louis XV, who wanted to be closer to his wife's lodgings in the Queen's State Apartments. The layout of these rooms was changed several times for Marie Leszczyńska, who installed a bathing room here as of 1728.

The condition of this part of the private chambers remained unchanged until 1779, when Marie-Antoinette called on Richard Mique to create a new décor for this ample room. To take advantage of the little light that filtered through the windows giving onto narrow courtyards, Mique created an alcove, which he lined with mirrors. Meanwhile, Jean Charton, a silk manufacturer from Lyon, wove sumptuous silk hangings with gilded medallions and floral motifs based on designs by Jacques Gondouin to decorate the walls. To furnish the room, Jean-Henri Riesener, the illustrious German cabinetmaker based in Paris, supplied a set of six pieces including a table, a folding secretary and a chiffonier designed as a bookcase.

In 1781, Empress Maria Theresa left Marie-Antoinette her collection of Japanese lacquer *objets d'art*, which sparked a new passion in the queen, inspiring her to start her own collection. Marie-Antoinette decided to display these pieces in her great private chamber, but the fresh, flowery décor of silk wall hangings clashed with the deep gold and black of the lacquers. She thus demanded that the room be redecorated. The new décor, delivered in 1784, is the one we know today.

The Rousseau brothers were commissioned to create the sculpted, gilded panelling painted in *blanc de roi*. The embellishments harken back to ancient times: sculpted sphinxes and incense-burners giving off perfumes and smoke echo the budding fascination with Egypt.

The furniture was replaced as well. In 1783, Riesener delivered a fall-front writing desk, a chest of drawers and a corner cabinet. These three pieces of highly refined furniture were coated in Japanese lacquer with a view to complementing the new collection of objects bequeathed by Maria Theresa to her daughter. Consoles, garlands of flowers and branches in matt gilded bronze: this room held Riesener's greatest masterpieces.



Detail of woodwork in the Gold Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Japanese lacquerwork dog-shaped box in the Gold Room  
© Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier















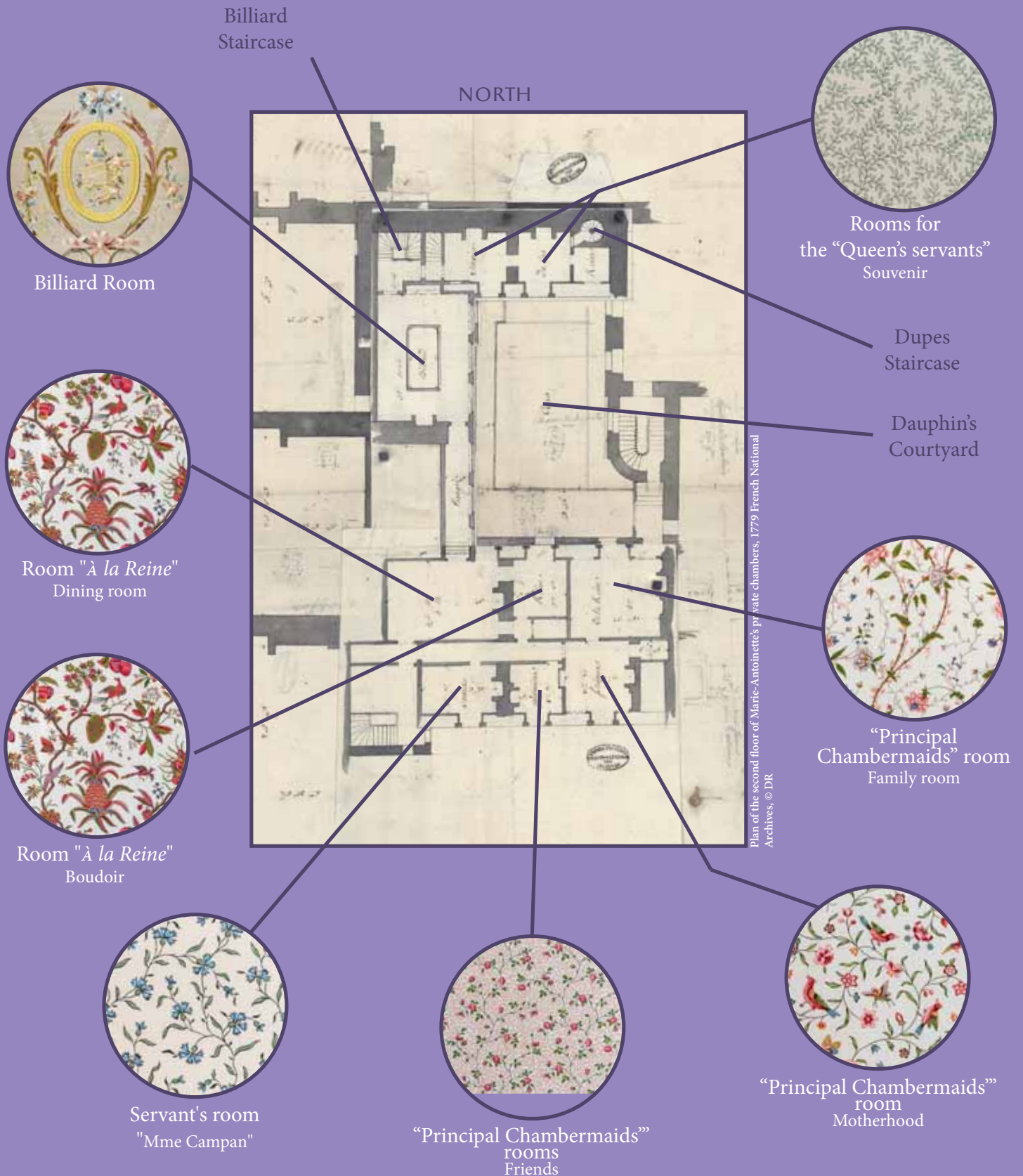
## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR

# THE SECOND FLOOR: EXPLORING THE PRIVATE LIFE OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Upon becoming queen in 1774, Marie-Antoinette hastened to expand her personal space in the Palace. On the second floor, she took over rooms that had previously been occupied by servants to the royal couple, converting them into new rooms for her personal use. As of 1779, major renovations included the creation, on the south side, of a billiard room, a popular game among courtiers; a "private retreat" – later converted into a dining room – on the east side; as well as three rooms reserved for her servants and three others for the "Premières femmes", i.e. her Principal Chambermaids, among whom we remember Madame Campan.

The second floor of the Queen's Private Chambers long remained one of the least documented areas of the Palace. Historical plans provide insight into the previous layout and testify to the initial renovations carried out for the dauphine: rooms for the king's head valet, a library for the dauphine, a small kitchen and terraces. Extensive historical and archival research by the curators of the Palace of Versailles has made it possible to determine, based on the rare contemporary plans describing the work carried out on this floor and in mezzanine areas, the purpose of these spaces transformed by Marie-Antoinette: chambers "*À la Reine*", rooms for her "Principal Chambermaids" and spaces for the "Queen's servants". The choice of textiles was based on this hierarchy. Further research focussed on the collections of the Manufacture Royale de Jouy dating from the 1780s, both in France and abroad.

# PLAN OF THE SECOND FLOOR OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS IN 1779 CURRENT FONCTION OF ROOMS





## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR BILLIARD ROOM

Fitted out in 1779 to accommodate a favourite Court pastime, the Billiard Room was transformed into a parlour in 1787. At the same time, the room was bedecked with the sumptuous silkwork originally commissioned in 1779 by the Royal Garde-Meuble for the Queen's State Chamber, which had since been redecorated.

The silk adorning the walls of the room was restored in the 1990s thanks to the patronage of Lady Michelham of Hellingly.

When this new parlour was created in 1787, cabinetmaker Georges Jacob provided Marie-Antoinette with a lavish set of furniture including six cabriolet armchairs and two sofas. Scattered during the revolutionary sales of 1793, these two items were acquired by American statesman Gouverneur Morris and finally repurchased by the Palace of Versailles in 1983.



Billiard Room © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



Bergère chair, François II Foliot, Jacques Gondouin, sculpted and gilded beech wood, 1779  
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN  
© C. Fouin

This exceptional bergère chair was commissioned for the Gold Room in 1779 and later installed in the Billiard Room in 1783. The wood frame is the work of cabinetmaker François II Foliot; Jacques Gondouin designed the floral motifs and silks. The bergère chair was incorporated into Palace of Versailles collections in 2019 thanks to a bequest from Ms Jeanne Heymann.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR DINING ROOM



Pineapple, reprinting based on an original motif held at the Musée de la Toile de Jouy  
© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

A passage at the back of the Billiard Room leads to the largest room on the second floor. This chamber served several different functions from 1781 to 1788, alternating between a dining room and a private retreat. The “superfine” Toile de Jouy fabric now adorning the walls and furniture is a true masterpiece of the Oberkampf Manufacture. Known as Great Pineapple fabric, it depicts the exotic fruit with elegantly interlacing branches, flowers and birds. Pineapples were prized at Court, including by Marie-Antoinette, who had a “portrait” of the fruit by Jean-Baptiste Oudry hung in her Gold Room. In addition to the subject of the work, which was dear to the queen, the rich decoration and consummate execution indicate that it was commissioned by a member of the royal family.



This dining room now houses a large portion of a precious Sèvres porcelain service commissioned by Marie-Antoinette in 1784 and ultimately presented to King Gustav III of Sweden as a diplomatic gift during his visit to France. A second, identical service was delivered to the queen a few months later. It consisted of soup dishes, terrines, butter plates and mustard pots, as well as a dessert service made up of buckets for cooling glasses and bottles, among other pieces.

Called “Rich in Colour and Rich in Gold”, this service is embellished with diverse varieties of flowers set in cartouches or friezes and surrounded by beads and laurel garlands. All the pieces stand out for particularly lavish gilding.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, porcelain inspired a degree of competition among members of the royal family. In addition to the Royal Manufacture of Sèvres, operating under the aegis of the king, each of the monarch’s brothers could pride himself on protecting his “personal” manufacture, commissioned mainly to produce various types of table services. While the Count of Provence supported a manufacture in Clignancourt, his younger brother the Count of Artois preferred workshops in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, north of Paris. Marie-Antoinette herself, in addition to her royal orders to Sèvres, championed the initiative to create the Parisian workshop known as the “Manufacture de la rue Thiroux”.



Seau crénelé from the “Rich in Colour and Rich in Gold” service, delivered to Marie-Antoinette in 1784, Manufacture de Sèvres, porcelain.  
© RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © F. Raux



Plate from the “Rich in Colour and Rich in Gold” service, delivered to Marie-Antoinette in 1784, Manufacture de Sèvres, porcelain.  
© RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © F. Raux

Clock, Jean-Antoine Lépine, ca. 1770, turned ivory, gilded bronze, enamel, glass, steel © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN ©

The décor of this dining room also includes a rare object: a turned ivory clock on the mantelpiece. Turnery, a favourite pastime among the European aristocracy, was the art of carving a piece of wood or ivory on a lathe.

Louis XV was himself an accomplished amateur turner.

In particular, he fashioned this delicate clock for his daughter Adélaïde, later executing a copy as a wedding gift for Marie-Antoinette in 1770. That piece is now held in the Hermitage Museum. The recent restoration of this exceptional object revealed a number of imperfections that bear witness to the monarch’s handiwork.



Serving table delivered in 1775 by the Garde-Meuble of the Count of Artois, François-Gaspard Teuné, rosewood veneer; gilded bronze; copper; white marble © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Foutin



## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR BOUDOIR



*Pineapple*, reprinting based on an original motif held at the Toile de Jouy Museum © Palace of Versailles/ T. Garnier

Behind the dining room is a small room, also hung with Great Pineapple fabric, where the most precious pieces in the collection are displayed.

This boudoir also houses an exceptionally precious piece of furniture: a jewel case with Sèvres porcelain plaques, made by Martin Carlin and presented to Marie-Antoinette in 1770. Martin Carlin, a cabinetmaker who specialised in creating furniture with porcelain plaques, is behind the nine known specimens of this type of jewel case, all dating from between 1770 and 1775. The first such piece was commissioned for Madame Du Barry, followed by a second for Marie-Antoinette. Determined not to be left out, the Countesses of Provence and Artois demanded the same, and their requests were honoured in 1773 and 1775.



Jewel case, Martin Carlin (cabinetmaker), 1770 © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) G. Blot

**Marie-Antoinette was clearly attached to this piece of furniture, which was among the possessions she brought to the Tuileries Palace following the March on Versailles on 6 October 1789.**

A charming medallion by François-Hubert Drouais depicts Marie-Antoinette as a young dauphine in 1772. The rarity of such images can be explained by the challenge of finding a painter in France who could capture on canvas the singular features of a dauphine who refused to sit still.



*Portrait of Marie-Antoinette*, François-Hubert Drouais, oil on canvas, 1772 © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

### EXCEPTIONAL ACQUISITIONS ON DISPLAY IN THE BOUDOIR

A chiffonier table by cabinetmaker Adam Weisweiler, adorned with two porcelain plaques and delivered around 1783-84 for the Countess of Provence, accompanies the jewel case, testifying to the fondness expressed by women of the royal family for this type of furniture. The work was incorporated into the Palace of Versailles collections in 2022 thanks to a bequest from Ms Jeanne Heymann.



© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin



© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

This pair of corner pieces was made for Marie-Antoinette in 1770. Characterised by refined details, they bear the stamp of cabinetmaker Martin Carlin. Relatively small, they were intended for a mezzanine

room, most likely in the future queen's inner chambers. These corner pieces were acquired in 2021 thanks to the patronage of the Fondation La Marck.



## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR PRINCIPAL CHAMBERMAIDS' AND SERVANTS' ROOMS

The six rooms that make up this part of the second floor of Marie-Antoinette's private chambers are located along a narrow corridor accessible from the north end of the dining room.



Reprint from a Jouy fabric known as "Barbeaux" ("Cornflowers") in the Toile de Jouy Museum © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles (

The corridor opens first onto a small room on the right, measuring just over 8 m<sup>2</sup> (86 sq. ft.). Once used by Marie-Antoinette's servants, it now houses a **likeness of Madame Campan** in the form of a masterly pastel portrait by Joseph Boze.

Henriette Genet, the future Madame Campan, was born in Versailles in 1752 and received a literary education, thanks in particular to her father, a foreign affairs clerk. At the age of 15, she was appointed reader to Louis XV's youngest daughters. When Marie-Antoinette arrived in Versailles in 1770, Madame Campan



Portrait of Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Genet, Madame Campan, Joseph Boze, pastel, 1786 © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) G.Blot

became her Second chambermaid, subsequently inheriting the position of Principal Chambermaid in 1786, although the advent of the French Revolution prevented her from exercising these duties. After the Revolution, Madame Campan opened a well-reputed educational institution for girls, attended by two of Napoleon's sisters.

Adjacent to this room lies another chamber used by the queen's chambermaids. Even smaller, it spans a mere 7 m<sup>2</sup> (75 sq. ft.). This room is associated with **Marie-Antoinette's friends**, particularly the Princess of Chimay.



Reprint from a Jouy fabric known as "Roses et boutons" ("Roses and buds") held in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

daughter of Charles de Fitz-James, grandson of King James II of England, and Victoire Louise Sophie Goyon de Matignon, *Dame du Palais* to Queen Marie Leszczyńska and later to the dauphine Marie-Antoinette. Laure-Auguste married the Prince of Chimay in 1762. Five years later, she succeeded her mother as *Dame du Palais* to Marie Leszczyńska.



Upon taking the throne, Marie-Antoinette appointed her lady-in-waiting to replace the Countess of Noailles, whom the new queen disliked. In this role, the Princess of Chimay supervised the queen's schedule, escorting her to religious and public ceremonies such as receptions, and accompanying her for games and walks. She also assisted the Superintendent of the Queen's Household – in particular the Princess of Lamballe as of 1775 – for the *lever*, the queen's waking ceremony.

The Princess of Chimay was known for a gentle, altruistic disposition that won her the affection of the queen, with whom she also shared a taste for music and opera. Exiled during the Revolution, she returned to France and devoted herself to charitable works until her death in 1814.

Above: Portrait of the *princesse de Chimay*, Louis-Michel Van Loo, 1767 © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) J. Schormans





Reprint from a Jouy fabric known as "Fleurs et Oiseaux" ("Flowers and Birds") held in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

The last room at the end of the corridor on the right, also devoted to the Queen's Principal Chambermaids, has a surface area of just 12 m<sup>2</sup> (129 sq. ft.). **It evokes Marie-Antoinette as a mother.**

The queen gave birth to four children between 1778 and 1787: Marie-Thérèse Charlotte in 1778, Louis-Joseph in 1781, Louis-Charles in 1785 and Sophie-Béatrice, who died in 1787 at the age of 11 months.

Motherhood was a turning point in Marie-Antoinette's life. She was deeply committed to caring for and educating her children, as can be seen in prolific correspondence with her mother on the subject.

#### Marie-Thérèse Charlotte (1778 - 1822)

Marie-Thérèse Charlotte, nicknamed "Mousseline la sérieuse", was a difficult child who maintained a complicated relationship with her mother. Narcissistic and vainglorious, the young princess regularly locked horns with the queen, who tried as best she could to remedy her daughter's character.

*"I dare to impart to the tender heart of my dear mother a moment of delight I experienced four days ago. Several people were in my daughter's room, and I asked her where her mother was. This poor little girl, with no prompting from anyone, smiled and held out her arms to me. It was the first time she acknowledged me, and I must admit it gave me great joy".*

*Letter from Marie-Antoinette to her mother, 1779*

#### Louis-Joseph (1781 - 1789)

The dauphin Louis-Joseph was born in 1781. The birth of this long-awaited heir was a great relief for the royal couple and a source of ebullient joy in the kingdom.

More docile in character than his older sister, he did not receive quite the same upbringing. Indeed, as he was destined to reign, his education had to revolve around his future duties. Unfortunately, young Louis-Joseph began to show signs of tuberculosis in 1786. He died in June 1789, at the onset of the Revolution, plunging his parents into profound grief.

#### Louis-Charles (1785 - 1795)

Louis-Charles was born in 1785. He became the prime object of Marie-Antoinette's affection after the death of his older brother. His mother nicknamed him "chou d'amour" for of his amiable and easy-going nature. Of all the royal children, he had the most tragic fate: manipulated by revolutionaries into offering false testimony during his mother's trial in 1793, "Louis XVII" died in the Temple prison in 1795.

This charming portrait of Louis-Charles with his dog Moufflet, painted at the dawn of the French Revolution by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, provides a moving perspective of the children of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.



Portrait of Louis-Charles of France, Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, ca. 1789, © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C.Fouin

It is a copy produced by the artist herself: the original, displayed at the Salon de 1789, was subsequently found at the Château de Saint-Cloud and destroyed in 1794 at the request and in the presence of members of the Committee of General Security.





Layette chest, wood and silk taffeta, 1781  
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

This room contains a very rare layette chest that has recently been restored. Most likely a gift from the City of Paris upon the birth of Louis-Joseph in 1781, it is made of wood and painted silk taffeta and depicts scenes of children playing, as well as the monograms of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI.

Motherhood transfigured Marie-Antoinette. In 1778, with the birth of Marie-Thérèse Charlotte, the frivolous young woman matured into a mellow and devoted mother. The birth of the royal children also brought Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette closer together. There may have been no real love between them, but the birth of the children consummated the foundation of a united family characterised by mutual esteem and respect between the parents.

**Opposite, the final room devoted to the Principal Chambermaids evokes the Royal Family.**

Louis XVI, son of the Dauphin Louis of France and Maria Josepha of Saxony, was born in 1754 and titled Duke of Berry. He became dauphin upon the death of his father in 1765, four years after his elder brother the Duke of Burgundy passed away at the tender age of ten. Two of his brothers, titled Count of Provence and Count of Artois, reigned under the Restoration as Louis XVIII and Charles X respectively. Finally, two of Louis XVI's sisters reached adulthood: Madame Clotilde and Madame Elisabeth.



Reprint from a Jouy fabric known as "Céillets bleus et rouges" ("Blue and Red Carnations") held in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

In 1771 and 1773, the Counts of Provence and Artois married two sisters of the House of Savoy, Marie-Joséphine-Louise and Marie-Thérèse, respectively. Their portraits are on display in this room.



Portrait of the Count of Provence, attributed to Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, 1773-1778, oil on canvas © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin



Portrait of the Countess of Provence, based on a work by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, after 1783, oil on canvas © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © G. Blot



Portrait of the Count of Artois, based on a work by Antoine-François Callet, ca. 1773-1778, oil on canvas © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © G. Blot © F. Raux



Portrait of the Countess of Artois, Joseph Ducreux, 1775, oil on canvas © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © G. Blot

Another portrait on display in this room is of Madame Elisabeth, Louis XVI's youngest sister. She was born in 1764 into a family in deep mourning following a succession of deaths. Not having the chance to wed a European prince, her natural piety won out: she eschewed marriage and devoted her life to God as of 1779. She even became co-adjutrix of Remiremont Abbey, albeit without taking holy orders. Imprisoned in the Temple prison with the royal family in 1792, she offered unwavering support to the royal couple during the Revolution. She was sentenced to death by a revolutionary court and executed in 1794.



Madame Elisabeth Playing the Harp, Charles Le Clercq, 1783, oil on canvas © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN© C. Fouin



Portrait of Madame Clotilde, François-Hubert Drouais, 1775, oil on canvas © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © D. Arnaudet

Another portrait depicts Marie-Antoinette's eldest sister-in-law, Madame Clotilde. She was born in 1759 and raised with her sister. Due to her corpulence, she was nicknamed "Gros Madame" by the Court, where mockery and invective were never in short supply. After the marriages of her two brothers to the princesses of Savoy, she herself wed their elder

brother and heir to the crown, Charles-Emmanuel IV, in 1775. The couple reigned over the kingdom as of 1796. Madame Clotilde died in 1802.



"Dauphins" soup tureen, Manufacture de Sèvres, 1782, hard porcelain © RMN-GP (Palace of Versailles) © F. Raux

## LACQUER ROOM

The Queen's Wardrobe adjoins the boudoir at the heart of the second-storey rooms. A marvellous collection of Japanese lacquerware is displayed here, in a new case designed to offer ideal conditions for the preservation of these highly sensitive objets d'art. Marie-Antoinette brought together one of the largest collections of such works in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Her mother, Maria Theresa of Austria, sparked her passion with a gift of a lacquer box to mark the birth of her daughter. Later, Marie-Antoinette received a bequest comprising some fifty pieces from her mother, which she continued to enrich in the 1780s with personal acquisitions.

These extremely refined and diverse boxes can now be admired in detail for the first time.



Box, Anonymous, Japan, 18<sup>th</sup> century, © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) © C. Fouin



Box, Anonymous, Japan, 18<sup>th</sup> century, © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) © T. Ollivier



Wood and lacquer box, Anonymous, Japan, 18<sup>th</sup> century, © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) © T. Ollivier



## 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR THE "SERVANT'S (OR "FERSEN'S") ROOMS

To the left of the landing of the Billiard Staircase lie two small rooms which were originally reserved for the king's servants, but which were reclaimed by Marie-Antoinette for her own. Little information has survived about how these rooms were used: all indications suggest that they were reserved for Count Fersen, a close friend of the queen. Count Hans Axel von Fersen, a charming officer descended from an influential Swedish aristocratic family, met Marie-Antoinette in January 1774 at a ball at the Paris Opera. Thus began a deep connection that fuelled myriad fantasies. Quickly, the queen included him in her close circle of friends. The rumours of a liaison between the queen and Fersen pushed the latter to leave Versailles: in March 1780, he took part in the American Revolution. When he returned in 1783, their friendship picked up where it left off.



Reprint of the "leafy" Toile de Jouy pattern, preserved in the Musée des Arts décoratifs © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

It was in this era that a hitherto unknown addressee appeared in count Fersen's correspondence: a certain *Joséphine*. Though we do not possess these exchanges, Fersen kept a meticulous "*Brevdiarium*", a ledger where he recorded the dates, addressees, and often the contents of his letters. In April 1783, he wrote two letters entreating the mysterious *Joséphine* to find him a place to stay "up above", without any further specification. On 8 October, 1783, Fersen asked *Joséphine* to arrange a corner of her apartment to install a Swedish stove, highly in fashion at the time. A letter discovered in the National Archives from a King's Buildings inspector to Count d'Angiviller (who at the time was in charge of the powerful organization), containing an order from the queen to install a Swedish stove in her upper rooms without delay, with dates that correspond to those mentioned in Fersen's journal, confirm that these rooms were made available for him.

If this attribution speaks to the deep connection that they shared, the small rooms made available to him for some months in 1787-1788 allowed him first and foremost to pass time between ceremonies closer to the queen.



Replica of Paul Bassenge and Charles-Auguste Boehmer's "Queen's" necklace, 1960-1963. © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

Today, these rooms are consecrated to presenting the queen's personal belongings, as well as to the memory and the cult of the queen that started during the Restoration. Among these objects is a salver (a presentation plate), offered to Marie-Antoinette for her wedding, whose restoration revealed the extraordinary quality of the etching work done in Augsburg; as well as a replica of the "Queen's" necklace, from the infamous scandal where Marie-

Antoinette, despite being innocent, saw her reputation tarnished.



Platter used to present gloves; Johann-Wilhelm Dammann and Wilhelm-Michel Rauner (silversmith), 1769, gilt silver © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

Recently acquired and restored by the Palace of Versailles, the portrait of Marie-Antoinette at the Conciergerie during her imprisonment dates from 1857. This work perfectly illustrates the creation of the cult around the "martyr Queen".



Marie-Antoinette at the Conciergerie: *Saying Grace*, Charles-Louis Muller, 1857, oil on panel, © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles







## 6 QUESTIONS TO HÉLÈNE DELALEX

Curator of Heritage, in charge of  
Marie-Antoinette's apartments

### What does the Queen's attention to the décor of her chambers tell us about her personality?

Creating, arranging, decorating, embellishing, demolishing and then rebuilding, "re-doing everything" to quote Mercy-Argenteau, was the queen's great passion, and in the field of décor and interior design, she displayed extraordinary taste, self-confidence and boldness. Only a few months after her arrival in Versailles, she commissioned, with childlike omnipotence and without even consulting the king, major works to Gabriel, who gasped, refused and complained to the monarch. The tone was set! This passion continued to grow and, in fact, only the Revolution put an end to it. In this respect, the accounts of the King's buildings provide an implicit portrait of her. It is a portrait sketched through her places, and, in my opinion, one of the most accurate. We can follow her as she endlessly remodels the small world of her inner chambers. Orders and counter-orders come one after the other, and she commands countless new arrangements for which the budget was unlimited, and no delivery deadline was set.

### What were the main phases of this project?

The first challenge was to understand the organisation and use of this series of small rooms, which had long remained unknown. This research was a crucial prerequisite to the choice of fabrics. Next, like a treasure hunt, by studying various sources, we were able to reconstruct the décor and furniture, at least as it was in 1784, which was the chosen date for this reconstruction, since the queen renewed everything every three years! For example, we had to understand that the dining room and the boudoir were actually the same room, known as "*Pièce de retraite près le Billard*" (Retiring Room near the Billiard Room), and were therefore meant to be upholstered in the same fabric. The next step was to delve into all the collections of Toile de Jouy fabrics, mainly in France but also abroad, and the collaboration with the museum of Toronto was crucial in this respect. Lastly, the actual restoration work began with the reconstruction of the fabrics, restoration and refurnishing. But the project is still underway, as we've just come across a note in an inventory about tie-backs and a passementerie bell rope that we'll be making next year.

### How would you describe Marie-Antoinette's craze for these "indienne" fabrics?

This craze was not limited to Marie-Antoinette, it was widespread. Always "*au goût du jour*" (in the taste of the times), the queen naturally endorsed them, and the *Manufacture* received royal status in 1783. The production of these printed cotton fabrics ("superfine" for the queen's furniture) was much cheaper than the rich silks from Lyon, and above all considerably faster to produce. Disseminated by the fashion journals, the constant flow of new designs enabled people to indulge in the latest trends, which were increasingly changing at the time.

### How did you select the seven fabrics that now decorate these rooms?

In this project, the choice was indeed the most difficult part! It was a collective process, carried out from a selection I suggested. In the end, more than 10,000 samples were studied and sorted, a fascinating delve into a visual universe of infinitely varied patterns, which sometimes make you dizzy. As I said, the choice was made according to the use of each room, and in this respect, the more colours are used, the richer the fabric. As you can see, all these canvases reflect the 18<sup>th</sup> century's passion for flowers, where roses and carnations prevailed. As for the Great Pineapple fabric, once we discovered it, the choice was obvious. It almost miraculously met all the criteria we were looking for: it was a complete masterpiece; it had kept its original colours; it dated almost exactly from the year we sought; it was of a royal quality, since the canvas featured 22 extraordinary colours; and it had absolutely magnificent qualities of white, luminosity and smoothness. In a stroke of luck, the museum of Toronto kept the large, medium and small borders. To be able to reproduce the canvas with its borders, which are often lost or dissociated over time, is extremely rare. Lastly, this pineapple, which had been very fashionable at court since 1733, suited Marie-Antoinette's taste perfectly, as she chose the famous Pineapple by the painter Oudry to decorate her large private chamber on the floor below.

**Do these rooms display any new acquisitions?**

Absolutely. The small corner cabinets with rosewood and purpleheart marquetry set off with green holly, made by Martin Carlin and delivered for the Dauphine's chambers, which fit in perfectly with the room and document a lesser-known aspect of the famous cabinetmaker's work; the delicate little "chiffonnière" table by Weisweiler, a personal purchase from the Countess of Provence for her Versailles apartment; and the "bergère" armchair by Foliot, which, after restoration, has revealed its unparalleled fine carving, to name but a few. In a different vein, the restoration of the painting depicting Marie-Antoinette at the Conciergerie, which was recently added to the collections, has revealed its extraordinary quality.

**Many pieces of furniture also underwent restoration. Could you tell us more about them?**

The light sconces, Riesener's corner cabinets, Charton's original silk hanging, the Queen's tray known as "salve," and even the trunks, almost all the pieces on display have been restored, which is always a good occasion to study them closely. Restoration work carried out on the wood of the chairs by Foliot and Boulard, as well as on two small chairs by Jacob that were previously kept in the storeroom, has revealed an absolutely prodigious and intact original paintwork. Last but not least, we must salute the outstanding teamwork that brought us all together in this fascinating project, especially the many craftsmen, cabinetmakers, upholsterers, trimmers and restorers of all disciplines.



Jewellery cabinet, Martin Carlin (cabinetmaker), 1770 © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles), G.Blot













# | EXCEPTIONNAL SAVOIR-FAIRE

Cabinetmakers, upholsterers, gilders... the refurbishment of Marie -Antoinette's private chambers called on the Palace of Versailles's artisans, who once again had the opportunity to demonstrate their virtuosic skills.

Placement of passementerie on a chair at the Palace of Versailles' upholstery studio  
© Palace of Versailles / S. Giles  
Prior double-page spread. Reprint of a fabric called "Flowers and Birds," conserved at the  
Musée des Arts Décoratifs © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles



# THE TRIUMPH OF TOILE DE JOUY

## THE MANUFACTURE OF CHRISTOPHE-PHILIPPE OBERKAMPF

Toile de Jouy is a cotton fabric printed with diverse figurative or abstract motifs.

The first cotton fabrics displaying coloured motifs originated in India. They were introduced into France in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the ships of the Compagnie des Indes, founded in 1664 by Jean-Baptiste Colbert. At the time, printed fabrics mainly depicted flowers, foliage and colourful birds. The establishment of diplomatic relations between France and Siam between 1685 and 1686 under Louis XIV led to a spike in demand for these new fabrics.

European manufacturers, unfamiliar with Eastern dyeing processes, tried to imitate them using domestically produced hemp or linen cloth, as well as cotton imported from India. The technique of "mordanting" (fixing pigments on fabric using gums and metallic salts) was as yet unknown in Europe; consequently, colours gradually faded with each wash.



Portrait of Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf, François Gérard, ca. 1819-1820 © MTDJ

In 1686, French wool and silk manufacturers, respond to the crises impacting their business due to imported cloth, prevailed on Louis XIV to issue an edict of prohibition ordering all manufactures to cease making "indiennes". This ban was lifted in 1759, finally enabling manufacturers to freely import and print fabrics.

It was at this point that Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf set up his own workshop. Born into a family of dyers in Germany in 1738, Oberkampf trained as an engraver before moving to France in 1757. After a year in Mulhouse, he arrived in Paris where he worked as a colourist. In 1760, he set up an indienne manufacture in Jouy-en-Josas. Business grew rapidly, peaking in 1805 after which the activity fell off, ultimately leading to the closure of the company in 1843.

For more than 80 years, the Oberkampf manufacture employed up to 1,500 workers and created tens of thousands of canvas patterns. This family business perfectly illustrates the 19<sup>th</sup> century shift from pre-industrial production to factories.

## THE TOILE DE JOUY PRODUCTION PROCESS

Three types of indienne printing were developed, all used at the Oberkampf manufacture. **The first and oldest was woodblock printing.** Inspired by eastern techniques, this technique was implemented at Jouy between 1760 and 1770. Engravers would create a relief reproduction of the motif to be printed on a block made up of several layers of wood. Each engraved block corresponded to a number of different dye baths, once the mordants had been applied. This discipline required great dexterity.

**The second technique, developed in Ireland and imported from England by Oberkampf in 1770, consisted of printing from copperplates.** Intaglio engraving on copperplates produced superbly detailed drawings, but only allowed for monochrome printing.

**The last technique, known as "copper roller" printing,** was developed by a Scotsman in 1783 and employed in Jouy-en-Josas from 1797 onwards to print repetitive motifs of limited dimensions.

Preparing and printing the fabric was a multi-stage process calling on a variety of different crafts. From **delivery and washing** of raw textiles, to **brushwork** – the final stage during which the most precise details, such as hair, were painted by hand – and the **madder-root bath** to evenly dye the fabrics, the Toile de Jouy printing process illustrated consummate technical expertise and unique savoir-faire.



Manufacture de Jouy, 1807, Jean-Baptiste Huet, oil on canvas © MTDJ

## A ROYAL PENCHANT FOR TOILE DE JOUY

The final years of the *Ancien Régime* saw an affinity for nature, championed by philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although generally associated today with monochrome scenes depicting figures in bucolic scenes, Toile de Jouy featured motifs more suggestive of the natural world in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, with prints portraying exotic flowers and fruit, boughs, foliage and colourful birds. These “Persian” textiles, as they came to be known, were printed in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century on dazzlingly white fabric, in keeping with French tastes. This penchant for nature conquered the hearts of the royal family, and particularly Marie-Antoinette. As the Oberkampf manufacture was located close to Versailles, the queen would organise educational outings to the site with her children: just as the Queen’s Hamlet taught them how to run a farm, the manufacture was a source of instruction for the royal children.

**To decorate the second floor of her inner chambers, Marie-Antoinette chose Toile de Jouy for the walls, curtains and doors, as evidenced by the order forms issued by the Royal Garde-Meuble to the Oberkampf manufacture.**

Although we do not know to which motifs the numbers on the order form refer, extensive archival cross-referencing – studies of the yardage and the borders delivered, the hierarchy of rooms, suppliers’ notes, deliveries of Toile de Jouy fabrics for the queen’s chambers in other royal residences – has made it possible to come as close as possible to the 1780 account mentioning the delivery and hanging of a large broderie perse in superfine Toile de Jouy fabric with a white background, accompanied by large, medium and small edgings. In all, nearly 10,000 samples from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most held in the Toile de Jouy Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, were patiently analysed, finally resulting in the selection of seven specimens that were exactly replicated using traditional techniques. This initiative was carried through thanks to the skill-based patronage of Maison Pierre Frey.



*Perse*, between 1760 and 1843, woodblock printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ



*Flowers and Birds Against a Background of Sprigs*, ca. 1783, woodblock printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ



*Bonnes herbes*, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, copperplate printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ



Work at the Manufacture, 1784, copperplate printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ



## RESTAURATION WORK IN THE PALACE'S STUDIOS

As with the prior re-furnishings of the Dauphin's Apartment or of Madame Du Barry's Apartment led by the conservation team, the Palace's museographic studios played a key role in restoring the Queen's Private Chambers.

**The cabinetmaker's studio** in particular was utilized to restore four corner-cupboards, created by Jean-Henri Riesener and delivered in 1780 for the Countess of Provence. They cleaned the heavily dirtied gilt bronzes, allowing one to appreciate the ornamental details that emerge from the rosewood and the satiny base.

Two armchairs made by Georges Jacob which once furnished Marie-Antoinette's small apartment at Tuileries had their frames entirely restored. These new conservationist-created frames match the exact dimensions of the seats and backrests. These latter sections will be upholstered to best preserve the original rabbit-joints, all while giving the illusion of traditional upholstery.

These armchairs then passed through the hands of the **Palace's upholsterers** who emulated 18<sup>th</sup> century armchair upholstery on these modern frames. These armchairs—as with the fire screen and the small white-wood dining room chairs—were covered with the same Great Pineapple fabric as covers the walls of the private chambers, its random placement of ornamental designs embodying the tastes of the *Ancien Régime*.

**The gilder's studio** was charged with the restoration of the wooden frames protecting the paintings, notably the frame of the Princesse de Chimay's portrait or Boze's pastel of Madame Campan.

Beyond the restoration projects led on the collections, the studios also collaborated in creating curatorial elements, such as stands, bases for lighting, as well as supports for presenting antique textiles and objects associated with the memory of the queen.



© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles



© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles



© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles



© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

## THE PATRONS

### RESTORING THE SECOND FLOOR

The restoration of the second floor of the Queen's Private Chambers is part of a long process started in 1985 with the reconstruction of this storey, destroyed under Louis-Philippe, followed by a refurnishing in 1993—along with the Billiards room—thanks to the support of Lady Michelham of Hellingly.

In 2008, the first reconstruction of the printed (or “*Perse*”) fabric with exotic motifs, originally ordered by the queen to the Manufacture Royale de Jouy, was executed thanks to the support of Madame Monroq through the intermediary of the Friends of Versailles.

Since then, research has helped establish a hierarchy of the décor of these chambers, which include the rooms *À la Reine*, i.e., those of the queen's principal chambermaids, and those of the queen's servants. The chambers today recapture their unique atmosphere **thanks to a partnership with the Toile de Jouy Museum, Paris' Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, and to the patronage of the Maison Pierre Frey, completed by gifts from Monsieur and Madame Mollier.** The furnishings were revisited and completed through acquisitions, such as the two Martin Carlin corner-cupboards **offered by the La Marck Foundation.**

### THE MAISON PIERRE FREY

In 2007, the Palace of Versailles and the Maison Pierre Frey launched a lasting relationship. Beginning with the exposition *Quand Versailles était meublé d'argent (When Versailles was Furnished with Silver)*, this relationship continued in 2008 with the restoration of the Petit Trianon, for which the fabric editor, chosen for his savoir-faire, printed decorative cloths to decorate attic spaces.

Today, the Maison Pierre Frey is proud to return to the Palace of Versailles in the role of patron, to help restore the second floor of the Queen's Private Chambers.



To decorate the dining room and the boudoir, and two other rooms for the queen's servants, three motifs were selected by the conservationists of the Palace from the collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Toile de Jouy Museum. It required several stages and hundreds of hours of labour to re-print these archival pieces while honouring the specificities of 18<sup>th</sup> century technical and artistic skills: from the breakdown of colours to the engravings, including the traditional French flatbed printing.

No fewer than 450 metres (1,470 feet) of fabric were needed to create hangings, curtains, and door-curtains, and to reconstitute a décor that sheds a more significant light on historical materials.

Pierre Frey brought his textile expertise to five printed cotton fabrics in addition to these three. Thus, the entire second storey is draped with fabrics restored in the purest of traditions.

There are several reasons for Pierre Frey's involvement in this process. First of all, as a member of the Colbert Committee, the Maison aims to spread French savoir-faire and transmit capital-H History. Re-printing an 18<sup>th</sup> century textile is part of understanding spaces and the use of decorative material through the ages and allows for a better understanding of history. It offers to institutions and museums a powerful conduit for cultural mediation.

What's more, in 1843, upon the liquidation of the Manufacture Oberkampf—famous for its printed fabrics known the world over as “*Toile de Jouy*”—Braquenié became the inheritor of several designs and printing materials, thus transforming it into a specialist in printed cotton fabrics.

Finally, an anecdote related in the archives of the Manufacture Oberkampf mentions Marie-Antoinette's visit to Jouy-en-Josas after Oberkampf reproduced the pattern of a torn garment in *robe de Perse* fabric. It was thus only natural that the conservationists of the Palace of Versailles would choose the Toile de Jouy Museum and the Maison Braquenié to refurnish Marie-Antoinette's private chambers.

A lovely way to share the beauty of Toile de Jouy!





# TAKING THE NEXT STEP

The re-organization of Marie-Antoinette's private chambers is accompanied by a rich offering of guided visits, allowing for guests to discover all the sites where the queen lived in the most complete privacy the Estate of Versailles had to offer.



## | GUIDED VISITS

### DISCOVER THE QUEEN'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS

After several years of research and restoration, the Palace of Versailles invites the public to rediscover Marie-Antoinette's private chambers. Through a full schedule of guided tours, visitors will delve into the richness of these chambers, true witnesses to the exquisite tastes of the Queen.

#### *An Hour at Marie-Antoinette's*



The Gold Room  
© Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier

To commemorate the reopening of Marie-Antoinette's private chambers, the public will be able to once again explore the queen's private spaces, during one-of-a-kind hour-long visits between 27 June and 9 July 2023.

#### *Getting cozy with Marie-Antoinette*

After 13 July, visitors will discover Marie-Antoinette's private chambers through a first-of-its-kind visit that will titillate the eyes and the buds alike. An exceptional visit to the Opera, the king's private chambers and the queen's private chambers will come with a gourmet break: breakfast or tea-time, depending on the time of day.

#### *Marie-Antoinette in private*



The "Mériidienne" Room  
© Palace of Versailles,  
T.Garnier

All year long, visitors will be able to appreciate the precious furniture, paintings, and *objets d'art* specifically chosen by Marie-Antoinette for her chambers. This guided visit will give the public a chance to observe the queen's passion for decoration, the arts, and fashion, to which she gave free rein when decorating her chambers.

Le Petit Trianon © Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier

### MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S TRIANON

At the same time, an offering of guided visits to the Trianon will allow visitors to rediscover these sites curated for Marie-Antoinette.

*Marie-Antoinette's Petit Trianon* invites one to appreciate the domain that the queen, free from her title, created at the Petit Trianon.

*The Hamlet of Marie-Antoinette and Marie-Louise* highlights the tastes of these two women for the charm of country living and the sophisticated rusticity of the hamlet's thatched cottages.

The *Stage Effects of the Queen's Theatre* visit reveals one of the most beautiful theatres of European society, veiled in foliage, remarkable for its delicate, miraculously preserved décor that machinists will bring back to life with ropes and pulleys for the visit.

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

Visits available by reservation.  
<https://www.chateauversailles.fr/>



View of the Queen's Hamlet © Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier

# MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S VERSAILLES

## THE QUEEN'S SMALL APARTMENT

In 1782, Marie-Antoinette reclaimed Madame Sophie's apartments from the ground storey of the Marble Court and made it a small apartment for her and her children. Today, two highly sophisticated rooms remain: a bedroom, famous for its "Etruscan" furniture by Georges Jacob, and a bathroom with delicately blue panelling highlighted—in the style of Wedgwood—with white, evoking the pleasures of water.



The bedroom of Marie-Antoinette's small apartment © Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier



The bathroom of Marie-Antoinette's small apartment © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

## THE PETIT TRIANON AND THE ENGLISH GARDEN

In 1758, Louis XV envisioned constructing a little castle at Trianon amidst the botanical gardens he had been developing for some ten years. He had Ange-Jacques Gabriel build a small pavilion in which to lodge and put up a part of his entourage. Gabriel created here a true exemplar of neoclassical architecture, a perfect specimen of design "à la grecque" that was highly in fashion in Europe. Finished in 1768, the new castle was named the Petit Trianon to distinguish it from the marble Trianon, which took the name the Grand Trianon.

In 1774, Marie-Antoinette took over the site, and the Petit Trianon quickly became the refuge of the queen, embodying, perhaps better than anywhere in the Estate of Versailles, the character and the taste of Marie-Antoinette—to the point where its name is inexorably linked to that of its occupant.

In 1777, Marie-Antoinette had an English Garden built at the base of the Petit Trianon. Richard Mique created a true theatre of greenery for the queen, including fake rivers, caves, and little mountains. To adorn these vistas, he built *fabriques*, or folies, small structures such as a Belvedere or the Love Monument. All this produced a garden dear to Marie-Antoinette, perfectly embodying a romanticized vision of nature, wherein the queen entertained a small circle of friends.



The Petit Trianon © Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier



The English Garden Belvedere © Palace of Versailles, T.Garnier



## THE QUEEN'S HAMLET

After the creation of the English Garden, in 1783 Marie-Antoinette once again called upon Richard Mique to further extend her rustic domain by constructing a village around a new lake. Mique, her official architect, completed the unique site in 1786, a hamlet bringing together thatch-roofed cottages each with a special function: some were designed for enjoyment, offering sophisticated interior décor, while others were used for agricultural ends, and finally, at a later date, a farm came to complete this idyllic ensemble. The myth that Marie-Antoinette came here to “play” as a farmgirl is a stubborn one. In reality, the Hamlet served her as a reception area, a promenade, and also as a pedagogical tool for the education of the royal children.



Marlborough's Tower in the Queen's Hamlet © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



The Working Dairy in the Queen's Hamlet © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



The Love Monument in the English Garden of the Petit Trianon © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

## THE QUEEN'S THEATRE

A lover of the performing arts, Marie-Antoinette had Richard Mique construct her a small personal theatre, completed in spring 1780. Discreetly situated to the side of the Petit Trianon in a sober building, the Queen's Theatre presents a pastebord and *trompe-l'oeil* décor. Its remarkable ceiling is the work of Jean-Jacques Lagrenée. Restored in 2001, the Queen's Theatre is the only 18<sup>th</sup> century French theatre boasting functional original machinery.



The Queen's Theatre at Trianon © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier



The Queen's Theatre at Trianon © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

## | PUBLICATIONS

### MARIE-ANTOINETTE, LA LÉGÈRETÉ ET LA CONSTANCE

Hélène Delalex



Drawing on updated iconography and archives, most of which come from the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Archives Nationales and the works at the Palace of Versailles, Hélène Delalex has undertaken a salutary review of the sources, resulting in a captivating biography. Through archive documents,

letters, reports, prints, drawings and little known or unpublished manuscripts, the author conducts a nuanced analysis of the queen's personality, obscured behind her legend, and endeavours to make her voice heard. The book sheds new light on her relationships with the king, her contemporaries, power, public opinion and the administration of the King's buildings, while retracing the tragic events of her life against the background of the profound changes that occurred in the newly mediated society that emerged from the Age of Enlightenment.

Number of pages: 312

Price: € 25

*Marie-Antoinette : la légèreté et la constance*

Hélène Delalex

Éditions Perrin

Collection "Bibliothèque des Illustres"

### VERSAILLES, UN CHÂTEAU AU FÉMININ

Edited by Flavie Leroux and Élodie Vaysse



Edited by Flavie Leroux and Élodie Vaysse, the guide *Versailles, un château au féminin* is an invitation to discover the Palace of Versailles by following the women who shaped it. Through female figures, sometimes in the shadows, sometimes in bright light, glimpsed through portraits, décors and objects, a different, unusual and sometimes hidden Versailles emerges.

Number of pages: 176

Price: €20

Co-publishing: Château de Versailles - Réunion des Musées Nationaux

Available at [www.boutique-chateauversailles.fr](http://www.boutique-chateauversailles.fr), in the Palace of Versailles shops and in all bookshops in France and abroad.



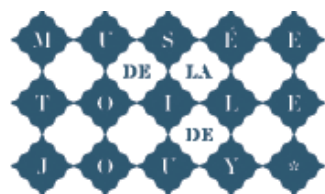
## THE TOILE DE JOUY MUSEUM

Created in 1977 and transferred to the Château de l'Eglantine in 1991, the Toile de Jouy Museum is dedicated to the activities carried out by the manufacture of Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf. It retraces the extraordinary adventure epitomised in the distribution, manufacture and use, on the European continent, of printed fabrics first encountered in India, known as “indiennes”, and which provide continued inspiration for contemporary design.

Toile de Jouy fabrics deserve to be seen from an appropriate perspective. Collective memory associates these textiles with upholstery applications and monochrome scenes depicting human figures. However, “indiennes” featured myriad polychrome decors, particularly floral and even abstract, used for both furnishings and clothing. Of the approximately 30,000 designs created by the Jouy manufacture, only around a hundred have images of people.

Over the past 50 years, the Toile de Jouy Museum has built up an exceptional collection of more than 10,000 pieces, regularly enriched with new specimens from the manufacture itself or elsewhere, as well as objects associated with Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf and modern fabrics directly inspired by those created in Jouy-en-Josas. In addition to historical and decorative items, the museum features technical exhibits: copper rollers and wooden boards offer insight into the different techniques used to print cotton. Looking to develop a high-quality and comprehensive understanding of the legacy of printed cotton, the Toile de Jouy Museum also seeks out original indiennes, which were a source of inspiration for 18<sup>th</sup> century craftsmen.

In particular, the Toile de Jouy Museum holds a portion of the original textiles reprinted for Marie-Antoinette’s private chambers, including the Great Pineapple fabric, a veritable jewel in its collections.



**TOILE DE JOUY MUSEUM**  
Château de l'Eglantine  
54 rue Charles de Gaulle  
78350 Jouy-en-Josas  
[www.museedelatoiledejouy.fr](http://www.museedelatoiledejouy.fr)

**MEDIA CONTACT**  
Pauline Pirot  
[p.pirot@jouy-en-josas.fr](mailto:p.pirot@jouy-en-josas.fr)  
+33 (0)1 39 56 95 11



*Flowers and Birds Against a Background of Sprigs, ca. 1783, woodblock printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ*



*The Hunt in Jouy, ca. 1815, woodblock printed at the Manufacture Oberkampf © MTDJ*

Opposite: Reprint from the Jouy fabric known as “L’Ananas” (“Pineapple”) in the Toile de Jouy Museum © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles  
Following double page: The boudoir on the second floor of the Queen’s Private Chambers

© Palace of Versailles, S. Giles

Back cover: Reprint from a Jouy fabric known as “Barbeaux” (“Cornflowers”) in the Toile de Jouy Museum © Palace of Versailles, S. Giles















