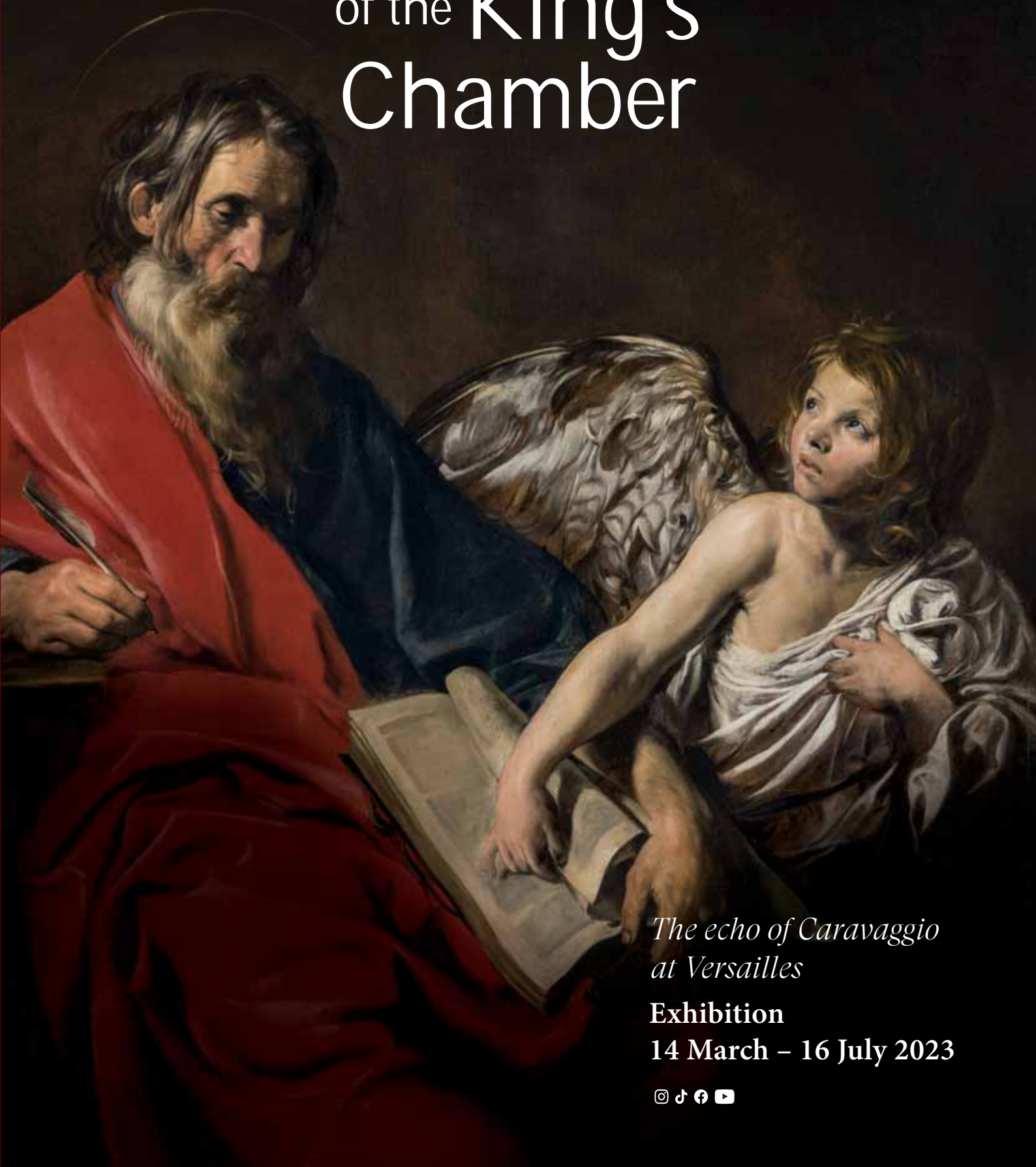


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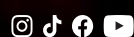
Masterpieces of the King's Chamber

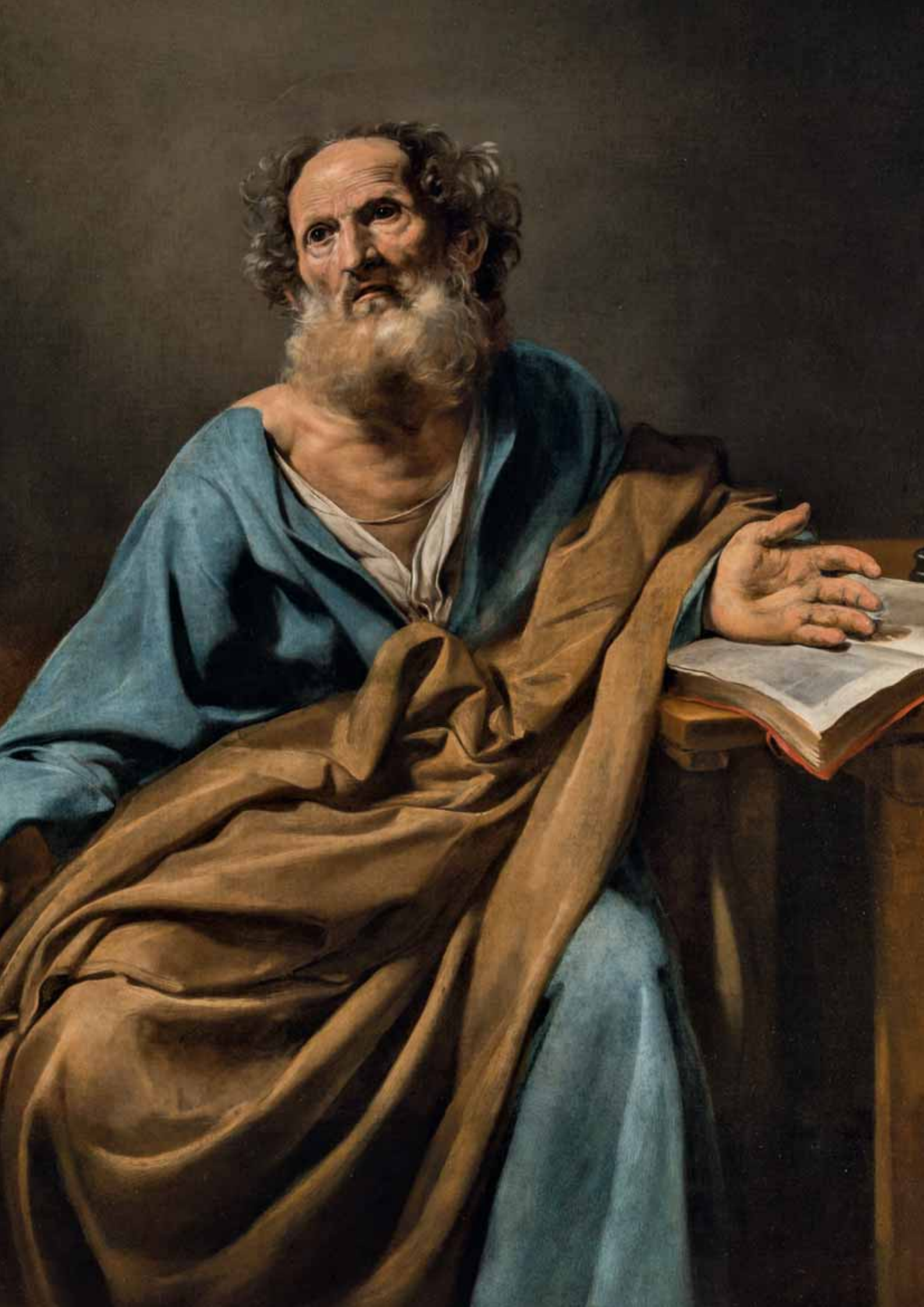


*The echo of Caravaggio
at Versailles*

Exhibition

14 March – 16 July 2023





CONTENTS

Press release	p.4
“Learning to see. Truly see...”	p.6
“Understanding how art flourished in Louis XIV’s Versailles.”	p.7

THE EXHIBITION

p. 9

The King’s bedchamber: the beating heart of courtly life	p. 10
A diverse collection	p. 13
The “King’s dressing room”	p. 14
The bedchamber’s décor in 1701	p. 16

BEYOND THE EXHIBITION

p.27

Book	p. 28
Find out more	p. 29
Practical details	p. 29

MEDIA PARTNERS

p. 31

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MASTERPIECES IN THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER CARAVAGGIO'S INFLUENCE AT VERSAILLES

Exhibition from 14 March to 16 July 2023 - Madame de Maintenon's apartment

Press release

For the first time since the end of the 17th century, the Palace of Versailles is bringing together nine masterpieces from Louis XIV's exceptional collection of paintings. A testimony to his taste for the Caravaggisti style, these works were once displayed in one of the Palace's central spaces, a room initially used as a salon before becoming the King's official bedchamber in 1701. Generally hung six metres above the ground, this exhibition will serve as a unique opportunity to admire the paintings at eye level.

THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER: AN IMPORTANT SPACE WITH A COMPLEX PAST

In 1678, Louis XIV decided to build the Hall of Mirrors, the War Room and the Peace Room, and rebuild the façade on the Marble Courtyard. This process paved the way for a major reshuffling of the royal residence's central spaces. As a result of these works, the large central salon between the Marble Courtyard and the Italian-style terrace overlooking the gardens was opened out onto the Hall of Mirrors by three arcades with doors.

In 1684, this room running alongside the sovereign's bedchamber, located in the present-day Ciel-de-Bœuf antechamber, became the "King's dressing room". Nine paintings from the incredibly dense collection that the Sun King compiled from the start of his reign were put on display on the room's attic décor, meaning the upper levels of the walls.

In 1701, Louis XIV decided to rearrange his private apartment again, modifying the previous salon by ordering Jules Hardouin-Mansart to "shape an intricately carved wooden balustrade in the salon to house the King's bed and become the bedchamber". The bedchamber's location and position at the centre of the Palace and royal apartment is highly symbolic: it is east-facing, making it the starting point for the sun — Louis XIV's symbol — as it sails across the sky. As it was the place of King's levee and of the King's going-to-bed ceremony, the room was an important structuring courtly etiquette.

Essential components of the salon's 1684 décor were preserved during these works, with the panelling, cornices, pilasters and doorframes all kept, as were the paintings displayed on the attic. The King kept a close eye on how works progressed, and decided to keep five of the salon's existing Valentin de Boulogne paintings. However, due to the gilded stucco relief added over the bed, two paintings by Giovanni Lanfranco and Valentin de Boulogne were removed, as well as one attributed to Nicolas Tournier.

These changes point to Louis XIV's taste for Caravaggisti painting, which he chose to keep here in this highly personal and symbolic room. With their stark compositions and touches of genius, these pieces play on shadow density and contrast beautifully with the room's opulent, gilded décor.

MASTERPIECES BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

One of the Palace of Versailles' most-admired rooms, the King's bedchamber, is better known for its symbolic presence than for the masterpieces it contains. This exhibition sets out to lend the paintings the visibility they deserve by giving visitors the chance to admire them at eye level for the very first time.

Thanks to pieces on loan from the Louvre Museum and the Musée de Tessé in Le Mans, the Palace of Versailles brings together, for the very first time, the nine paintings that would have hung in the room from 1684 to 1701, alongside of the four overdoor medallions. Some of this nine masterpieces are still displayed here today.

EXHIBITION COMMISSIONER

Béatrice Sarrazin, Heritage Curator at the Musée National des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon



"LEARNING TO SEE. TRULY SEE..."

Learning to see. Truly see. The exhibition of masterpieces in the King's bedchamber, brought to us by Béatrice Sarrazin, Heritage Curator at the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, is a chance to get close and personal in contemplating the masterpieces Louis XIV would have enjoyed in his most intimate sphere, demonstrating his grandeur to the noblest guests. Fixed to the attic, six metres above the floor, they sometimes escaped our eye as hurry visitors.

Thanks to loans from the Louvre Museum and Musée de Tessé in Le Mans, nine paintings are brought together here for the very first time, in one of the Palace of Versailles' most famous rooms. Six of them are still being exposed in it today. The angel's gentle and questioning gaze as he looks upon Saint Matthew, and the Evangelist's fevered eyes, now meet our own.

A testimony to the King's taste for Caravaggio's chiaroscuro, further enhanced here by Valentin de Boulogne's skilled hand, lie at the heart of his collections, just as the bedchamber itself sits at the centre of both Palace and power. The King's bedchamber dictated when day became night, and night became day. It was here where court life was given its pace and rhythm, falling silent when the King retired to sleep.

Now as Versailles celebrates its 400th anniversary, one might be tempted to regret that the King's bedchamber is closed for restoration, fifty years after it was recreated. Yet the power and magic of this exhibition is that it grants us a glimpse of the exceptional masterpieces that decorated this room in their own right — an eternal symbol of Versailles' glory.

Catherine Pégard

President of the Public

Establishment of the Palace, the Museum and National Estate of Versailles

"UNDERSTANDING HOW ART FLOURISHED IN LOUIS XIV'S VERSAILLES."

Only a few remain in Versailles: spaces where visitors can admire the paintings as the Palace's residents would have done under the Ancien Régime, rooms where portraits have been kept in their original spots, where the overdoors continue to weave their founding stories. *L'Ananas* by Jean-Baptiste Oudry is embedded in the Cabinet Doré's panelling, precisely where Marie-Antoinette chose to place it. Just as it did in times gone by, *Les Heures du jour* by Joseph Vernet basks in the melancholic light of the Dauphine's private chamber. Such examples become rarer still if we venture further back to Louis XIV's reign. The painted ceilings unfurl at dizzying pace in the large apartments, and in doing so continue to convey the grandiose vision the Palace's architects sought to express. But on the walls, it is difficult today to truly understand how art flourished here, and to have an idea of the accumulation of masterpieces that characterised Louis XIV's Versailles. The most iconic examples are *Le Repas chez Simon* by Veronese in the the Hercules room, the room that would go on to become the Hercules Room, especially designed for the King, and of course the Caravaggist masterpieces in the King's bedchamber.

These artworks were not destined to travel, except for very special occasions such as the Musée de Picardie's extraordinary contribution to the *Louis XV, Passions of a King* exhibition organised by the Palace of Versailles in Autumn 2022. Along with the complete series of the famous *Chasses en pays étrangers* pieces that decorated the Small Gallery in the King's apartment, and the two monumental bear and lion hunt scenes painted by Bachelier for the Château de Choisy, the loans from Amiens formed the centrepiece of the exhibition. In exchange for this prestigious loan, the Palace of Versailles set out to exhibit the paintings from the attic in the King's bedchamber in Amiens before displaying them now at the Palace, for the public at eye level for the very first time.

The recently restored Valentin de Boulogne paintings, of which just two were included in the Louvre Museum's monographic exhibition in 2017, are some of the most stunning examples of 17th-century European art: visitors are sure to find themselves spellbound by the inscrutable gaze of Saint Matthew's angel, its eyes gleaming with tenderness, gravity and concern in a painting that epitomises genius in its purest form — a sense that occurs more often than one might think in Versailles' collections.

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





PART 1 | **THE EXHIBITION**

1 THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER: THE BEATING HEART OF COURTLY LIFE



Balcony in the King's bedchamber, seen from the Palace of Versailles' Royal Courtyard © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

REARRANGED SPACES AND SHIFTING DÉCOR

The King's bedchamber now lies at the heart of the Palace, and Louis XIV was fully involved in arranging its layout and spaces.

From 1678, the King had the first-floor rooms overlooking the Marble Courtyard restructured, he decided to create the Hall of Mirrors along with his two salons and to rebuild the inner façade.

Following Queen Maria Theresa's death in 1683, Louis XIV moved into the bedchamber that had until then been occupied by his wife, located in the northern half of the present-day Ciel-de-Bœuf antechamber.

The room soon emerged as being too small, and in 1701 the King had his bedchamber moved to the sweeping adjacent salon that gave out onto the Hall of Mirrors. Known until then as the "King's dressing room", the space had been created fewer than twenty years earlier by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the King's architect. It unfurled over two floors, was perfectly positioned at the centre of the estate's symmetrical layout, and was east-facing, thereby allowing for a potent form of symbolism:

the sun would rise with the King.

The décor in this new bedchamber mirrored the style seen in the salon, a new type of décor with a bare ceiling and white walls embellished with touches of gold. On the upper level, each bay housed a painting, or a window on the western wall.

The paintings were not moved during works, although three were taken down to allow the state bed to be set up. In the upper section, Nicolas Coustou set the political tone for the room with his sculpture: an allegory of the Kingdom of France, with an ermine cloak accompanied by two renommées at the corners: angels with trumpets to watch over the King as he slept.



La France veillant sur le sommeil du Roi, Nicolas Coustou
King's bedchamber, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

These decisions stemmed from the King himself, who was very attentive to the sumptuousness of the décor: he requested “intricate sculpture” embellishments, issued his opinions on the metalsmithing, asked that the woodwork on the shutters and jambs be honed. It may therefore be assumed that Louis XIV had the same interest and involvement in choosing to transfer some of the existing attic paintings from the salon to his new bedchamber.

AN EPICENTRE OF COURTLY CEREMONY

The defining feature of the 1701 bedchamber is how this room combines two distinct functions, serving as both a place to sleep and a ceremonial bedchamber. The King could therefore use it for purely personal purposes, resting in the space, or conversely open it up as a room for pomp and ceremony, where etiquette dictated every movement.

However, throughout Louis XIV’s reign, the official ceremonial bedchamber remained the Mercury Salon in the King’s Grand Apartment, as per the custom. Indeed, it was here that the sovereign’s body was laid out to rest in 1715 following his death, despite him dying in the “1701” bedchamber.



The Mercury Salon, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

Traditionally, the bedchamber between the Hall of Mirrors and the Marble Courtyard was indeed where the sovereign would sleep, and where the pace and rhythm of courtly life was set by ceremonial risings and retirings. The King would wake here at eight o’clock, before praying and washing. Once his wig had been fitted, the Palace could rise. The number of courtiers in attendance would then grow as they watched the King dress, pray again, and leave his bedchamber at half past nine. He would return to this room at one in the afternoon for the *petit couvert*: lunch taken alone. At around eleven at night he would retire, lying on his bed and entrusting the last candlestick to the courtier of his choosing.

The bed was separated from the rest of the room by a balustrade, and the doors would be double-locked while the sovereign slept.



The King’s bedchamber, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, T. Garnier

The room would only have been accessible when the King went to bed and rose, during the monarch’s daytime absences, and for special receptions of ambassadors and foreign princes.

In accordance with kingly custom, the bedchamber was also a special space where oaths were taken. The Knights of the Order of Saint Louis, for example, were knighted in this room.



Institution de l'ordre militaire de Saint-Louis, François Marot (1666-1719), 1710, oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

This ceremony was depicted by the painter François Marot in one of the preparatory sketches for the cartoon commissioned to complete the *Histoire du Roi* hanging, woven at the Manufacture Royale des Gobelins. The scene commemorates Louis XIV establishing the Order of Saint Louis, standing before the kneeling knights about to be dubbed. Founded in April 1693, the order was bestowed on the most valiant of armsmen. The painter took artistic liberties with the timeline, choosing to set the ceremony in the bedchamber that the King occupied from 1701 on.

TIMELINE

1666

Until then located on the Palace's first floor, the King's bedchamber is moved to the ground floor, to the apartments belonging to Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV.

1673

The Apollo Salon in the King's Grand Apartment becomes the ceremonial bedchamber, and is later moved to the neighbouring Mercury Salon.

1684

The bedchamber is moved to the small apartment belonging to Queen Maria Theresa, who died in 1683. This room lacked space, with the King getting ready in the room next-door, known as the "King's dressing room".

1701

To mitigate the previous room's limitations, the larger "King's dressing room" becomes his bedchamber. Aware of the symbolism inherent to this new bedchamber located in the line of the rising sun, the King decides to make it his ceremonial bedchamber too, although the Mercury Salon continues to be preferred for major ceremonies.

1738

Louis XV decides to create another bedchamber in the King's small apartment. At this point, Louis XIV's bedchamber is now only used as a large ceremonial bedchamber.

FRENCH REVOLUTION

The furniture from the King's bedchamber is sold at auction, with the attic paintings gradually dispatched to Paris' Muséum Central des Arts (Louvre).

FIRST FRENCH EMPIRE

The bedchamber's woodwork décor is further enriched by a large Veronese painting, *Jupiter foudroyant les vices*, snatched from Venice's Doge's Palace by the French army in 1797. The painting is displayed on the ceiling.

RESTORATION

As part of Louis XVIII plans to move back to Versailles, new paintings are commissioned for the bedchamber attic. Serving as an extension of the Veronese ceiling, these new paintings depict giants and mythological women chastised by the gods.

1837



When Louis-Philippe decides to turn the Palace of Versailles into a museum, he sets his heart on returning the royal bedchamber to its former

glory, and orders the room be refurbished for the very first time, with Valentin de Boulogne's four Evangelists returned to the space. He also undertakes to emphasise the bond between himself and Louis XIV by adding the two portraits of Anne of Austria and Maria Theresa, medallion portraits of the royal family, and the famous wax portrait of Louis XIV. A balustrade sourced from the royal storage archives is returned to its place between the alcove and the bedchamber's public space.

20TH CENTURY

At the dawning of World War 2, the bedchamber's hanging and furniture are put into protection. When the museum reopens in 1946, the decision is taken not to return them to the room.

In the 1950s, the bedchamber is therefore left without a bed, and all the textiles that once adorned it are gone. The Palace of Versailles' head curator at the time, Gérard Van der Kemp, plans on restoring the furniture and furnishings that would have existed at the end of Louis XIV's reign. This is difficult to achieve, and the period ultimately chosen is the start of Louis XV's reign — an era with a very similar feel. This layout is kept until the middle of Louis XVI's reign. The Maison Prelle's Lyon ateliers set about weaving in 1957, completing their work in 1977.



While the lengthy weaving process is underway, a model is put on display for visitors to the Palace, giving them an idea of how it would once have looked. The furniture is partially restored, including a French-style bed

bracketed by two armchairs. The paintings are positioned in their current attic location. Once it has been fully restored, the bedchamber is inaugurated in 1980.

Top: *La Chambre de Louis XIV*, Jean-Baptiste-Fortuné de Fournier (1798-1864), 1861, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, Dist RMN © C. Fouin
Bottom: *Maquette de la chambre de Louis XIV*, Charles Arquinet (1900-1992), 1958, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, Dist RMN © C. Milet

2 A DIVERSE COLLECTION

Louis XIV continuously added to his collection of paintings. The inventory of Royal Cabinet paintings was drawn up by Charles Le Brun in 1683, and listed over 400 works. The 1695 inventory catalogued over 700. This collection was pieced together over the course of his reign, particularly in the early days, through commissions, donations and purchases, such as the collections that were acquired from the estates of Cardinal Mazarin, François Oursel – to whom Valentin's four Evangelists belonged – and two sales from the collection owned by German banker Eberhart Jabach. From 1682 on, when the Palace of Versailles became the official seat of the monarchy and courtly residence, this rich collection was used to decorate the Palace's walls.

The King owned masterpieces from all schools, notably Italian paintings, which sat alongside more modest artworks, deemed of higher quality at the time. This no doubt stemmed from the fact that the paintings were sourced from prestigious owners who served as guarantees, their names alone a testament to their value.

In this way, the four oval overdoors (with the exception of *Sainte Madeleine*) that were set up in the King's bedchamber in 1701, come from the Jabach collection that was sold to Louis XIV in 1662 and 1671.

The *Autoportrait* and *Portrait de Moncade* were thought to be the work of Van Dyck. *Sainte Madeleine* is a copy of a Domenichino painting. As for *Saint Jean-Baptiste*, this work is attributed to the master himself, Caravaggio, when in fact it is the work of one of his acolytes, Caracciolo. The concept of original artwork did not hold the same weight at the time, with the artist's name considered weightier.



Portrait de Moncade, marquis d'Ayton
After Antoon van Dyck (1599-1641),
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles,
loan from the Louvre Museum, 1948
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN
© C. Fouin



Autoportrait
Antoon van Dyck atelier (1599-1641), oil on
canvas, Palace of Versailles
loan from the Louvre Museum, 1948
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN
© C. Fouin



Saint Jean-Baptiste
Battistello Caracciolo (v. 1578-1635),
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles,
loan from the Louvre Museum, 1966
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN
© C. Fouin



Sainte Madeleine
After Domenico Zampieri,
known as Domenichino (1581-1641),
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles
loan from the Louvre Museum, 1950
© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN
© C. Fouin

3 THE "KING'S DRESSING ROOM"

FROM SALON TO BEDCHAMBER: THREE MASTERPIECES IN EXILE

From 1684 to 1701, three paintings were hung on the western wall of the "King's dressing room". On this partition, three segmented arched openings alternated with four Corinthian pilasters, connecting the room to the Hall of Mirrors.

The exact layout of these paintings is unknown. Would *Agar secourue par l'ange* by Lanfranco have been positioned in the middle, bracketed by the *Diseuse de bonne aventure* and *Réunion des buveurs*, both of which capture everyday vignettes and feature identical colour palettes? **These two genre scenes are perfectly in step with the Caravaggisti movement: figures fully occupying the space against an undistinguished background, showing a range of positions and postures, workaday appearances, their hands and eyes telling the story, forms emerging from the shadows through bright, direct light.**

Inspired by the Old Testament, Lanfranco's painting, meanwhile, serves up a softer brand of Caravaggisti style, the forms here more sculptural, the palette more varied, the composition lighter and roomier thanks to the landscaped background.

When the salon was turned into a bedchamber in 1701, the number of decorative attic paintings was cut, as the wall lying between it and the Hall of Mirrors now housed the royal bed. Three paintings therefore needed to be removed, including the only two with a secular theme.



La Diseuse de bonne aventure

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), 1626-1628,
oil on canvas,
Paris, Louvre Museum, Painting Department.
© Louvre Museum, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/A. Dequier

Many of Valentin's preferred themes emerge in this painting: people gathering around a table, a wide variety of ages and life stages, musical instruments, and the Bohemian, depicted here as a fortune-teller reading a man's palm with gusto. Each character seems to be absorbed in their activities: the musicians are alone, their chords serving as a soundtrack to a young man leaning on the table, while the fortune-telling session allows the thief to slip away into the shadows.



Réunion des buveurs

Attributed to Nicolas Tournier (1590-1639), oil on canvas
Le Mans, Musée de Tessé, loan from the Louvre
Museum, 1958
© RMN-Grand Palais/Agence Bulloz

Once attributed to Bartolomeo Manfredi, this painting is most likely thought to be a copy by Nicolas Tournier, a French artist working in Rome in the first half of the 1620s. Drinkers gathering is a recurring Caravaggisti theme, with painters given free rein to show off their skills through a variety of different positions and postures and a range of textured effects. The depth of the composition is heightened by the foreshortened objects such as the knife balancing on the marble table, the lute and the sword hilt in the foreground.



Agar secourue par l'ange

Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647), ca. 1616, oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles, loan from the Louvre Museum, 1949

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

Taken from Genesis (XXI, 9-21), this story often inspired art in the 17th century: to satisfy his wife Sarah, Abraham banishes the Egyptian slave Hagar and the son he had with her, Ishmael.

They wander the Beersheba desert until their water soon runs dry. Hagar lays Ishmael under a bush and walks away so as not to watch him perish. Hearing the child's cries and his mother's sobs, God sends them an angel.

Lanfranco paints the teenaged angel touching Hagar's

shoulder with one hand, the other pointing to a life-giving spring. Barely visible between Hagar and the angel is Ishmael.

Having started his training under Agostino Carracci, in Rome Lanfranco moved in Annibale's circle, his master's famous cousin. Upon returning to Parma, inspired by Correggio, Lanfranco moved away from his teachers, with the artist's career taking off in Rome and Naples. His innovative style began to take shape: from altar-pieces to dizzying frescoes on the domes at Rome's Sant'Andrea della Valle and the Royal Chapel of the Treasure of St. Januarius in Naples, he brought to life illusionist forms in uprisings of angels and clouds of gold, showing a marked taste for contrast.

4 THE BEDCHAMBER'S DÉCOR IN 1701

THE BEDCHAMBER'S ATTIC: VALENTIN DE BOULOGNE'S CHIAROSCURO

When the salon became the royal bedchamber in 1701, six existing paintings were chosen by Louis XIV to remain in the attic décor.

Valentin de Boulogne's four Evangelists were placed at the ends of the northern and southern walls, framing *le Denier de César* by Valentin and *Le Mariage mystique de Sainte Catherine* by Alessandro Turchi.

These two paintings were sent to Louvre during the Revolution, and while *Le Denier de César* was returned to its rightful place in 1949, Lanfranco's *Agar secourue par l'ange* was mysteriously replaced with *Mariage mystique de Sainte Catherine* by Turchi.

Here in his iconic, symbolic bedchamber, Louis XIV chose to give pride of place to the Caravaggisti style, giving the lion's share of the wall-space over to Valentin de Boulogne's five paintings. This decision was in no way random: surrounded by Italian and Flemish masters, Valentin was the only representative of the French School. At the time, he was considered France's second greatest painter after Nicolas Poussin, worthy of being included in the King's Cabinet engraved series published by Félibien in 1677, a catalogue compiling all the masterpieces from the collection.

The four Evangelists form a whole, which is advantageous in the context of hanging them two by two to create a formal sense of structured balance. Presented horizontally and captured in a three-quarter view, the four large figures pop against a plain, dark background. Deftly combining monumental scale with delicate execution in a realist style brimming with interiority, Valentin offers up a masterful interpretation of divine inspiration, skillfully bringing out the features of the face, hands and draped fabrics, as well as colours, particularly on the characters' clothing, lending each figure their own identity.



VALENTIN DE BOULOGNE (1591-1632)

Valentin de Boulogne is the most Italian of the French Caravaggisti painters. He spent most of his brief career in Italy, from 1614 until his tragic death in 1632. He won his teeth in the turbulent Rome of the 1620s, following in Caravaggio's footsteps. While his work points to the master's influence on his style, he nevertheless stands out through his own brand of melancholic gravity. Over the course of his career, he produced a humble body of work, around sixty paintings in the pure Caravaggisti style: Valentin focuses on genre scenes with dark backgrounds and half-length figures – bohemians, brawls, gatherings of musicians – with a keen emphasis on religious themes, too.

Saint Matthieu

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), ca. 1624-1626, oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles

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

Clad in blue clothing and draped in a vibrant red cloak, the Evangelist seems weary. He holds a quill in one hand and an open book in the other, at which a worried, questioning angel is pointing. The contrast between the old man and the surprised cherub with its glorious wings is striking. The table, quill, books and parchment serve as a masterclass in still-life skill, unfolding in a symphony of beiges, whites and browns.



Saint Marc

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), ca. 1624-1626,
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles

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

Eyes lowered, arms outstretched with his palms turned to the skies, Mark stares into the distance. His face is creased, the hollows beneath his eyes pronounced. His beard is peppered with strands of grey and ginger and white, the locks of his curly hair are clearly defined. The second gospel, the one he wrote opens with a cry in the desert, an allusion to the lion's roar. Here, Valentin draws on a moderate, finely dosed chiaroscuro style in the halo glowing around the saint's face.



Saint Jean

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), ca. 1624-1626,
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles

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

The youngest of the four Evangelists is positioned diagonally across the canvas to powerful effect, his gaze turned to the external force inspiring the saint.

Although this is not the artist's first depiction of Saint John, in this painting he amplifies the chiaroscuro and shades of grey that work with the Hebrew text to heighten God's mystery. According to tradition, John is said to have written the Book of Revelation. Choosing to depict the four Evangelists alongside their symbols – Matthew and the angel, Mark and the lion, Luke and the ox or bull, and John with the eagle – stems from Ezekiel's vision (I, 4-13), reiterated in identical form in Saint John's Book of Revelation (IV, 7-8).



Saint Jean

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), ca. 1624-1626,
oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles

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

Saint Luke is depicted in his prime, peacefully going about his work. Absorbed in his thoughts, his fist over the handwritten page holds it in place. His gaze is lowered as he piously writes out his gospel, flanked by the bull and an icon of the Virgin, of whom he was the first painter according to tradition. The Accademia di San Luca in Rome was a powerful confederation of painters that Valentin supported in 1626.

CARAVAGGIO AND VALENTIN

At the end of the 16th century, Caravaggio ushered a change of vision that splintered away from the Renaissance ideal and the exaggerated Mannerism style. Drawing on chiaroscuro, he broke free from the drawing/colour dichotomy, infusing religious narrative with humanity and turning the everyday into sacred, and in doing so shaking up the old ways and rules of painting. His influence rippled across Europe with immediate effect: Italian, Flemish, Dutch, Spanish and French artists all embraced the movement, each interpreting the master's teachings in their own unique way.

Seen as the most Italian of the French painters, Valentin de Boulogne embodied one of the most talented examples of the Caravaggisti style that vanished with the artist in 1632.

Caravaggio's works and those of his imitators can be seen in Rome's churches and palaces. Valentin was drawn to dark backgrounds, half-length compositions and everyday subject matters. The melancholic gravity that shines through in his style sets him apart from the master.

While Valentin works with *pittura dal naturale*, he serves up his own particular take on the form: grave, measured versions in which time seems to stand still. His models are taken from the streets of Rome, transformed into universal archetypes brimming with humanity.

Caravaggio had created a first version of *Saint Matthieu et l'ange*, one of the three paintings in the famous Church of St. Louis of the French chapel, before painting the piece that currently sits there. Valentin undoubtedly took inspiration from the angel by the Evangelist's side. Yet Caravaggio's determined, inspiring angel dictating Matthew's words becomes a terrified child under Valentin's brush, a cherub with soft, sweet eyes and a restrained posture.



Le Denier de César

Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), ca. 1622-1623

Oil on canvas

Palace of Versailles, loan from the Louvre Museum, 1948

© Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © Christophe Fouin

This biblical episode is taken from the Gospels: seeking to catch Christ out, the Pharisees and Herodians ask him whether or not it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. They hand him a piece of silver engraved with Caesar's name and portrait. Jesus replies: "Give Caesar what is due to Caesar". Valentin cuts the scene down to three characters, telling the story through the intensity of their gazes and the expressiveness of their hands working around the coin in the middle: the centre-point of the composition.



Le Mariage mystique de sainte Catherine

Alessandro Turchi (1578-1649), ca. 1635

Oil on canvas

Paris, Louvre Museum, Painting Department

© RMN-Grand Palais (Louvre Museum)/Tony Querrec

Baby Jesus sits on his mother Mary's lap, slipping a ring onto Saint Catherine of Alexandria's right hand. The latter can be recognised by her gold crown and the breaking wheel against which her left hand rests. By taking the ring, the saint devotes her life and virginity to Christ. The solemnity of the gesture is heightened by the painting's stark composition, in which the hands and faces are brought to the centre.

THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER: A MASTERCLASS IN PAINTING

The attic isn't the only part of the royal bedchamber that was decorated with paintings. In 1701, Domenichino's *Le Roi David jouant de la harpe* hung to the right of the bed, while to the left was *Saint Jean à Patmos*, a painting thought to have been by Raphael, now attributed to a follower of his style, Innocenzo da Imola. The two paintings were positioned here after the Domenichino painting was removed to build a "royal-style fireplace", meaning a fireplace topped with a mirror, on the northern wall.

Today, these two paintings are now on display in the Mercury Salon, in the King's Grand Apartment.



Saint Jean à Patmos Innocenzo di Pietro Francucci da Imola, wood transfer on canvas, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin



Le Roi David jouant de la harpe Domenico Zampieri, known as Domenichino, oil on canvas, Palace of Versailles © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

If one looks closely, visitors will notice that teachings from Raphael, the Bolognese School and Caravaggio — the three overarching styles that were particularly coveted by collectors — can all be gleaned in the King's bedchamber. These paintings reflect Louis XIV's artistic tastes: excellence in all things. This philosophy explains why the sovereign had a soft spot for Domenichino's restrained charm and Valentin de Boulogne, one of the most spell-binding icons of the Caravaggisti style.

WESTERN WALL - GIVING ONTO THE HALL OF MIRRORS



La Diseuse de bonne aventure
Valentin de Boulogne



Agar secourue par l'ange
Giovanni Lanfranco



Réunion de buveurs
Attributed to Nicolas Tournier



Saint Jean, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Matthieu, Valentin de Boulogne

1684-1701
THE
"KING'S DRESSING ROOM"



Le denier de César, Valentin de Boulogne



Le Mariage mystique de sainte Catherine,
Alessandro Turchi



Saint Luc, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Marc, Valentin de Boulogne

EASTERN FAÇADE - GIVING OUT ONTO THE MARBLE COURTYARD

The exact locations of the room's attic works are unknown. All we know is that *La Diseuse de bonne aventure*, *Agar secourue par l'ange* and *Réunion de buveurs* would have been on the wall giving out onto the Hall of Mirrors, however we do not know precisely how they would have been laid out. The idea here is to give a loose idea of how they might be hung in the room.

WESTERN WALL - GIVING ONTO THE HALL OF MIRRORS



Saint Jean, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Matthieu, Valentin de Boulogne

SOUTHERN WALL



Le denier de César, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Luc, Valentin de Boulogne

1701

THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER

NORTHERN WALL



Le Mariage mystique de sainte Catherine,
Alessandro Turchi



Saint Marc, Valentin de Boulogne

EASTERN FAÇADE - GIVING OUT ONTO THE MARBLE COURTYARD

The exact location of each painting is unknown, with the exception of *Denier de César*, *Mariage mystique de Sainte Catherine* and *Saint Matthieu*. The idea here is to give a loose idea of how they might be hung in the room.

WESTERN WALL - GIVING ONTO THE HALL OF MIRRORS



Saint Luc, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Jean, Valentin de Boulogne



Le denier de César, Valentin de Boulogne



Agar secourue par l'ange, Giovanni Lanfranco



Saint Matthieu, Valentin de Boulogne



Saint Marc, Valentin de Boulogne

EASTERN FAÇADE - GIVING OUT ONTO THE MARBLE COURTYARD

SOUTHERN WALL

NORTHERN WALL

PRESENT-DAY
THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER



View of the King's bedchamber © Palace of Versailles, Dist. RMN © C. Fouin

RESTORATION WORK ON THE SIX PAINTINGS IN THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER (2015-2020)

The six paintings currently on display in the King's bedchamber required in-depth intervention on their backings to the extent that some required relining, as well as on the paint itself, including cleaning the paint-overs, harmonising the enlargements, and filling in gaps. These works hadn't been restored since they were definitively returned to the room in 1948-1949.

When *Saint Marc* and *Saint Matthieu* were put on loan for the first Valentin de Boulogne exhibition (*Valentin de Boulogne, réinventer Caravage* at the Louvre Museum in 2017), the decision was taken to restore the two paintings and to follow this up with restoring the four other paintings, too.

The work took place between 2015 and 2020, with the ateliers at the Musées de France Research and Restoration Centre (C2RMF) reuniting the paintings with their legibility, harmony, stability and colour vibrancy, all of which now blend seamlessly in with the magnificent décor on display in the King's bedchamber. The intervention was also an opportunity to remedy alterations that threatened the paintings' integrity, and to prevent future damage. Finally, the restoration was seized as a chance to reflect on the works' material past, notably in terms of the many changes in format linked to changes of location and status. The process allowed for a deeper understanding of the paintings by cross-checking the handful of references found in the archives with traces of past interventions that were brought to light through scientific assessments and the restorers' work.





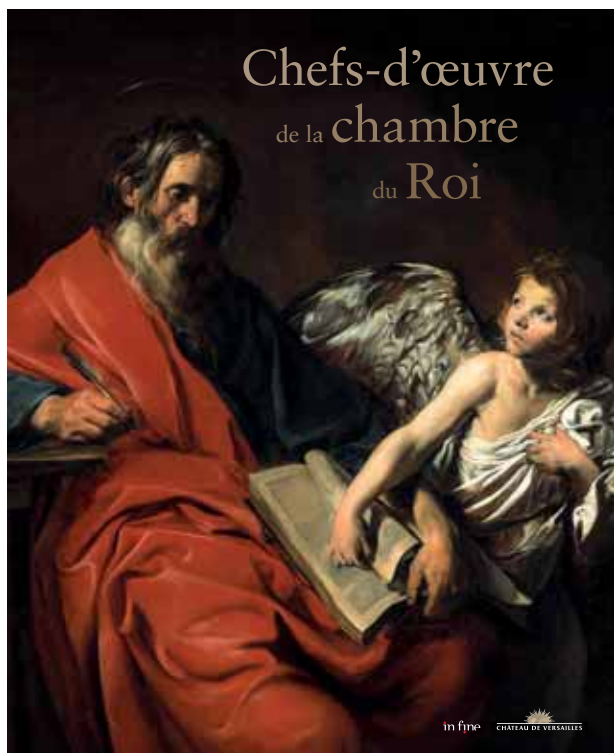




PART 2

BEYOND THE EXHIBITION

| BOOK



**Co-published by the Palace of Versailles - In Fine
Éditions d'art**

96 pages, format: 19.5 x 25 cm

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Only in French

Supervised by Béatrice Sarrazin, Heritage Curator at the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.

With contributions by Claire Gérin-Pierre, Vivien Richard, Pierre-Xavier Hans and Frédéric Lacaille.

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CONTENTS

Italian influence in Versailles

- The tastes of a king
- Valentin de Boulogne: an ode to melancholy
- Valentin de Boulogne: *Le Denier de César*
- Valentin de Boulogne: The four Evangelists *Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke and Saint John*
- Giovanni Lanfranco: *Agar secourue par l'ange*
- Restoring the paintings in the King's bedchamber

The King's bedchamber: customs, décor and transformation

- The history and functions of Louis XIV's rooms
- The King's bedchamber in the 18th century
- The King's bedchamber after the Revolution

Bibliography

| FURTHER INSIGHT

THE AUDIO-GUIDE

Audio-guide commentaries are available in French and English to guide visitors through the exhibition. This journey through the space covers the architectural changes that the King's bedchamber underwent, Louis XIV's taste for the Caravaggisti style, the royal collections and how they were compiled, and work by the painter Valentin de Boulogne.

Price: €5/€4 (reduced rate). Free for visitors with a disability and their carer, as well as for cultural pass cardholders.

VIDEO CONTENT

Two never-before-seen videos are available on the Palace of Versailles' YouTube channel.

The first is also available to view within the exhibition, and explains the changes that swept through the salon's inner layout on its journey to becoming the royal bedchamber in 1701, as well as how these changes impacted on the manner in which the paintings were displayed in the room.

The second film homes in on the paintings of the four Evangelists by Valentin de Boulogne, the only French painter to feature in the King's bedchamber. Online users can find out more about the 17th-century artist's masterpieces, and explore what made this painter's style so distinctive.

| PRACTICAL DETAILS

The exhibition will run in Madame de Maintenon's apartment from 14 March to 16 July 2023.

The Ciel-de-bœuf antechamber and the King's bedchamber are currently closed for works, and will reopen to the public in spring 2024.

EXHIBITION OPENING HOURS

Until 30 March: every day except Monday, from 9:00am to 5:30pm (last entry: 5:00pm).

From 1 April: every day except Monday, from 9:00am to 6:30pm (last entry: 6:00pm).

TICKET OFFICE AND BOOKINGS:

www.chateauversailles.fr

Admission to the exhibition with the 'Passport' or 'Palace' tickets, the 'A Year in Versailles' subscriber card, and visitors eligible for free museum entry (under-18s, under-26s residing in the EU, visitors with disabilities, jobseekers in France, etc.)

GETTING HERE FROM PARIS

RER ligne C, heading to Versailles Château - Rive Gauche.

SNCF trains from Montparnasse station, heading to Versailles - Chantiers.

SNCF trains from Saint-Lazare station, heading to Versailles - Rive Droite.

RATP bus line 171 from Pont de Sèvres heading to Versailles - Place d'Armes.

Motorway A13 (heading to Rouen), exit for Versailles - Château.

Parking on Place d'Armes. Parking fees are charged, except for visitors with disabilities, and every night from 7:00pm on.

VERSAILLES FOR ALL

Free self-guided entry to the temporary exhibitions:

- for visitors with disabilities and their chaperone when you show your badge.

- for visitors claiming benefits when you show supporting documentation issued less than six months ago.

For information and booking: +33 (0)1 30 83 75 05 and versaillespour tous@chateauversailles.fr

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES APP

Get the exhibition itinerary on the app available to download from the App Store and Google Play.

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PART 3 | **PARTNERS
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