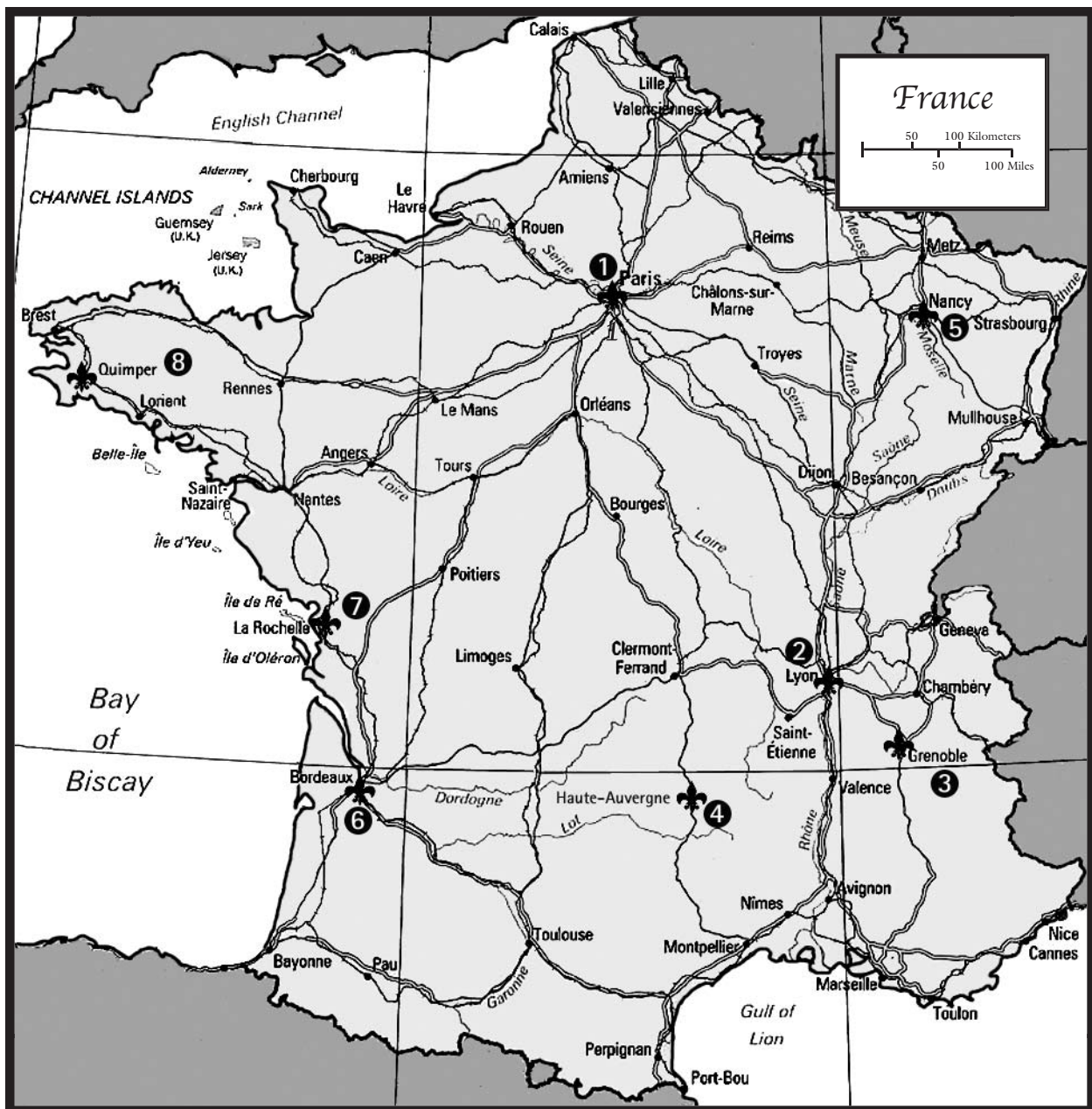


Furniture in France



Wooden Artifacts Group
May 2001





1. *Paris*: Musée Carnavalet Histoire de Paris; Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau; J. George, S.A.; Vaux-le-Vicomte; Château de Groussay; Musée Nissim de Camondo; Ateliers Robert Gohard; Bruno Desnouses; Michel Jamet; Rémy Brazet; Société d'Encouragement aux Métiers d'Art (SEMA), L'Hôtel Potocki; Château de Voisins; Château de Maintenon; Les Grands Ateliers de France; Le Palais Garnier; Institut de Formation des Restaurateurs d'Oeuvres d'Art (IFROA); Ecole Bouille; Ateliers de Versailles; Musée du Louvre; Patrick Desserme; Castel Béranger; Chevalier Conservation

2. *Lyon*: Reymondon; Prella et Cie; Musées des Tissus et des Arts décoratifs
 3. *Grenoble*: Musée Dauphinois; Château de Longpra; Château de Sassenage
 4. *Haute-Auvergne Region*: Ferme de Pierre Allègre; Musée de la Haute-Auvergne
 5. *Nancy*: Villa Mâjorelle; Musée de l'école de Nancy
 6. *Bordeaux*: Musée des arts decoratifs
 7. *La Rochelle*: Musée de Nouveux Monde, Musée d'Orbigny-Bernon
 8. *Bretagna*: Château Kerjean; Ferme Musée du Léon; Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper

cover photo by Canedi Pascal

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Preface

The Wooden Artifacts Group (WAG) of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) visited France in May 2001, creating a significant opportunity to extend the education of WAG members by studying the country's furniture and influence on American designs. Since the trip was designed by conservators, it was important to include visits to conservation/restoration studios as well as to museums. France is special in that many traditional craft techniques and workshops are often preserved virtually intact. By visiting some of these workshops, we gained a greater insight into the processes that went into creating both French and American antique furniture. Finally, not only did we make contacts with French conservators, but also we got to know some new American colleagues.

In the late fall of 1999 David Bayne, Furniture Conservator for the New York Bureau of Historic Sites, wrote a letter to the AIC Board wondering if they would support a formal proposal to a foundation to help finance a study trip to France for WAG members. Katharine Untch, AIC's Director of Professional Education and Training, presented it to the board, which gave it the nod. David then worked with Elizabeth F. "Penny" Jones, AIC/FAIC Executive Director, and Beth Kline, former Assistant Director, fleshing out the ideas. An Organizing Committee of Kathy Z. Gillis, Jeff Moore, and David Bayne was formed to represent WAG interests and provide input on what the members might want to see in France. At the same time Brian Considine, Conservator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the J. Paul Getty Museum, and Paul Miller, Curator of The Preservation Society of Newport County in Rhode Island, were developing itineraries based on their extensive experiences and contacts in France. A Selection Committee that included Brian, Paul, and David as well as Jonathan Thornton, Professor of Conservation Training at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and Charles Hummel, curator and former Deputy Director of Winterthur Museum, chose from the numerous applicants. Since outreach and publicity is a goal of WAG, we included curators and furnituremakers in our canvassing.

The itinerary included over forty different venues in Paris and eight other French cities. The breadth and range of furniture, museums, craftsmen's studios, and restoration ateliers was astounding. Much of the credit goes to Brian and Paul for their enthusiasm and willingness to share with us their access to some of the finest facilities in Paris. Their many years of work with French colleagues and resources created some unbelievable visits. Furthermore, traveling with twenty-one people, visiting three to four venues a day, was intense intellectually and physically. Fortunately, our Logistics Coordinator Leslie Rainer, a conservator in private practice managed the transportation and visits in the most efficient and comfortable way possible. She also did some of the photographic documentation of the group as well as translation. All in all she did a superb job.



Kathy Z. Gillis (l) and Jeff Moore (r), organizing committee members. Randy Wilkinson, center.

Combining the wonders of Paris with the provincial delights of Grenoble, Nancy, the Auvergne, and the Atlantic coast, we saw almost the entire range of French furniture. In palaces we saw royal commodes by Jean-Henri Riesener, cabinetmaker to Marie-Antoinette. In Parisian *hôtels*, we found suites of chairs by Georges Jacob. Along the Atlantic coast, there were bourgeois *armoires du Bordelais*, and in Auvergne, intact farmhouses that have barely changed since the middle of the 19th century. We spoke with conservators who work in isolated, sole proprietor shops as well as with administrators in Paris who determine museum policies.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation generously provided \$2600 for each of 15 participants and \$3000 each

for two students. That left only \$1425 that each participant contributed to attend. This included airfare, hotels, most of the ground transportation, and the expenses of the four guides. Not included were meals other than breakfasts and incidentals.

The trip has been described with comments such as “an opportunity of a lifetime” and “it doesn’t get any better than this.” It was successful, and in order to share some of this success, each member was asked to describe two or three sites. These have been compiled by Kathy Z. Gillis and David Bayne into the following *Perspectives* and *Trip Summaries*. The *Perspectives* consist of three essays describing some of the impressions of the guides. The *Trip Summaries* are arranged in the order that we visited the sites and hopefully give an overview of not only the activities of the group, but also insights into French furniture, conservation, and museum practices. Since some editing took place, any inaccuracies or misinterpretations are the fault of the editors and not the original authors.



Perspectives

Paul Miller

Curator, Preservation Society of Newport County

October 17, 2001

Patrick Albert, Centre de Conservation
du Québec (CCQ)



*Paul Miller on the steps of Hôtel
Potocki, Paris.*

The WAG-AIC visit to France in May 2001 provided a timely and topical opportunity for conservators, curators and designers to inspect primary sources. In the daily pursuit of our endeavors, we frequently pause to consider the stylistic design prototypes and potential aspirations of the artisans who created or inspired the legacies we are charged with safeguarding. Spending time in Paris and the provinces permitted those sensitized to French historic styles to retrace the steps of craftsmen in the traditional furniture making venue of the Faubourg St. Antoine and to appreciate the built and natural environment from which design inspiration and raw materials were drawn. Of particular importance was a comprehension of centralization and specialization; in other words the “state” as patron and arbiter of taste and Paris as the epicenter of the state. Specialization might be viewed as a guarantee of traditional professional

methods, tools and techniques or conversely as an anachronistic holdover inviting time-consuming bureaucracy. An understanding of these criteria proves essential to any investigation into the proud legacy, and at the same time, innate fragility of France’s *métiers d’art* and current actions underway to seek balance and future stability.

Our return to primary sources was not confined to inspection of the decorative arts holding of the Louvre or Versailles; rather we saw, felt, smelled and heard and, yes, tasted the immutable essence of craftwork in multi-generational family ateliers. From stocks of seemingly primeval exotic woods, to century-old velvet hand looms, to carved frames from 18th-century royal collections, the senses were regaled with primary documents of widely varied media. Without commercial advances, we were invited to study the document and the primary materials traditionally used for treatment. Constructive dialogue ensued on alternative methods and their pragmatism for Continental colleagues.

For all participants sometimes easy, sometimes complex correlations could be made in the fields of design, methodology and philosophical theory. Conclusions were drawn individually, but jointly all participants shared the privileged exposure to an often guardedly private world of tradition and—for us no longer indefinable—character.

Brian Considine

Conservator, J. Paul Getty Museum

October 11, 2001

Patrick Albert, CCQ



Brian Considine in the garden of the Château de Sassenage.

The WAG trip to France was a great success in all of its stated goals, but we also engaged our hosts in a dialogue with us and among themselves about what material culture means and how best to preserve it. I took the greatest pleasure in sharing with the others on the trip the collections, ateliers and, most importantly, the people who have enriched my professional life since I first went to Paris as an aspiring conservator in 1982.

The level of craftsmanship that we saw is to the great credit of Louis XIV. He was determined to make France the artistic capital of Europe by setting up royal workshops at the Manufacture des Gobelins following the model of the Medici's Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence. It was at first the guild system that maintained rigorous standards throughout the centuries following Louis XIV. However the government now plays an active role in the support

of these crafts by placing large orders for the preservation of museums, châteaux and their collections and by running several schools where these crafts are taught. There is also a government ministry of craftsmanship and a government-funded society for the encouragement of artistic crafts. The French are understandably very proud of their craft traditions, and our group was struck by the way in which this attitude is manifested in their approach to the preservation of their collections. We came to understand that preserving objects is inseparable from preserving craft traditions.

At the same time that we came to a greater understanding of the French attitude towards furniture conservation, we were able to share with them our perspective, which tends to favor the preservation of original material over artist's intent. There were many interesting conversations about the reasons behind the different points of view and the trade-offs they involve. In addition to these discussions about treatment, our visits encouraged our hosts to rethink their points of view and to involve each other in an ongoing dialogue about these issues. We also gave them the idea of making similar visits and organizing study trips themselves. It was very gratifying to see their strongly positive reaction to the initiative and openness that our trip reflected. All of us involved realized the tremendous value in stepping out of the daily routine to get a different perspective on the issues that inevitably come to be taken for granted. The effort that we had made to organize our visits heightened their sense of the value of their own skills and of the work that they

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were doing. At the same time, it moved them to get beyond any stereotypes that they might have had, particularly that we would think that ours was the best way. In the end, both the members of the group and our French hosts came away very impressed by each other, but also understanding that we all had a great deal to learn from each other. We had all benefited from the challenge to reconsider our notions about other people's approaches as well as our own. And we left feeling that we had given something in exchange for the very moving hospitality and professional sharing that they had shown us.

David Bayne

Furniture Conservator, New York Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation
October 17, 2001

Our visits and conversations with many individuals in France revealed that there is a pervasive interest in preserving original crafts. In some situations preserving the technique is considered as important as preserving the objects themselves. Craft schools like Ecole Boulle produce highly skilled artisans capable of making museum masterpieces. When antique furniture reaches their bench for restoration, these artisans have a much deeper understanding, compared to many American conservators, of the historic materials and techniques that went into the production. They know how it was done originally, and they can recreate original intent accurately. Does this validate their methods of restoration? By restoring the varnish or missing elements with traditional materials and techniques, they not only preserve the object, they preserve the talent that made it. Some skills are perpetuated in an unbroken chain lasting for generations. The preservation of the process and associated skills is in some situations for the French, more valuable than the objects themselves.

A frequent American perception is that furniture collections or research do not exist outside of Paris. Our European furniture history courses discuss the pieces made in and around Paris, but most ignore any other French production. One of the successes of this trip was discovering that there are excellent collections, complete with scholarship and catalogs, far outside of Paris. The Musée Dauphinois, the Ferme de Pierre Allègre, the Musée de l'Ecole de Nancy, or any of the half dozen museums along the Atlantic coast, all had informative exhibits displaying the great yet little known diversity of French furniture. Little of this material is presented to Americans. This is unfortunate since French influences on American furniture were most often not through Parisian royalty or aristocracy, but through the lower classes. For example, the 1680 Huguenot settlers of North Carolina and New York did not bring the furniture styles of Paris but of their own regions around La Rochelle and Nantes. Similarly, we discovered that many of the settlers and the furniture styles of the Mississippi valley might be from the Bearn region south of Bordeaux.



David Bayne in the doorway of the Ferme de Pierre Allègre, Loubaresse.

Regionalism is a widely used tool to classify and group American furniture. Would it work in France? At first it seemed to the Furniture in France group that class differences overwhelmed regional differences. In France there was an unfathomable difference in income, styles and influences between the classes that is reflected in the furniture. The difference between Auvergne and Brittany is very small when compared to the extravagant international styles originating in Paris. But with the closer examination afforded by the trip, we did find some fascinating regional differences, especially among the furniture made for the lower classes. The furniture of the Auvergne is not the same as that of La Rochelle. Regionalism, as taught in America, is a useful tool in many different situations.

In modern France, regional differences are sometimes the *raison d'être* for the collections. The museums are both a source and a reflection of local pride. Regionalism also benefits the tourist economy. Tourists (including furniture

conservators) look for something different. An emphasis on regional definitions in the decorative arts can be very attractive. Almost every museum gift shop had an excellent catalog of their local collections as well as all of the other paraphernalia.

Historic houses in America are an important component for the display of furniture and the decorative arts. We have a tremendous array of types, but we found in France a dimension that is missing in American houses. Some of the many French *châteaux* we visited retained a much more vivid sense of being lived in by a family of the period. In some cases, the family had literally just left the room, but in others there were lingering period sentiments and nostalgia. In France, it is still okay to either live in a part of a historic house, or to leave it empty but totally untouched. Consequently some of the old lifestyles and feelings have been preserved. It is ironic that we had to go 3500 miles to *feel* how the people in our neighborhood historic house actually lived.

Just as French tradition has preserved great craft skills, so they have kept the atmosphere of a bygone time in their historic houses. But it cannot last. If you live in historic houses, they will be changed and possibly destroyed. The basic precepts of American decorative arts conservation are sound. If you leave a farmhouse interior untouched just as the family walked out the door, it will rot. In America, we preserve some of the original materials, but the cost seems to be a diminution in nostalgia.

Our French colleagues welcomed us with champagne receptions and lavish meals. From the prestigious Ateliers Prella in Lyon, to a village *ferme* in the Cantal, they

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received us with gracious hospitality and enthusiasm. Prella for example, entertained all of us with lunch, and then the next day repeated it to reiterate the message. At J. Georges, a veneer supplier, three generations of the family came in, on their holiday, not only to show us their operation, but also to offer us homemade cakes and wine (at 10:00 am!) Mme Chantal Spillemaecker at the Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble raised money from local sources to treat us to both a lunch on an alpine lakeside terrace as well as a full dinner at Château de Sassenage. The entire group hopes that when our turn comes to act as hosts, we can repay our French friends with equal hospitality.

In many ways, this became a retreat for American furniture conservation. We were able to compare notes and practices in our institutions and studios in ways that are seldom possible at such venues as professional meetings. In addition, this trip allowed us to discover that there are many similarities between the two countries in our attitudes towards furniture. We networked, relaxed with each other, and saw some fabulous furniture.

What happens next? Certainly one of our goals is to deepen the connections with the French conservators, curators and restorers and to encourage them to visit our shops and institutions. As Brian Considine has discussed, the French were impressed with the idea of our trip, and we hope they will be able to organize one of their own to the United States. We would be grateful for visits with smaller groups and will gladly welcome visits from any of our French colleagues. Within the American conservation community, it is important to share the experiences. Each study trip participant is contributing to this special edition of the *WAG Post-prints* and many will be lecturing throughout the country. It was immensely satisfying for WAG to do something that was significant on both an international and national scale. We are grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the staff of AIC, and all the WAG members that worked with us for their encouragement and support in making this type of cross-cultural conservation experience a reality.

List of Participants

Patrick Albert

Conservator, Centre de Conservation du
Québec, Québec, Canada

David Bayne

Conservator, New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Peebles
Island, Waterford, New York

Alton Bowman

Private Conservator, Dallas, Texas

Brian Considine

Conservator, J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles, California

John Courtney

Conservator, National Park Service White
House Executive Support Facility, Maryland

David deMuzio

Conservator, Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Tad Fallon

Student conservator, Smithsonian Institution

Kathy Gillis

Conservator, Virginia Museum of Art,
Richmond, Virginia

Gregory Guenther

Furnituremaker, Savannah, Georgia

Arlen Heginbotham

Conservator, J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles, California

Paul Miller

Curator, The Preservation Society of Newport
County, Newport, Rhode Island

Charles Moore

Conservator, The Preservation Society of
Newport County, Newport, Rhode Island

Michael Podmaniczky

Conservator, Winterthur Museum,
Wilimington, Delaware

Leslie Rainer

Private Conservator, Los Angeles,
California

Cheryl Robertson

Independent Curator, Boston,
Massachusetts

Thomas Snyder

Student Conservator, Buffalo State
College, Buffalo, New York

Chris Swan

Conservator, Colonial Williamsburg
Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia

Tatiana Wilcke

Conservator, Robert Mussey Associates,
Boston, Massachusetts

Randy Wilkinson

Furnituremaker and Conservator,
Bristol, Connecticut

Anne Woodhouse

Curator, Missouri Historical Society,
St. Louis, Missouri

Barry R. Yavener

Professor of Furniture Design, Buffalo
State College, Buffalo, New York

Musée Carnavalet

23, rue de Sevigné 75003, Paris

Randy Wilkinson

May 7, 2001

The Musée Carnavalet is dedicated to the history of Paris from its origins to the present day. The museum is located in two adjacent historic mansions: the Hôtel Carnavalet, the home of Madame de Sevigné from 1677 to 1696, and the Hôtel le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau.

Our main goals for visiting Carnavalet were to have an introduction to French furniture, to explore the controversial nature of the period rooms, and to be introduced to the Art Nouveau movement in France.

The curator, Mme Anne Forray-Carlier, greeted our group. She gave a brief history of the museum and explained that it has in its collections decorative arts, metals, furniture, paintings, photographs, drawings and models. Since our primary area of interest is furniture, she concentrated on the period rooms and pointed out specific pieces of furniture.

Mme Carlier explained that each of the period rooms is a re-creation based on interpretation and that the *boiseries* (carved wood panelling) in most of the rooms are architectural fragments from area *châteaux* and grand *hôtels*. Mme Carlier explained that these interpretations were influenced by their private donors and thus explained the lack of continuity in some of the rooms. The colors chosen for the *boiseries* do not always represent the original colors, but are aesthetic choices. Although some of the rooms are controversial and some choices are not based on conservation science, Mme Carlier struggles with these interpretations but is confident that they are representative of their period.

As an introduction to the 20th century we saw the Salle de bal de l' Hôtel de Wendel, a 20th-century room with wood paneled floors, eight arched doors and a painted interior. The room was designed by Jose Marie Sert (1876–1945) and features silver gilding with large elephants marching from the clouds. The last salon we toured was a jewelry boutique designed for Fouquet by Alphonse Mucha. The entire room, its architecture and display cases, was in the Art Nouveau style. This was a rare opportunity to experience a complete landmark Art Nouveau room in its entirety. It also introduced the Art Nouveau style that we would see more of in Nancy.

Our visit was short due to our pressing schedule, but the Musée Carnavalet was a wonderful introduction to the changing style of furniture and architecture from the Baroque of Louis XIV to the Art Nouveau of the 20th century. In addition, as in the American decorative arts, we experienced the struggle between curator and donor, scientific evidence and taste, and challenges facing the Musée Carnavalet.

Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau
77300 Fontainebleau

Arlen Heginbotham

May 7, 2001

The Palace of Fontainebleau is the oldest of the French royal palaces. The earliest parts date back to the Middle Ages, though reconstruction and major additions have occurred in the intervening centuries. Our guide, M. Yves Carlier, spoke of the Palace as a *rendez-vous des châteaux* or a meeting of castles, referring to the many building styles and periods represented.



Leslie Rainer

Curator Yves Carlier, (standing) showing the group a velour ciselé on a Napoleonic chair, Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau.

M. Carlier, *conservateur*, very generously spent the entire afternoon with us, giving us a personally guided tour, which focused on the private *appartements* of Napoleon I. These apartments were entirely refurbished by Napoleon in 1804 (though he saved the Louis XV *boiseries*, or carved wood paneling), and the furnishings remain largely intact and in place. Highlights included a grand and elaborate *bergère* (fully upholstered armchair) which retained its original *velour ciselé* (chiseled silk velvet) upholstery in completely undisturbed state. Protected areas of the textile even retained their brilliant red and green coloration, which is highly unusual given the fugitive nature of period dyes. This was a rare opportunity to observe first hand the form, materials and construction techniques of the best French upholstery of the period.

M. Carlier was very interested in discussing with us the ethical and pedagogical problems of upholstery conservation. In particular, we discussed the best course of action for a large

suite of carved and gilded furniture, made for Napoleon I, which had its original yellow and red upholstery, but in very faded condition. On one hand, the rarity of original upholstery and modern conservation ethics argue strongly to preserve the upholstery in its present condition. However, there is a strong pedagogical argument to be made for reupholstering the pieces with reproduction silk in order to convey the rich, and almost shocking, brilliant palette of colors which were fashionable at the time.

Our tour also covered a wide range of earlier (16th to 18th century) decorative arts, including a dazzling array of 18th-century furniture by the greatest French

makers such as Riesener, Jacob, and Schiller. There was a collection of bronze sculptures by the Italian sculptor Primaticcio dating to the reign of François I (r. 1515–1547) and 18th-century Savonnerie carpets.

In short, our afternoon in Fontainebleau was an incredibly dense visual and intellectual experience. This was made the more profound by the realization that we were only able to see a twentieth or less of the Palace's remarkable holdings during our short stay.

Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte

Vaux-le-Vicomte, 77950 Maincy

Tad Fallon

May 7, 2001

On the evening of Monday, May 7th, we traveled by bus to Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte for a tour of the gardens followed by a dinner located in the former servants' wing. The purpose of this visit was to see one of the premiere French *châteaux*, and it was the first time we ate together as a group, allowing us time to mingle and get to know each other before a candlelight tour of the château.

It was interesting to view Vaux-le-Vicomte in this type of lighting, as it seemed more in keeping with period lighting levels. There were many more candles than might be expected in the 18th century, and they tended to be quite large. There was also some electric lighting, making the effect not entirely realistic and in some cases highly distracting. However, the candlelight did give an impression of the illumination in the period. Currently, the château operates as a public site offering not only daily tours but also candlelight visits with dinner. Of course, there is also an extensive gift shop.

The château was built in the late 17th century by the Finance Minister to Louis XIV, Nicolas Fouquet. Three of his contemporaries, the architect Louis Le Vau, the painter Charles Le Brun, and the landscape designer André Le Nôtre were hired for the huge project, which took five years to complete. Upon completion, Fouquet staged an elaborate celebration, so lavish that it inspired jealousy in Louis XIV. The beauty and opulence of Vaux-le-Vicomte led to charges of embezzlement and conspiracy against Fouquet. He was arrested and was imprisoned for the rest of his life.

Prior to the building of Vaux-le-Vicomte, the talent of Le Vau and Le Brun was already known, but as a team they would next achieve celebrity with the construction, decoration and gardens of Versailles, commissioned by Louis XIV in his desire to surpass Vaux.

Today the site is open to the public and is managed by the association "Les Amis de Vaux-le-Vicomte," a group created in 1983 to "preserve the high standards of the Estate."

J. George, S.À.

96–100 Avenue Galliéni Bagnolet, 93170 Paris

Tatiana Wilcke

May 8, 2001



Leslie Rainer

Patrick Georges (l) with his cousin and cousin's son.

As with so many of the French small businesses and ateliers the study group visited, this wood veneer supplier is not simply a family-owned and operated venture, but has been in the George family for four generations. Like businesses owned by restorers and artisans—and like the craft tradition itself in France—these multi-generation links of ownership provide a continuity of knowledge so commonplace in the European trades and almost unknown in America.

Our visit with generous hosts Patrick George, the owner of the business and son of J. George, and other members

of the family provided an in-depth look not only at his supply of rare veneers, the wood stock the veneer comes from, and the other related materials they sell, but also at their specific technique of veneer cutting.

Their veneer is cut on a specialized saw, the *scie à bois montant* or “rising-wood saw,” that dates from the end of the 19th century. This technique of cutting differs from standard rotary-cut veneer in that the wood log actually rises vertically through a reciprocating blade. These well-sharpened blades were made on the premises and produce a flat and relatively even surface, and, more importantly according to M. George, keep the tannins of the wood in, resulting in better color. There is less damage to the wood fibers than slicing with a knife under pressure.

Most of the veneer they produce today is for restoration work, so they prefer to use—and have—very old logs, such as Cuban mahogany left over from boat stock of the late 18th century. They carry over 170 species of wood veneer, tinted veneers, stringing, banding, and oysters of wood, as well as sharkskin, bone, horn, and mother-of-pearl. Many of these materials are not readily available or even seen in the States. The fact that they stock these supplies is reflective of the differences in style and materials of the original French furniture compared with American, as well as being indicative of the techniques of loss replacement used by French restorers today.

M. George and his shop are accustomed to international trade and are well equipped, via their website and e-mail address, to provide American customers with hard-to-find veneer. This venue, then, was also an opportunity to purchase veneer supplies, which was of particular interest both to the furniture makers in the group as well as to the furniture conservators who work on original French pieces in American museums and private collections.

Musée Nissim de Camondo

63 rue de Monceau, 75016 Paris

Tatiana Wilcke

May 8, 2001



Patrick Albert, CCQ

Conservator Pierre Costerg showing the interior of a secrétaire à abattant by Jean-François Lelou (1729–1807) Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris.

The Musée Nissim de Camondo, located near the Parc Monceau in Paris, was a townhouse originally built by the Comte Moïse de Camondo between 1910–14 to house his significant collection of late 18th-century furniture and decorative arts. This is one of the more important decorative arts collections in Paris and features examples of Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture. The collection is comparable to one such as the Frick in New York in terms of the period during which it was assembled, the collector's individual taste, and of the quality of objects collected.

Comte Moïse came from a Sephardic Jewish family who left Spain during the Inquisition and founded one of the largest banks in the Ottoman Empire. The family came to Paris in the 1870s and established themselves as passionate patrons of the arts. The Comte, rather than buying an original 18th-century townhouse, commissioned the architect, René Sergent, to build a mansion reminiscent of Le Petit Trianon at Versailles that would be the “perfect” 18th-century setting for his collection based on the ideals of symmetry, harmony, and coherence. Since neither of his children survived him, he bequeathed the house and collection to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and named the museum for his son who died in aerial combat over France in World War I. Today the furniture and objects remain in their original placement, with minor adjustments for museum visitors.

The collection of furniture is mostly from the later phase of the Louis XV style and the Louis XVI style and includes the works of numerous masters. The ear-



Dyed burl and ormolu on a commode with tambours. Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806). Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris.

lier Rococo period is represented by a pair of *encoignures* (corner cabinets) by Bernard Van Risen Burghs (BVRB). Among numerous pieces from the late Louis XV period is a *bureau à cylindre* (roll-top desk) done in floral marquetry by Jean-François Oeben, as well as three rare pieces decorated with Sèvres porcelain from the 1760–70s by Martin Carlin and Roger Van der Cruse Lacroix (R.V.L.C.). From the Louis XVI, or neo-classical period are works by Jean-Henri Riesener, such as a *table en chiffonier* made for Marie Antoinette at St. Cloud, and Adam Weisweiler who also sold work to both the French royal family and the aristocracy. This brief listing of notable pieces speaks to the quality of the entire collection.

Although the study tour focused on the furniture and equally impressive 18th-century paneling that the Comte collected, the museum also houses significant works of porcelain, tapestries, silverware, sculpture, and other *objets d'art*. The landscape architect, Achille Duchêne (whose work we were also able to see at Château de Voisins) designed the terrace and the gardens of the townhouse. We were particularly fortunate in being able to view furniture in the collection both with

the curator and with a conservator, who was willing to remove drawers, display the undersides of some pieces, and demonstrate the moving parts of the furniture so that we had a better understanding of materials and construction techniques used.

Château de Groussay

Montfort l'Amaury, 75017 Paris

Tad Fallon

May 8, 2001

On Tuesday, May 8th, we traveled by bus to Château de Groussay just on the edge of Paris. This château is now privately owned by Jean-Louis Remilleux, the owner of a documentary film production company. M. Remilleux heard about the Furniture in France tour through a friend of Brian Considine, and was interested in talking with us about our experiences in France and at home. M. Remilleux is currently working on a documentary film on French craftsman. During our visit, Paul Miller and Brian Considine were interviewed by M. Remilleux and his

production staff for a new video. M. Remilleux was supportive of our trip and welcomed us with a very special tour and dinner reception.

The château has been refurnished with no pretense of being historically accurate, although some elements originating from the property have been located and returned. This was the case for two chandeliers in a room just off the main dining room. M. Remilleux hosted our group for a wonderful tour of the Gardens, and a champagne reception in the former “Dutch Room.” Before moving on to dinner, we sat in the *bijou* theatre, with its red drapes, colonnades and central chandelier. M. Remilleux toasted us and welcomed us from the stage before moving in to the main dining room.

Groussay was built in 1815 at Montfort l’Amaury in the Île de France for the Duchess de Charost and was purchased in 1939 by Charles de Bestegui, an heir to a fortune made in silver mines in Mexico during the 19th century. The château was not designated as a historic monument, allowing Bestegui complete freedom to transform it, and he worked with the architect-decorator Emilio Thierry enlarging and refurbishing the château and gardens.

In 1970 Bestegui died and left the château to his nephew Juan, who preserved his uncle’s estate until 1999, when he asked Sotheby’s to carry out an inventory and auction the contents of the estate. The château was auctioned off with its contents arranged in their original place, thus documenting the *goût* Bestegui, which brought together true works of art and copies, historic objects and modern creations with great freedom.

Ateliers Robert Gohard

90–92 rue des Entrepreneurs, 75015 Paris

Greg Guenther

May 9, 2001

The studio of third-generation gilding restorer Fabrice Gohard is contained within a cluster of buildings in the center of Paris. The studio has skylighted work areas, an open display room, and various offices and loft storage. The firm works on *boiseries* (carved wall paneling), furniture, and exterior and interior architectural gilding. The work is considered among the best commercial gilding in France.

An overview and discussion of the ongoing work provided a summary of restoration gilding techniques. The studio uses a division of labor based on the various steps and techniques. Cleaning, gessoing, re-cutting of the gesso, application of clay, glue size and laying of the gold leaf, and, if required, burnishing were the responsibilities of different technicians. Both men and women were involved with these hands-on processes. Traditional gilders’ workbenches were in use, as well as moveable worktables. Exterior architectural gilding is carried out by the studio



Patrick Albert, CCQ

Patrice Gohard (center) with Anne Woodhouse, Brian Considine and Thomas Snyder.

on many Parisian landmarks (i.e., Fontaine des Mers, Place de la Concorde). The techniques include building up the surfaces with epoxy paint, applying three coats of varnish with added ochre pigment, and the final oil gilding.

A large Beaux Arts oval-shaped table was displayed in the open showroom area. The restoration gilding included both burnished and unburnished elements as well as patterns cut free-hand directly into the gesso ground. This was the work of seasoned and skilled gilders. Viewing the finished work prompted further discussion of the techniques viewed in the workrooms.

The specialization within the discipline of gilding allows for the development of a high degree of skill in one area. American craftsmen in general, do not have the strict areas of specialization as viewed in French studios. The continued master-apprentice relationships within these studios foster a high degree of subtle skill development. In the final project, the various craft groups are drawn together for each to add their expertise, versus the generalist approach taken by many American craftsmen. As a furnituremaker, the variety of skills brought to bear on the making and/or restoration of a single project is worth noting. The availability of skilled individuals accustomed to adding their specific expertise to a given work can greatly improve the outcome of a project.

Bruno Desnoues

18, rue de Reuilly, 75012 Paris

Greg Guenther

May 9, 2001

Canedi Pascal



*Working drawing, plaster model
and final carving by Bruno
Desnoues for the Lit à la
Polonaise, J. Paul Getty Museum.*

Bruno Desnoues's space is located in the old furniture manufacturing area of Paris, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine within a series of adjacent workshops surrounding a 19th-century courtyard built for craft studios with living quarters located above the shops. Bruno Desnoues, along with his two *compagnons*, specializes in restoration carving for wood furniture, wall paneling, frames, and carriages meant for natural and gilded finish treatments. The shop also handles wood models for bronze casting molds and replication furniture carving. According to Brian Consideine, who engaged Bruno Desnoues's woodcarving skills in the restoration of a Louis XVI bed for the J. Paul Getty Museum, "Bruno...is one of the most highly skilled wood carvers in the world." A recently carved shell and foliage panel in oak displayed artistic flow and exemplary proportion and execution.

The arrangement of the tight workspace provides some clues to the priorities of the studio. The workbenches are located against the large studio windows facing the common courtyard in order to take advantage of the natural light. All required hand tools—chisels, gouges, scrapers, mallets and planes—are located directly in or on the bench and surrounding walls, immediately and efficiently available. Larger power tools are tucked under counters and in recesses not taking up space until required, but also implying their lower frequency of use and, most likely, lower priority in the period restoration and replication methods employed. The walls of the studios are covered with castings of period-carved elements, actual

period carvings, and sketches providing ready reference to the subtleties of different carving styles and techniques required.

Ongoing work relied upon methods of traditional restoration practices. Two apprentice carvers, for example, were laminating wood blocks onto freshly flattened areas of chair frames and recarving lost elements. Since the flattening required to attach the replacement blank actually removes material, creating greater loss of the original, American conservators might choose a different method and non-traditional materials to replace the loss. The discussion of traditional methods with their many tried and true techniques versus a minimally intrusive conservation viewpoint is an ongoing debate. Although the highest quality of craftsmanship is exhibited, the restoration approach is at odds with present American conservation goals.

Michel Jamet

43, rue des Clöys 75018, Paris

Greg Guenther

May 9, 2001

Patrick Albert, CCQ



Brian Considine (l) and Michel Jamet in front of his restoration workshop.

The furniture restoration studio of Michel Jamet is located on the ground floor off an interior courtyard of multi-use buildings, with work and living areas intermixed. Michel Jamet, along with four restorers, specializes in a wide range of furniture restoration treatments. He has worked for the Château de Versailles as a *menuisier*, and now provides services to the French National Museums and *châteaux*, Waddesdon Manor in Britain, the J. Paul Getty Museum in the United States, and private collectors throughout the world.

The tight workspace was well organized and had four workbenches in one room with two more workbenches in an adjoining room. Loft storage was utilized, with stationary power tools tucked away until needed. One craftsman was in the process of gluing elements of a Boulle marquetry chest of drawers. A demonstration of techniques for lifting the loose brass from the other sections of marquetry in order to glue and stabilize the drawer front panel was presented. This led to a discussion of fish and animal glues. M. Jamet presented a summary of alternative techniques and materials available. The restoration of *bombé* veneered surfaces was discussed in detail as well, with a presentation of caul, press, and clamping

methods. These two challenging areas of restoration (Boulle work and veneering bombé surfaces) are frequent in French furniture, and the comparison of techniques fully engaged the group. The traditional but somewhat aggressive methods employed to accomplish the repairs were debated. Specific materials were discussed with realization that the actual make-up of adhesives and finish materials, although of traditional name, may be of differing composition today. A study to define the materials, names, and composition seems important for an international exchange of methods.

Restoration choices made in conservation labs and museums contrasted somewhat with those made in private studios. The demonstrated “lift and re-glue” method was very goal oriented. The techniques included resetting the veneers to allow use, surface preparation for refinishing, and limiting further lifting with additional glue to prevent associated loss and damage. The less intrusive methods of area lifting and spot injections of adhesives can be viewed as causing less immediate change to the original, but may not solve the overall adhesion problems over the long term. The lack of adhesion might be a problem if the piece is going into functional use and not just a display environment. Instead of absolutes in method choice, there exist a variety of choices, which fit a particular set of needs. Those involved in the decision for treatment, therefore, must have or seek out a variety of techniques and experiences, and only then choose a course of treatment.

Rémy Brazet, Tapissier

22, rue des Belles Feuilles, 75116 Paris

John Courtney

May 9, 2001

At the Maison Brazet, we were shown examples of original fabrics and window treatments from the Musée national du château de Fontainebleau, and the reproductions fabricated to be reinstalled in several rooms there. We were also given a brief overview of the technological developments made in the French silk industry in the 18th and 19th centuries including the manner in which several types of fabrics were manufactured. We witnessed upholsterers working on the last throne of Napoleon I, which, when brought to M. Brazet’s shop, still had remnants of the period show cover and under-upholstery on it. One interesting note is that M. Brazet had in his shop at one time or another three of Napoleon’s thrones; one when Napoleon was General, one when he was Emperor and the one mentioned above.

M. Brazet has worked extensively with Brian Considine and is sympathetic to the concept of non-intrusive upholstery conservation. A highlight was an upholstery treatment that he undertook for the J. Paul Getty Museum in which he combined a very innovative and yet historic technique. In the 18th century, French chair makers were producing chairs *à châssis* which had removable upholstered parts

M. Rémy Brazet with passementerie for Napoleon's bedroom at Fontainebleau.



David Bayne

(back, seat and arms). These chairs were designed so that different upholstered panels could be applied for summer and winter. What M. Brazet has done is to take this concept and apply it to other types of chairs that did not originally have removable panels. The original chair frames are not altered to accept the panels. Instead back panels, arm pads, and seats (when possible) are made and upholstered first and then attached to the chair in a non-intrusive manner. When it is not possible to fit a removable seat, an alternative seat platform is attached to the seat and all successive materials are built upon it.

This venue was very insightful to everyone in the group and was of particular interest to those of us involved in the design and application of non-intrusive upholstery systems.

Reymondon

17, rue de Gerland, 69007 Lyon

Prelle et Cie

7, rue Barodet, 69317 Lyon

David deMuzio

May 10, 2001

On May 10th the Furniture in France group left Paris for Lyon to visit the silk weaving and *passementerie* ateliers of Prelle and Reymondon. We viewed these visits with great interest, since many of us are acutely aware of the difficulty of acquiring the proper silks for the restoration of upholstery on period furniture and interiors. Upholstery textiles for both furniture and entire rooms were often the

most important and luxurious component of an interior. High-style upholsterers in America and Europe have used silk textiles made in Lyon since the 16th century. Only a handful of manufacturers in France, Italy, England, and the Far East still hand weave historically accurate textiles. Since there has never been weaving of this standard in America, these luxury materials have always been imported.

The morning of May 10th, 2001, we were met at Reymondon by Jean-Etienne Lavenir, *Directeur Général*, Jacques Noca, Sales Manager, and Frédéric Minaire, Plant Manager. Our tour included seeing many of the intricate facets of making of gimp, decorative rope, tassels, and other forms of *passementerie*. This was our first introduction to the use of the hand-operated Jacquard looms, which require only one person to operate and are capable of weaving very complicated trim patterns. This method was refined by Joseph-Marie Jacquard (1752–1834) around 1805.



David Bayne

M. Philippe Verzier with period documents from the 19th and 20th centuries. Prelle Ateliers, Lyon.

Being on the manufacturing floor and seeing the weaving of elaborate trim, twisting of rope, and the hand stitching of tassels was incredibly illuminating and illustrated why *passementerie* is so costly. It explains why, for example, the cost of elaborate trimmings on a state bed could exceed the cost of both the carved wooden frame and the fabric hangings.

After our visit to Reymondon our group traveled to Prelle, Silk Manufacturers, in Lyon's traditional weaving quarter of La Croix-Rousse. Led by Paul Miller we were met by Guillaume Verzier, chairman of Prelle, and his father François Verzier who, with his brother Philippe, headed the company before Guillaume. This is the fifth generation of the Prelle-Verzier family running the business established in 1752. Although Prelle now also manufactures modern cotton and silk fabrics on state-of-the-art power looms, our tour focused on the hand weaving department, design studio and archives used to reproduce historically accurate reproduction textiles.

In a large studio filled with 19th-century Jacquard looms we saw patterned cut velvet being rewoven

for the ballroom of the Marble House in Newport, Rhode Island. Archivist Mme du Bellay showed us the original 19th-century order and swatch for this fabric in an order book pulled from the archives. The archives fully document production since the 18th century. A test weaving of an embroidered silk (original 19th century order #6140) destined for the Château-Sur-Mer, also in Newport, Rhode Island, was seen on a small "sample loom."

New orders from the French government have resulted in the exact reweaving of brocaded lampas, damask, and cut velvet silk fabrics for royal commissions at Versailles and Fontainebleau, with these design and reweaving projects taking decades to complete. Other order books from the archive showed Art Nouveau and Art Deco patterns by designers Ruhlmann and Dufrène, many of which are being rewoven on mechanized Jacquard looms to meet the needs of today's marketplace. The Prelle archives are an incomparable resource for conservators and curators researching period fabric design. Many of the archived fabric samples are now being scanned into a computer database to make the archive even more accessible.

Our visits to Reymondon and Prelle were particularly well received, as our hosts were very enthusiastic and willing to answer our many technical questions. They treated the group to two meals and hosted a reception in our honor. This allowed us the opportunity to solidify working relationships, and for many of us, start new ones. Since our visit, several of the participants have consulted with Guillaume Verzier on upcoming restoration projects for their home institutions. We were struck by the continuity of craft tradition that allows Reymondon and Prelle to produce silk textiles to such exacting standards essential in restoration work.

Musée Dauphinois

30, rue Maurice Gignous, 38031 Grenoble

Jeff Moore

May 11, 2001

Having been in Lyon for the day of May 10, we traveled to Grenoble on the morning of Friday the 11th—a drive of about 1½ hours. We skirted the Auvergne and headed towards the Alps.

The Musée Dauphinois is one of the sixteen Musées Départemental de l'Isère. It is located in a former convent, the convent of Sainte-Marie-d'en-Haut, built at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The bus was unable to get close, so the approach was made on foot by ascending a steep set of stairs and pathways. We were met by Chantal Spillemaecker, Curator of the Musée Dauphinois, Marianne Clerc, author of a book on the Hache family of Grenoble cabinetmakers, and Catherine Eleouet and Patrick Goy, furniture restorers.

Within the ancient walls of the restored convent was a carefully designed and modern museum. Our tour took us through an exhibit of regional wooden artifacts. Most were utilitarian but decorated with great care and imagination using chip-carving techniques or gouge work. For me, the most interesting objects of that group were the wooden boxes that men wore on their belts to hold the stone for sharpening their scythes. Though similar in size and shape, an incredible diversity in design proclaimed their individuality. One of the museum's prized possessions is a commode by Jean-François Hache. The Hache family worked for three

generations in Grenoble and had as clients such notables as the Duke of Orleans. It was enlightening to see the skill and scope of design in the work of a non-Parisian, so-called provincial *ébéniste*.

We ended our tour with a visit to the storage facility, where there were many more examples of the Hache family works. We were able to do detailed examinations of the joinery, marquetry, and mounts with the two restorers who were familiar with technical aspects of the work. Of special interest was the discussion of the joint where a drawer blade and a side came together on a piece of case furniture. The joint could be described as a full-housed half-dovetail, situated horizontally, which slides down to lock and is held in place with a square plug that is glued in. It was an interesting and inventive piece of joinery.



David Bayne

Lunch on the terrace with the staff of the Musée Dauphinois.

At the end of the tour, each participant was given a large folder containing information on recent exhibitions at the Musée Dauphinois and the other museums of the Isère region. Each of us also received a copy of Marianne Clerc's beautiful book *Hache: Ébénistes à Grenoble*. Our visit to the Musée Dauphinois introduced us to objects as diverse as the craft tradition of the local populace and the high-end *ébénisterie* of the Hache family.

Château de Longpra *38620 St. Geoire en Valdaine*

Jeff Moore

May 11, 2001

Following lunch, we continued by bus to the Château de Longpra, the origins of which go back to 1536. We were met by M. Albert de Francieu, a direct heir of the builders of the château, whose family has been in residence since 1844. The house has an extremely distinguished history, and because it is out of the way, has survived in very good condition. What makes it fascinating is the fact that it depicts such specific moments in history: cannonballs from the Protestant siege of 1590, secret altars built into case furniture for use during the Reign of Terror, and especially the renovation of the building beginning in 1755 and ending in 1789. The château is full of documented work by the local and regional craftspeople, such as woodcarver Boileau, cabinetmakers Rougemont, Hache, and Froment, master joiners Giroud, Fanton, and Devaux, locksmiths Hache, Eymard, and



M. Albert de Francieu outside Château de Longpra, near Grenoble.

Rousseau plus work by other documented carpenters, masons, metalsmiths, plasterers, and glassmakers. The relationship between the *boiseries*, the furniture, the parquet floors, and the carved and gilded work is still there to see, unchanged. An undocumented desk with marquetry panels highly reminiscent of the work of André Charles Boulle was another highlight that reminded us that although these patrons were living in the provinces, the influences of the highest styles in Paris were still felt.

An added bonus, especially to a group close to the woodworking craft, was an outbuilding housing a collection of tools. These had mostly to do with the two fine 18th-century ornamental turning lathes that were there. There are apparently more tools in storage. Featured with the lathes was a set of silver-plated turning tools—clearly not from the kit of a regional craftsman. It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that these lathes and tools could be evidence of the activity

of ornamental turning here at Château de Longpra as a “gentleman’s” pastime.

The craft evidence at Château de Longpra reminded us that there were many other woodworkers and workers in other trades who collaborated to build, rebuild, renovate and furnish this great house, especially during the period 1755–1789. It is, in fact, a living testimony to just that collaboration.



Interior Château de Longpra.

Château de Sassenage

38360, Sassenage

Tad Fallon

May 11, 2001

The Château de Sassenage is located at the foot of the impressive Vercors cliffs. This stop coincided with our visit to Grenoble, and served two purposes: a tour of the historic Château with some Hache furniture, and an opportunity to dine with our new contacts. Our dinner reception was partially paid for by our hosts from Grenoble.

Although the style of the architecture is Louis XIII, it is contemporary with Versailles, built during the reign of Louis XIV. It was built between 1662 and 1669 by Charles, Lord of Sassenage. Eventually Marquise Pierette Elisa of Sassenage donated the castle to the International Council for the French Language.

Jean-Jacques Elouet, our host, gave us a tour of the interiors. We began in the Grand Salon, decorated with paintings from the legend of Psyché.

The reception rooms have their original ceilings, wood paneling and decoration. The enormous *salle d'état* with its two large 17th-century paintings showing the Pythoness and Venus looking for Aeneas's sword in Hell, is quite impressive.

The music room with its parquet floor looks out over the grounds. In this room there is a 17th-century Flemish painting of the Battle of Kirkholm between the Swedish and Polish armies.



*Barry Yavener at Château
Sassenage*

Patrick Albert, CCQ

Ferme de Pierre Allègre

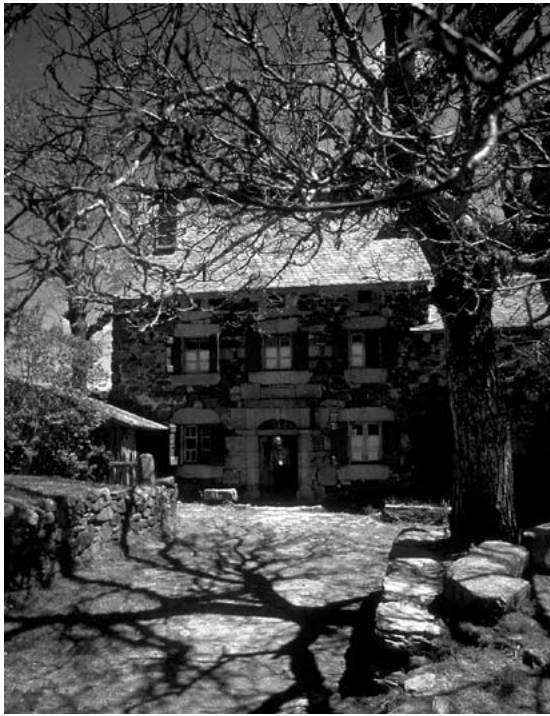
Loubaresse

Musée de la Haute-Auvergne

1, Place des Armes, 15100 Saint-Flour

Barry R. Yavener

Patrick Albert, CCQ



Ferme de Pierre Allègre, Loubaresse.

On Saturday morning, May 12, 2001, the Furniture in France study group left the hotel in Lyon and drove by bus to the Haute-Auvergne region of France. Located in south central France, the area is one of beautiful steep green hills with quaint villages sprinkled throughout the region.

Our first visit was to the Ferme de Pierre Allègre, a beautiful farm located in the center of the village of Loubaresse. The buildings and grounds are wonderfully maintained and are typical of farms in this region that belonged to relatively well-to-do families. A conscious effort has been made to preserve the interior and exterior of the house as it would have appeared when it was a working farm. Our guide explained that they want visitors to “share the daily life of a farm family who have just stepped out for lunch.” Indeed, it truly appears to be recently occupied, though the farm has been vacant for many years. The farm was acquired by the state in 1967 and was opened to public in July 1975. All

of the furnishings were either original to the house or indigenous to the area and time period that is being represented. Fortunately, very little restoration has been required.

Our hosts, Laurent Vedrine, Dominique Dufayet, and Anne Chanonet arranged lunch for the group at the nearby Auberge Paysanne with low ceilings and a dirt floor. Sitting around large tables with benches, M. Vedrine explained to us the history of the farm and the goals of the museum. We then had a delightful dandelion apéritif followed by a *truffade*, wine, and some fantastic Cantal cheese. It was an opportunity to experience the complete richness of the area: food, furniture, architecture and delightful people.

After lunch we took the bus to Saint-Flour, the historical capital of the Haute-Auvergne region of France. Situated high on a rocky promontory, this medieval town is home to the Musée de la Haute-Auvergne. Housed in the former bishop’s palace, which was rebuilt in the 17th century, it is located across from the Cathe-



Salle commune at the Ferme de Pierre Allègre, Loubaresse.

dral of Saint Pierre. Our guide for the museum tour was Jean-Claude Roc, one of the foremost authorities of furniture from the region and author of a book cataloging this collection and other pieces in the Haute-Auvergne. The museum houses an impressive collection of furniture that documents the history and evolution of domestic regional furniture. I was particularly inspired by the closet-like *lit-clos* (“closed-bed” or sleeping compartments), many of which were displayed completely intact, the long kitchen tables with their unique long storage drawers, and the armoires with carvings unlike any that we had seen. The museum has the oldest armoire of the Massif Central region which was made in 1679 by G. Planche, a master cabinetmaker from Ussel in Planèze. M. Roc was an invaluable source of information, answering the group’s questions, particularly those concerning conservation techniques, traditional finishes, and the identification of the indigenous species of woods.

The Ferme de Pierre Allègre and the Musée de la Haute-Auvergne clearly present wonderful examples of interiors and furniture. The objects displayed possess a practical purpose first and foremost, with embellishments added as secondary elements to reflect local sensibilities.

These important collections represent the antithesis of the high fashion and opulence that was concurrently in vogue in Paris and provide a wonderful counterpoint. However, they are just as important in the overall context of French furniture history and style development.

As a designer, I was able to recognize details in furniture that have been incorporated into American furniture, especially the furniture marketed during the early 1960s. As one of the furniture makers in the group, I found this body of work to be most stimulating from the perspective that embraces the philosophy of form following function.

I was exposed to a wealth of images and motifs that will influence my future furniture design and construction. This exemplifies the connection artists can

experience from one period to another as history evolves. Studying the creative expression of artists (long ago) enhances our understanding of the world in which they functioned and provides a bridge to and inspiration for contemporary design. This experience, which has enlarged my perspective both personally and professionally, will ultimately benefit my students, now and in the future.

Musées des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs

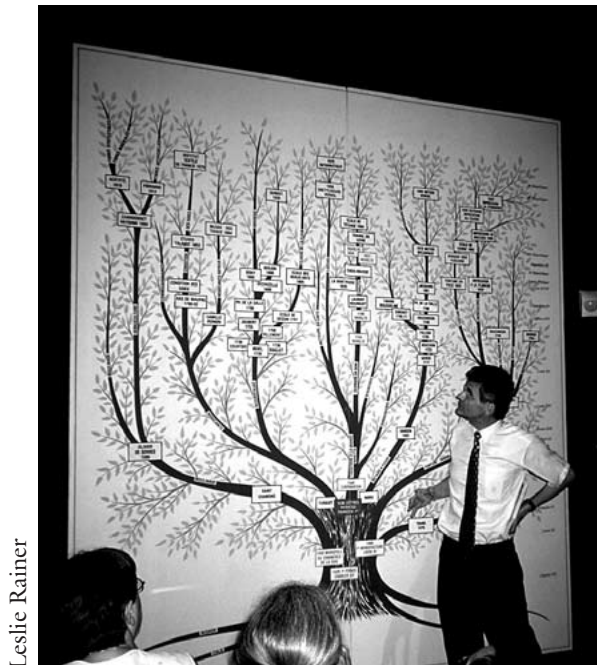
34 rue de la Charité, 69002 Lyon

Kathy Z. Gillis and David Bayne

May 13, 2001

The Musée des Arts décoratifs and the Musée des Tissus were established as one museum (the Museum of Arts and Industry) in 1854, inspired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It was separated into two distinct collections in 1890. Monsieur Guy Blazy, our guide, is the *conservateur en chef* (chief curator) of both museums.

The Musée des Tissus houses an encyclopedic collection of textile documents which follows the development of textile weaving from antiquity to the present. We were treated to a visual feast of fabrics, many of them Imperial commissions of the 19th century intended to revive the silk industry in Lyon, which suffered greatly after the Revolution.



Curator Guy Blazy showing the family tree of the silk weavers in Lyon. Musée des Tissus, Lyon.

A feature of this museum, which we find infrequently in American museums, is the donated room with its contents. Many of the donors gave period rooms complete with paneling to the museum with the provision that they remain together with the contents. Whereas American museums may group their collections by styles or themes regardless of donors, the Musée des Arts décoratifs kept the collections of the individual donor together.

The majority of the furniture collections on display are from Paris, but many pieces were made in Lyon or the surrounding areas. Especially interesting examples of local manufacture are beautiful chairs by Pierre Nogerat (1718–1771) and François Canot (1721–1786). The chairs by Nogerat are particular favorites with bolder carving and proportions than Parisian examples. Lyon was also a center for keyboard instruments, and there were several gorgeous examples.



*Pierre Molinaroli with a secrétaire à abattant by Hache.
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Lyon.*

In one gallery were three pieces by Hache, the celebrated family of cabinetmakers from Grenoble in the Isère region. We had been introduced to Hache while we were in Grenoble, and this was an opportunity to examine one of Jean-François Hache's (1730–1796) masterpieces. The *secrétaire à abattant* (fall-front writing desk) has been widely published and recently restored. Pierre Molinaroli was the restorer/conservator that worked on the piece, and he showed us some of the most attractive features incorporating native and exotic woods, including amboyna, pearwood, amarante (or purple heart), tulipwood, and king-

wood. This *secrétaire à abattant* (dated 1760–65) employed three different techniques of intarsia. Pierre discovered the technique when lifting the veneer on one side to fill a split. Notable is an 18th-century technique incorporating end grain within the marquetry. The cabinetmaker saws out his decorative flowers from stacks of different wood veneers. The components then match perfectly, except for the width of the saw kerf. The individual pieces are pressed together outward so that all saw kerf gaps are filled. To compensate for overall loss of dimensions, the center of the flower is inlaid with a piece of endgrain wood. There are eight stamps on this piece put in places easily seen—a practice not commonly found, especially in American pieces during this period. The family changed labels periodically, so most pieces can be accurately dated.

Jean-François Hache is also known for his high quality of staining. It is rare to see pieces of this date with stained wood colors remaining so apparent. Wood stains in the 18th century were kept very secret. Among the ingredients used by Hache were parsley, chervil and artichoke. Hache was involved in a legal suit with an employee who stole some rare woods used for stains. We know this from surviving court records, but we do not have the actual formulas.

Another one of the museum's treasures was a commode, unsigned, but a classic example of the work of Charles Cressent (1685–1768). It displays that cabinetmaker's masterful coordination between the marquetry and mounts. Cressent illegally carved and cast his own mounts. Consequently, there is a perfect fit between the inlaid wood background and the applied mounts. In the strictly separated craft guilds of the day, one rarely sees the tight coordination between the marquetry inlay and the mounts, except in Cressent pieces.

Although both the textile and the decorative arts collections share the same building with no physical separation between them, there were notable differences. As might be expected given the local industry, the textiles benefited from a little

more care than the decorative arts. The light levels for the textiles were appropriately low and the use of cases more frequent. Also, there seemed to be designated spaces and funding for changing exhibitions of textiles that were absent from the decorative arts section. Perhaps local corporate sponsorship (i.e. Prella) was at work here.

Société d'Encouragement aux Métiers d'Art (SEMA)

Viaduc des arts - 23, avenue Daumesnil, 75012 Paris

Patrick Albert

May 14, 2001

The Société d'Encouragement aux Métiers d'Art (SEMA) is a public organization under the jurisdiction of the Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie of France. Its members are either individuals or organizations sharing an interest in traditional crafts.

Installed in the Viaduc des Arts, the main office of the SEMA offers a variety of services to the public at large and to the craft community. It:

- manages a Resource Center on crafts that is accessible to the public;
- promotes crafts and craftsmanship to young people;
- is the center of a large correspondence network where various information exchange activities take place with all regions of France;
- promotes craft trades via the publication of the *Courrier des métiers d'art*, a monthly publication with editorial as well as information content;
- contributes to the valorization of crafts and craftsmanship via the attribution of prizes;
- organizes thematic discussion days in its *Galerie d'actualité*, when different craft trades and aspects of craftsmanship are covered.

Our hosts were M. Pierre Chevalier, President, Mme Dominique Duchemin, Vice President and M. Yvan Houssard, General Manager. After a presentation of the organization and its goals, they introduced us to a few French craftsmen and craftswomen and gave us a tour of the facilities. Of great interest were the large collection of video monographs on crafts, craftsmen and craftsmanship, and the library.

Both M. Chevalier and M. Houssard raised the issue of the importance of creating international links between organizations sharing similar goals for the survival and development of traditional crafts. They invited anyone with such interests to contact them in order to see how cooperative activities can be developed.

Castel Béranger

35, rue Merlin de Thionville, 92150 Suresnes

Cheryl Robertson

May 15, 2001

Whereas an air of aristocratic luxe and the traditions of the *ébéniste* endured at the Hôtel Potocki, the Castel Béranger, an early work by the Art Nouveau architect Hector Guimard, embodied the shock of the new, circa 1895. The whiplash curves and novel abstractions of flora and fauna gave rise to epithets such as “Castel Déranger [deranged]” and “Castel des Diables [of the devils].” Although luxurious in name (*castel* comes from a *Provençal* word meaning “villa”) and in the use of stained glass, mosaic floors, and customized ceramic tiles, copper plaques, and ironwork, the Castel Béranger was originally built as speculative housing for the *petite bourgeoisie*. Then as now, the building consisted of condominium units. Although standard apartments featured just three rooms, they were treated as unified living environments. For the residents, Guimard coordinated not only the architecture but also painted decorations and wallpaper, wainscoting done in embossed paper or Lincrusta-Walton, lighting, built-in furniture, textiles, and even door knobs. The present-day stair carpets in the building were re-created from Guimard’s cartoons. In the apartment Guimard reserved for his own atelier, we saw the original porcelain knobs, which, he claimed, derived their form from the hand of the potter—literally. The irregular, organic shape resulted from the simple act of picking up a ball of clay and squeezing it.

Doorknobs notwithstanding, most of the materials and workmanship at Castel Béranger bespoke not the handmade but rather industrial production. As with the Eiffel Tower (1889), the intent was to wed art and industry. The main stairwell boasted the same kind of opalescent glass blocks incorporated in Siegfried Bing’s “Art Nouveau” gallery in 1895. Interestingly, Guimard had apparently first envisioned classical decoration and details for the entire structure and interiors (1894). After a visit to Brussels and exposure to the innovative work of Victor Horta, he came back to Paris and completely changed his plans. Apparently, Guimard had no second thoughts thereafter since the new building went up quickly.

The rehabilitation of Castel Béranger was a private endeavor, unlike much of the architectural restoration/conservation we saw elsewhere. As others have noted, a great deal of the country’s cultural and material heritage is owned and maintained by the state. The issues, compromises, and cost accounting described by our architect-guide were quite comparable with historic preservation initiatives undertaken by citizens or corporations in the United States.

L'Hôtel Potocki

Chambre de Commerce
27 Avenue Friedland, 75008 Paris

Cheryl Robertson

May 15, 2001

Patrick Albert, CCQ



Staircase at Hôtel Potocki.

L'Hôtel Potocki, evocative of the pomp and circumstance of the Second Empire, is to urban domestic architecture what the Opera Garnier de Paris, which we visited the following day, is to civic monuments. We were fortunate to have as our guide Gérard Rousset-Charny, author of a book on late 19th-century Paris architecture—an endangered species, by his account. The palatial townhouse replete with 18th-century decorative quotations and splendid polychrome Italian marbles (eight different types grace the double-staired entrance hall alone) was commissioned by the Polish Count Nicolas Potocki and his wife, Emmanuella Pignatelli, who was the daughter of the Neapolitan ambassador to Russia. The parallels between this house and its decoration and the Breakers at Newport, Rhode Island, were striking. Completed by the architect Reboul in 1882, the Potocki interiors were revivalist yet up-to-date at the same time. While the trophies of the wall treatment in the Grand Salon emulated Versailles, the elaborate metallic ornament on the monolithic entryway columns was executed in electroplate by Christofle.

After the Count's death in 1921, the Chamber of Commerce of Paris purchased the structure and added two wings with Art Deco fixtures and furnishings by Jacques Ruhlmann. The stately dining room with classically-inspired details, pink marble wall facings, and brass-inlaid parquet floor showed the same concern for rich materials, fine craftsmanship, and sumptuous effects characteristic of the 1870–80 period—tempered, however, by a restraint and stylized rendering of motifs that were unmistakably *moderne*.

Château de Voisins

55, Blvd. de Beauséjour, 75116 Paris

Kathy Z. Gillis

May 15, 2001

Patrick Albert, CCQ



Château de Voisins from the lake shore.

Our host and hostess were the Comte and Comtesse de Fels, owners and residents of Château de Voisins. The current structure dates from 1903–1906, but the architect directing this campaign, René Sargent, based the construction on the 18th century modifications made to the original manor house by Ange-Jacques Gabriel. Fortunately, the documents survive from this period. Actually, the château has an archive of documents dating back to the 16th century, and there is an archivist on staff. It was intended to be a hunting lodge, and today, during hunting season, sportsmen can hunt for pheasants, quail, wild boar

and deer. The château is intended to be self-sustaining.

We were guided through the gardens, the architecture, and the interior furnishings and décor. In the central hall, the splendid staircase is the focal point. The rooms are aligned along the axis of the house, not the garden, as we have seen in other châteaux. This was more practical for flow. The house is made of cut limestone, as it would have been in the 18th century. The stone comes from the north of France. When the restoration was underway, arrangements were made for a

deviation of the train route to get the stone delivered to Voisins. The interior wooden panels and the furnishings came from different family houses and date from the 18th century to the present. The Marble Room is *rouge lamde*, from the south of France.

The garden is one of the masterpieces of garden designer Achille Duchêne. It displays a harmonious integration of French and English garden styles. Duchêne's grandson, Michel, was on hand during our visit to guide us through the extensive gardens. The naturalism (albeit totally artificial and manmade) found in an English garden can be found furthest from the structure. The garden becomes more ordered and formal the

Leslie Rainer



Comtesse de Fels with master huntsman, Château de Voisins, near Rambouillet.



Patrick Albert, CCQ

Legion of honor garden with island and canal, Château de Voisins.

closer one approaches the house. The whole is a wonderful contrast of chaos and order. One hundred and forty-five laborers were employed to clear the land. This required moving approximately 4000 cubic meters of soil. Many of the laborers subsequently became gardeners and workers for the château. Typical of Duchêne garden design, gravel is incorporated as the material for the paths. The gravel is

raked before the arrival of visitors, so first footsteps are of the guests. Although the upper garden *parterre* at the rear of the château has not formally been maintained for over a century, the shadow of the design is still apparent. Ideally, all foundation walls are to be covered with greenery to “hide” the architecture in the garden, which is symmetrically balanced with the architecture of the château.

The formality and graciousness of our hosts created an air one can imagine similar to what would have been experienced in France in previous centuries. The experience, complete with attentive maids, butler and huntsman, provided us the opportunity to see not only a château, but also a lifestyle that is being maintained as it was practiced in the 18th and 19th centuries.



David Bayne

Interior, Château de Voisins.

Château de Maintenon

28130 Maintenon

Kathy Z. Gillis

May 15, 2001



Château de Maintenon

Monsieur Jean Raindre was our guide to the Château de Maintenon. His wife, Geneviève de Noailles, is a direct descendant of the family of Madame de Maintenon (1635–1719), the last wife of Louis XIV. Madame de Maintenon (née Françoise d'Aubigné), was a widow of 34 when she entered the service of Madame de Montespan, the King's mistress, as governess to her six surviving children fathered by Louis XIV. In 1683 or 1684, she and Louis XIV secretly married. Having no children of her own, Madame de Maintenon left the château to her niece, Françoise Amable d'Aubigné, her brother's daughter upon the occasion of her marriage to Adrien-Maurice de Noailles. The château remained in the Noailles family until 1983, when the last owners and present curators, M. and Mme Raindre, created a foundation for Maintenon and donated the house, archives, and furnishings to France. As is often the case in America, taxes and upkeep of an historic monument of this magnitude frequently inspire the family to turn over the burden to the government. The château is situated in a beautiful setting on the river Eure. A highway constructed in the 1980s prevented the land from being overrun with the 20th century, but unfortunately also affected visitation to the château, which has dropped by about 50% since that time.

There are three buildings at Maintenon. The first, built in the 11th century, was a rustic defense building purchased by Cotreau, the Finance Minister of Louis XII and Frances I. The round towers were built in 1480. The third building is the

long wing on the entrance side, connecting the other two buildings to the chapel; it dates from 1645.

In 1684, construction began on the property for an aqueduct to supply water to Versailles from the river Eure. Thirty thousand men (masons and soldiers) worked on it. Although it was never finished, original aqueduct documents survive. It was intended to contain the entire river and be 4,600 meters long with a series of three arches at the deepest part of the valley. The total projected height of 72 meters would have made it higher than the towers of Notre Dame. Only the first series was built—47 arches, each 13 meters wide, and 25 meters from the ground to the top of the vaults. War broke out in 1688, diverting soldiers and money. Eventually the project was abandoned. Later, Le Nôtre, landscape designer of Versailles, was engaged to transform the property around the aqueduct into a garden.

Along with the connections to Louis XIV, Maintenon was also an important location in later French history. In 1830, Charles X (grandson of Louis XIV) stayed at Maintenon seeking asylum before going into exile in Cherbourg. It was at Maintenon that Charles X gave up the throne, thus ending the reign of the last “King of France.”

Renovations made in the 19th century by Paul, *duc de Noailles*, advanced the façade on the back, and created a corridor to separate the rooms and make each more independent. Fortunately, the property was not transformed on the exterior. Between 1830–1835 the long wing became a main drawing room, library, and a portrait gallery, displaying portraits of the Noailles family. The appearance of the château has remained unchanged since that time.

Maintenon was classified as an historic monument in 1943. In 1946, because of a World War II bomb blast in the moat, restorations were needed to reinforce the roofs and foundations. At the same time, the windows were restored. The furnishings had been removed during the war.

Of interest was a suite of furniture dating from the 1860s, which retained its original tapestry seat upholstery. This group is based on early Louis XV style furniture, but was on a much larger scale. The colors have remained quite bright, shocking in hue, and appropriate to the theatrical settings of the 1860s. We learned that in France there was a tendency to close in the sides on armchairs, like in this set, with fringe suspended from the arm. This treatment is not found in American furniture. The bottom part has a square assembly above the foot, with stretchers all in one plane. The top part is more in keeping with Louis XV style; it is beech and was probably made in Paris.

I was particularly interested in *secrétaire à abattant* forms at the collections we visited. I wanted to compare those in France with a New York *secrétaire à abattant* recently acquired by my institution, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, that is believed to have been made by a French cabinetmaker in America. Maintenon had two examples of this form. The French pieces were less embellished with bronze capitals and fancy hardware, yet they displayed remarkable cabinetry

skills and derived their primary visual elegance with careful selection of veneer woods, banding and patterned application of the veneer. The forms are consistent, components the same, yet each *secrétaire* I observed on this trip was unique. There always seems to be a variation in decorative hardware, veneer, banding, and marble tops. This also seems to be the case in American examples.

Interior decoration also exemplified the skills of 18th-century French craftsmen. Heavy oak doors on the second floor incorporated Italian linenfold carving. The antechamber of Madame de Maintenon had splendid decoration with painted and gilded leather wallpaper that has been partially restored. This is fortunate, since the treated portions look over-cleaned, plastic, and flattened. The untreated areas are in bad shape at the edges of each sheet and are in need of stabilization, but the beauty and quality of the original workmanship can still be seen. A follow-up correspondence between Furniture in France participants addressing the issue of more restrained conservation of the remaining untouched leather would create an opportunity for education for Maintenon's caretakers and perhaps a hands-on experience for interested American conservators.

Les Grands Ateliers de France

45, rue Boissy d'Anglas, 75008 Paris

Patrick Albert

May 16, 2001

The Grands Ateliers de France is a registered, nonprofit organization. It is independent of any professional or institutional body. As a group, the Grands Ateliers de France strives to enhance and advance the fame of French craftsmanship worldwide. It is composed of a group of select, high-quality artisans, dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the finest French tradition in hand craftsmanship. The selection process for membership is extremely strict; candidates are chosen by secret ballot and then reconfirmed again each year.

The twofold aim of the Association is the pursuit of museum-quality workmanship along with the encouragement of cultural enrichment. The Grands Ateliers de France includes 46 Member Ateliers representing 40 professions. Their master craftsmen work on the creation, preservation and restoration of collections of public and private art and antiquities around the world.

The Association, established through private initiative, was created in 1993 by five great names in French craftsmanship: Jean Alot, Marie Brocard, Rémy Brazet, Michel Germond and Daniel Meilleur. Its founding president was M. Jean Bergeron, who was then also president of an organization of the greatest names in French luxury products, the Comité Colbert.

The reception took place at the Couvent des cordeliers, an impressive historical convent dating back to the fourteenth century. M. Rémy Brazet was our host and introduced us to the group of members of the Grands Ateliers. We were then invited to visit an exhibit on metalwork and to mingle with the artisans in order to establish contact and share experiences. It was a great occasion to get to know better some of the best artisans in the world in a variety of fields of activity. A list of participants was supplied to both groups and it is hoped that the future will bring opportunities for other contacts through professional organizations, work or personal initiatives in the pursuit of excellence in craftsmanship.

Le Palais Garnier (Opéra National de Paris)

Place de l'Opéra, 1 rue Gluck 75009 Paris

Kathy Z. Gillis

May 16, 2001



Leslie Rainer

Climbing the roof of Palais Garnier, Paris.

The Palais Garnier was built between 1860 and 1875 on the orders of Napoleon III, as part of a Parisian reconstruction project. The building did not open until 1875, being delayed by the 1870 war, the fall of the Empire, and the Commune. It is named for Charles Garnier, who at age 34 won the competition for the project in 1860. Garnier felt that the members of the audience at the opera were also actors, and the building is the stage set for them. He envisioned a balance between architecture and decoration.

Based on the gallery of a typical French château, the grand foyer is accentuated by mirrors and windows. The horseshoe-shaped auditorium seats 1900 guests, and the capitals on the front porch are composed of three different materials. Stone, cast bronze, and electroformed copper were all gilded. Electroplating and electroforming were marvels at the time this structure was built. Another milestone is that in 1880 this was the first monument in Paris to be illuminated by electricity.

Our guide at the Palais was Alain-Charles Perrot, *architecte-en-chef des Monuments Historiques et du Patrimoine*, who escorted our group through the structure literally from top to bottom. In the bowels of the basement, we were able to view the equipment and mechanisms required for stage workings, curtain drawings, and

various events happening on stage. We also ascended to the roof, allowing a survey of the building's architecture looking down, a behind-the-scenes look at the monumental roof sculpture, not to mention an incredible 360° panoramic view of Paris.

It was not until the 1980s that the French began to consider the Palais Garnier a national monument and restoration efforts were initiated. In sharp contrast to the predominantly 19th-century decoration, the ceiling of the auditorium, painted by Marc Chagall in 1964, poses a problem for the restoration project. M. Perrot would like the entire building restored to its 19th-century appearance. This would require removal of the Chagall ceiling, which was created for this space. Although this merging of the centuries is fascinating, it impedes Garnier's original intent for perfect balance between the architecture and the decoration. As M. Perrot explained there are different standards for museums (preservation) and monuments (original intent). This allowed them to add features to the Opera that Garnier intended but never completed. In a museum setting, however, these types of additions would not be done.

Just as we experience in America, controversies such as this exist in France. France, however, has very strong laws protecting the artistic rights of artists, dead or alive. The ongoing restoration efforts at the Palais Garnier are one of many ways the crafts are kept alive in France. The excellent artisans and the support of the French government make it possible. In addition, at the Opera, even patrons are subsidized by the government to keep the performances going. It is interesting to contrast these types of subsidies in France with the governmental subsidies in America as an insight to priorities.

Hôtel Pontalba

*Résidence de l'ambassadeur Américain
4, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, 75006 Paris*

Kathy Z. Gillis

May 16, 2001

The American Ambassador's Residence in Paris is located in what was once a bucolic suburb of Paris: Faubourg Saint-Honoré. The building derives its current name from the Baroness Micaela de Pontalba, who purchased the property in 1836. She commissioned the architect Ludovico Visconti to design the *hôtel*, replacing the first structure, dating from 1720. Construction was completed in 1855. The Baron Edmond de Rothschild acquired the property in 1876 and had it renovated substantially. Baroness Pontalba was an American, born in New Orleans, who married a descendant of a French noble family that had land in Louisiana. It is fitting that our group, essentially diplomats of the field of conservation in America should be entertained at such an appropriate venue.

In 1948, the American government purchased the building. Its restoration from 1966–1971 was under the supervision of the Foreign Building Operations in Washington DC and by Maurice Pascandia, specialist in French 18th and early 19th-century architecture. At present there are ongoing small restoration aspects. Decisions reached for these projects are hopefully based on historic precedent, rather than personal taste, but much of the building reflected an American aesthetic when compared to Château de Voisins or even the Hôtel Potocki.

The furniture highlights we saw included a pair of Louis XIV giltwood and gesso pier tables with red Vienna marble, a rare Louis XVI parquetry writing table, four giltwood armchairs by Louis Cresson (1706–1761, cabinetmaker of Louis XV), two Louis XV commodes stamped by Jacob Coulon, and a Louis XVI black-lacquered *demi-lune* commode stamped by Vassou. There were four giltwood transition period armchairs signed by the renowned cabinetmaker Nicholas Heurtaut. Other pieces from the set are on display in the Louvre.

Finally, to emphasize the resounding goodwill between France and America, we visited the Lindbergh bedroom, which contains the bed in which Charles Lindbergh slept the night of May 21, 1927, after his historic transatlantic flight. It originally was located at the former Embassy Residence on Avenue d'Iena.

IFROA

Institut de formation des restaurateurs d'oeuvres d'art
(The Institute for Training of Restorers of Works of Art)
150, ave. Pres. Wilson, 93210 St-Denis La Plaine

Ecole Boulle

9, rue Pierre Bourdan, 75012 Paris

Mike Podmaniczky

May 17, 2001

For those participants who are engaged in some form of teaching, substantive time spent at Ecole Boulle and IFROA was invaluable. For conservators who are steeped in the American approach to conservation as distinguished from a purely craft-oriented tradition, the French attitude is bracing. In one sense, the deep and broad French traditions of furniture making, repair and restoration are seamless and ongoing, and as such, there has not been the same evolution in the societal attitude toward less intrusive preservation as there has been in the United States. Preservation here focuses almost solely on “things,” whereas the French attitude includes processes, techniques...even attitudes. The closest the United States gets to this is in the historic trade shops at Colonial Williamsburg, and yet the rarified purity of that environment is not really comparable with the day-to-day continuance of historic processes executed in a contemporary environment as observed in France.



Metal work at Ecole Boulle, Paris.



Student work at Ecole Boulle.

Ecole Boulle is the paradigm of historic trade schools and a mecca for those interested in maintaining traditional handcrafts. Although we also viewed classrooms focused on metal trades, the most enlightening time was spent with students and teachers of carving, marquetry, furniture making and chair making, all of which are taught as distinctly separate trades resulting in almost guild-like professional arrangements. The skills demonstrated by students were extremely high, attesting to the demanding standards set by the Ecole. Students concentrate on 18th-century designs and techniques during their training, but many go on after graduation to explore contemporary, studio furniture while their classmates join the flow of traditional furniture making and restoring around Paris.

The Institute for Training of Restorers of Works of Art (IFROA) offered insight to a more focused conservation program. The themes of ethics, philosophy, applied science and craft paralleled those taught in programs in North America and were familiar to American conservators. As is often the case, the European program demanded more years of the student than programs in the United States. Also, IFROA expects a higher level of traditional craft skill from their students than is usually the case with American counterparts, which is not surprising given sister institutions such as Ecole Boulle.

Although IFROA is clearly at the cutting edge of conservation training in France, there is still a strong centripetal pull from the traditional craft milieu in many



Student at IFROA describing faux tortoiseshell finishes.

Ateliers de Versailles

*Le Centre de Recherche de Restauration des Musées de France
Petite Ecurie du Roy 2, ave. Rockefeller, 78000 Versailles*

Thomas Snyder

May 14, 2001

forms. These range from instructors who are drawn from the traditional restoration field to an insistence that there be no substitute for true tortoise shell used by students practicing Boulle work restoration.

Despite the differences along the scale of conservation/restoration, the one precept that stood out everywhere was pride and commitment to the decorative arts heritage of France.

The Furniture in France participants visited the conservation labs of the Atelier de Versailles, installed in the Horse Stables of the Versailles Palace, on May 14, 2001. This site is where a lot of French government-owned artifacts are treated. The labs are divided into separate spaces for each of the following broadly-defined categories: furniture conservation, gilding and gilded frames conservation, paintings conservation (including panel conservation) and sculptural objects conservation. Our host was Mme France Dijoud, *chef du Département de la conservation restauration*.

The conservators who work in the labs must be professionally trained through either the French national system, private French conservation schools or a foreign university. They are not employed by the Atelier Versailles but hired on a contract basis. Three estimates for the work are sought, but the owner of the artifact has some influence over which conservator is ultimately chosen. The museums that own the artifacts pay for the work out of their own budgets. Conservators are invited to work in the spaces provided and are provided with support personnel such as scientists and photographers, but the conservator must bring his or her own tools. As often as possible, however, the conservators are urged to work on-site.

In these matters, the Ateliers de Versailles are like some museums in the United States today, but the differences are obvious in the type of work performed. In France, the general term applied to conservation is *restauration*, meaning the process of making the item look as near to new or original as possible. This sometimes includes processes that many American conservators deem too intrusive or involve

materials and methods that are not always distinguishable from the original. It also may include the use of materials without a clear idea of what the residual effects of the materials may have.

We visited the panel painting lab where our host discussed a painting with a large crack in the wooden panel. Enlarging the crack with a chisel and inserting new wood, a traditional method, was employed to repair the crack in the panel. However, new materials that are more stable and lighter are also sometimes used. Metal cradling was attached using epoxy to the reverse of panels as a substitute for the wooden cradles formerly used. This was a demonstration of a conservator practicing his trade using time-honored techniques while adding a few new and more suitable materials to his toolkit. This scene might have been found in many conservation labs throughout the world.

In the furniture conservation lab of the Ateliers de Versailles, an example of the United States-style conservation versus European restoration conflict was most evident. "Panama wood" is employed as a material to remove tarnish from gilt bronze mounts. This as-yet-unidentified wood is steeped in water, sometimes with beer added, and the liquid is then applied to the bronze mounts. There has apparently been no attempt to analyze what compounds are the active ingredients or what residual effects this solution may have. This is a traditional method, and the mention of it is not intended to deny the effectiveness or suitability of it as a material or method, simply to point out that in the United States at well-funded conservation labs, these time-honored methods and materials have largely been replaced with commercial products of known analytical content. This contrast between conservation and *restauration* was enlightening and important to witness, especially for a recent graduate of an American conservation school where conservation theory and ethics are instilled into the students at many levels.

In the gilded objects conservation lab, frames and gilded mirrors, chandeliers and other gilded objects are treated with traditional materials and techniques, much as the furniture conservation lab operates. The conservator was not very forthcoming about some of his recipes despite repeated attempts to determine just what he was using to remove surface dirt and overpaint.

The sculptural objects conservation lab contained several examples of sculpture in different materials: stone, wood, composite and plaster. Several of the conservators eagerly sought advice from the American conservators on the treatment of an 11th century Cambodian stone statue, and illustrated that the French conservators were dealing with issues very similar to their American counterparts. The issue discussed was whether very old, incomplete coatings done in Oriental lacquer in the 14th century were best left intact. Originally, the stone was uncoated. What should be done? Remove the coating to restore the original artistic intent or leave it alone as part of the history of the piece? As always, the issue was not decided during our brief visit.

Musée du Louvre
Porte des Arts, 75058 Paris

Thomas Snyder

May 14, 2001



Patrick Albert, CCQ

Pierre Ramond in the marquetry atelier, Ecole Boulle.

After touring the restoration labs at Versailles, we were welcomed into the galleries of the Musée du Louvre by Daniel Alcouffé, *conservateur général chargé du département des Objets d'art*. We were led through the furniture galleries of the Louvre by Pierre Ramond, a world-renowned marquetry expert and author of some of the foremost books on marquetry, parquetry and intarsia. His latest work is the three-volume set *Masterpieces in Marquetry* (recently translated by Brian Considine). Other titles written by him are the benchmark work *Marquetry*, also translated by Brian Considine. M. Ramond explained in detail the different decorative veneering techniques that were used by cabinetmakers such as Jean-Francois Oeben and Andre Charles Boulle, among others. He helped explain these techniques by finding examples of the different marquetry techniques on pieces of furniture in the galleries. He pointed out entrance holes used when starting marquetry saw cuts and shoulder knife cuts used to inlay wood elements, which was extremely helpful

in trying to understand the intricacies of marquetry. M. Ramond also explained how other materials such as brass and tortoise shell were incorporated into many of the pieces of furniture. The tour was a self-guided one organized between the Furniture in France group and M. Ramond, and the furniture was not opened or touched for examination.

On a subject that has little to do with the study of furniture, I could not help but notice that the lighting of the furniture in the Boulle gallery and other furniture galleries, but especially the Boulle gallery, was harsh and uneven. In a world-class museum like the Louvre, it was disappointing to try to squint through the glare that reflected off the highly polished furniture to pick out the subtle details M. Ramond was exposing for the group. Obviously, the design of the building severely restricted the placement of lighting and furniture, due to windows that lined an entire wall of the gallery. While I do not offer any solutions, I simply note that this condition exists.

Patrick Desserre

17 rue du Pont-aux-Choux, 75003 Paris

Greg Guenther

May 18, 2001



Wood fired 19th-century kiln for slumping glass into forms. Patrick Desserre glass, Paris

The intriguing workshop of fifth-generation glass blower and shaper Patrick Desserre seems to hide secret treasures. The space reflects many decades of dedicated work, with shaping molds stacked to the ceiling and piled against walls. The adjoining rooms are packed with raw materials, old glass globes and objects, newly-completed glass shapes, and numerous shaped-metal molds. The specialty of the studio is taking flat glass panels, heating them correctly, and shaping or slumping them into specially-made curved molds. With timeless skill, *bombé* and other shapes needed in glass are meticulously created.

Mold making requires unique and varied skills. The molds are made of steel and heavily reinforced with ribbing and supports to handle the heating required. Glass plate is laid on top of the molds inside of a kiln, heated, and lightly hand coaxed into the given shape. When fine reproduction work is required, a wood-fired oven kiln is used which imparts its own effect from the smoke and ash. The glass plate used may come from Germany, Africa or Spain. The chemical ingredients of the glass impart specific tones: high carbon oxide has

a reddish hue and basalt a greenish hue. These beautiful and many colored hues shine in this unusual space in the center of Europe.

The significance of work performed by a dedicated fifth generation craftsman is illustrated by this studio setup and work method. If one assumes a direct transfer of tried techniques through generations, as well as continual improvements, an able craftsman should be capable of subtle work in a specific niche. The outcome of the work is not based upon group agreement or knowledge; it is the sum of one individual's training and experience and the resultant choice of methods. Even with the introduction of new methods and new materials (modern plate glass, for instance), the grounding of a craftsman in tradition provides a broad base from which to make technical and aesthetic choices and evaluations, and assure quality workmanship.

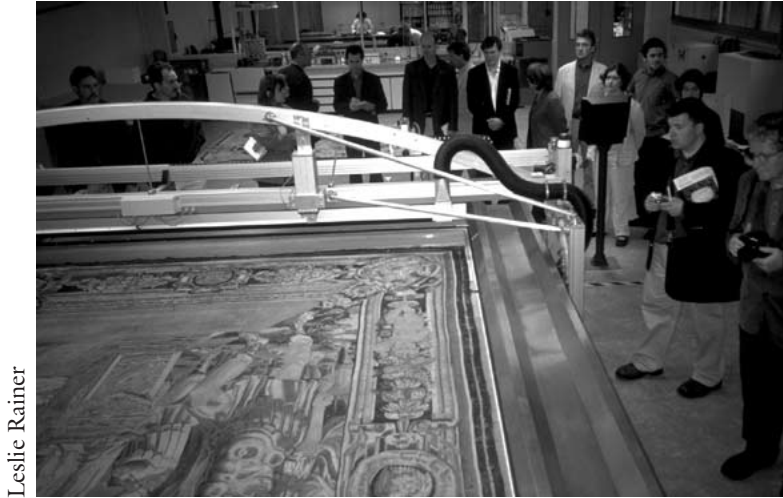
This studio visit has increased awareness of the continuation of successful older, traditional methods of work, presented a resource, and developed a broadened appreciation of interdependent craft fields.

Chevalier Conservation

64, Blvd de la Mission-Marchand, 92400 Courbevoie

David deMuzio

May 18, 2001



Leslie Rainer

Chevalier Conservation, Courbevoie.

The group visited Chevalier Conservation in Courbevoie on May 18th, and we were shown around the modern facility by owners Pierre and Dominique Chevalier. Chevalier Conservation specializes in the preservation of tapestries, rugs and textiles, including furniture upholstery. In addition to carrying out treatment using traditional hand stitching, Chevalier has developed and installed a large state-of-the-art computer-driven cleaning table for rugs and tapestries. Claire Balmes, a textile engineer and conservator,

demonstrated the cleaning process on a large tapestry. The main innovation of the system is that it allows wet cleaning of fragile textiles without total submersion in water. The textile is supported on a taut mesh table over which moves a robotic platform that allows vacuuming or delivery of solvent to all parts of the textile without making physical contact, thus minimizing damage to the fibers. A computer controls and monitors the process, regulating the amount of nebulised cleaning solution sprayed onto the textile from the moving platform above. Variable suction from below the mesh table draws the cleaning solution through the tapestry at the point of application, allowing the textile to be cleaned using only a fraction of the water of a traditional wet cleaning process (100 liters vs. 6000 liters). This significantly minimizes the risk of fugitive dyes bleeding from the fibers. All parameters of the process are controllable, allowing the specifics of each treatment to be tailored to the conservator's requirements. It was absolutely fascinating to watch. Clients who cannot visit the lab can actually watch the treatment of their textile on their computer in real time through a Webcam® link!

This very sophisticated cleaning system, combined with specialized staff working in the textile restoration tradition seems unique to Chevalier. No American museum conservation department could justify this amount of specialized equipment and staff, making Chevalier's textile conservation services an important part of rug and tapestry preservation worldwide. For this reason, and particularly for very large textiles, there is a growing list of American museums using Chevalier's services. In contrast to most American textile conservation facilities, an integral part of Chevalier's business is buying, restoring, and selling antique rugs and tapestries.

The textile portion of the study trip was an incredibly important experience since most of us focus primarily on the “wood issues” of furniture and woodwork. Upholstery is the most fragile of materials incorporated into interiors and therefore is the least likely to survive the passage of time. To see the craft that continues to produce these luxury goods was very instructive.

Villa Majorelle

1, rue Louis Majorelle, 54000 Nancy

Alton Bowman

May 19, 2001



Leslie Rainer

Villa Majorelle, Nancy.

The Grand Hotel de la Reine, where we stayed in Nancy, is located on the Place Stanislas, an 18th-century square. In the center of the square, we saw the statue of Duke Stanislas Leczinsky, whose abdication from the throne of Poland and subsequent move to Nancy in 1735, was pivotal in making Nancy the capital of the Lorraine region. The square is surrounded by huge black, rococo iron gates, with gilding done by our friends at the Atelier Gohard in Paris.

We split into two groups; one viewed the 18th-century architecture and

the other viewed the Art Nouveau buildings. We walked through the city and regrouped at the Villa Majorelle. Our group stopped first at an Art Nouveau wooden storefront, now occupied by a Laura Ashley clothing store, designed by Eugene Vallin. There was a beautiful Art Nouveau pharmacy on a corner that is still in use as a pharmacy. We stopped at the Crédit Lyonnais Building, a bank designed at the turn of the century and still in use by the same company. Inside, the magnificent high ceiling of the main room was decorated in stained glass by Jacques Gruber. It featured symbolic floral motifs and flooded the entire room with light.

At the Villa Majorelle we were met by our guide. She informed us that the villa was the private home and studio of Louis Majorelle. In 1898, Majorelle contracted the young Parisian architect Henri Sauvage to execute his dream home. Constructed between 1901–1902, it is one of the finest expressions of the collaboration of Art Nouveau artists in Nancy. Majorelle designed the furnishings, the staircase and the built-ins that were manufactured in the shops on the property. Jacques Gruber created the stained glass in the foyer and the grand salon.



The chimney was made by the ceramist Alexandre Bigot and the painted decorations are by Francis Jourdain as well as work by Henry Royer and Lucien Weisenberger. The exterior of the house was partially restored in 1996. The restoration of the interior is ongoing as well as the search for the original furniture, some of which has already been returned to the Villa and some of which can be seen in the Musée de l'école de Nancy, which is just up the street.

Dining room at the Villa Majorelle. Furniture made by Louis Majorelle, stained glass by Jacques Gruber, and ceramic chimney by Alexander Bigot.

Musée de l'école de Nancy

38, rue du Sergent Blandan, 54000 Nancy

Alton Bowman and David Bayne

May 19, 2001

The museum is a collection of the major works of the artists working in Nancy during the Art Nouveau period. All of the decorative arts are represented: furniture, glass, ceramics and metalwork. A founder and teacher of the group was Emile Gallé and some of his glass works and major furniture pieces are displayed here. The magnificent carved and inlaid bed, *Aube et Crépuscule* (1904), is one of the masterpieces of the museum and French furniture. It is his last piece and one of our favorites of the trip. The museum also contained furniture by Eugène Vallin (1856–1922) and Jacques Gruber, plus large cabinets by Louis Majorelle (1859–1926) in the tropical hardwood Goncalo alves, and Cuban mahogany.

After seeing some of Vallin's exterior architectural work in our walk to the museum, it was a treat to see a set of his furniture in a complete room setting. We could see how the flow and sweep of the furniture meshed with the carved paneling, built-ins, and ceiling. Although not quite in a period room, the museum also contained the complete bedroom suite and lamps from the Villa Majorelle that we had just visited. He used beautifully carved ash to frame veneers of curly ash inlaid with mother of pearl. This light and delicate suite for a private space contrasted

with the somber mahogany dining tables and interior finishes that we had seen in the more public parts of his house. Finally, not only was work by Louis Majorelle represented, but there also was an unusual piano decorated by his father. We could experience again the continuity of French furniture from generation to generation.

Even lunch was a learning experience as we dined at the famous Grand Café de la Brasserie Excelsior. In 1911, the architects Weissenberger and Mienville designed this classic restaurant near the train station. The interior was filled with works by artists of the Nancy school. Louis Majorelle designed the furniture and decorations, the glass lamp shades were designed by Antonin Daum, and the stained glass windows by Jacques Gruber. The restaurant was restored in 1986 when Flo, a French restaurant chain, acquired it. The food was exceptional with interesting German-influenced variations.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs

39 rue Bouffard 33000 Bordeaux

Anne Woodhouse and Kathy Z. Gillis

May 20, 2001

One of the goals of our trip was to explore French furniture beyond the limits of Paris and royal commissions. This was satisfied in our visit to the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Bordeaux. The museum is housed in a late 18th-century mansion built between 1775–1779 by the Bordeaux architect Etienne Laclotte for Pierre de Raymond de Lalande, a lawyer in the Bordeaux Parliament. The collections range from the beginning of the 18th century through the period of Louis XVI (1774–1793). The museum gave us an opportunity to compare the high-style furniture of Paris with native *bordelais* furniture, which in general is less ornate, and more solidly proportioned. Our guide, Mme Catherine Gaboury, gave up her Sunday to provide us with a fascinating and thorough tour.

We learned about a category of furniture referred to as “port” furniture, a distinct variation produced in the Atlantic coast cities such as Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and Nantes. Because the Atlantic seaports of France were part of the “triangular trade” between Europe, the West Indies, and Africa, they received large shipments of mahogany, kingwood, purpleheart, and lignum vitae. An unusual kind of furniture was born using exotic hardwoods as solid wood rather than merely as veneer show woods. Although Parisian-made furniture would be expected in a Bordeaux salon, locally made pieces would be found in less public spaces. For example, we saw commodes in solid purpleheart and tables of turned lignum vitae. Pieces similar to Bordeaux furniture can be found in furniture made in the West Indies and New Orleans, where exotic woods were also readily available. Very little veneered furniture was made in Bordeaux, and marquetry is unusual. In Paris, the standard wood for interior structures was oak. In Bordeaux, more than one type of wood was used.

Unlike Paris, where a system of specialized craftsmen divided the work of joiner, carver, and gilder, in Bordeaux there was a more generalist system of production. The same person may have executed parquet floors, joinery, veneering, carving, etc. One area in which production was reserved for a specialist was wainscot woodwork.



David Bayne

Armoire bordelaise Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux.

Among the many examples of Bordelais furniture we saw were some objects found only outside of Paris. We examined a pair of console tables that were unique in incorporating a front drawer, two incurved side drawers, and turned legs. There were many turners in Bordeaux in the 18th century and a lot of turned furniture was produced for the trans-Atlantic trade. A “refreshment table” is another piece with turned legs and containers to cool bottles, with plate racks on lower shelves and a marble top.

Signature examples of specialized furniture are the huge armoires of carved solid Cuban mahogany. They were used in the dining room, not the bedroom, and during dinner were opened to display the plates and ceramics. Often the interior incorporated complete sets of built-in drawers. Although from the front the hardware was rather plain and ordinary, when the doors were opened, beautifully-finished iron locks and bolts were revealed.



David Bayne

Bordeaux desk and bookcase, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Bordeaux.

In Bordeaux, we saw several examples of English influences on French furniture. Along the French coast, desks with bookcases were made. This form is not frequently found in the rest of France and although the concept is English, the *bombé* shaping, paneled sides, and front with tiny cabriole feet looked very French. The American desk-and-bookcase, which is very similar overall, is an example of the same English invention being expressed in another culture.

The visit to the Bordeaux Musée des Arts décoratifs illustrated for us the regional characteristics of French furniture but also the influences from other cultures. The adaptation of English forms using New World materials is something familiar to Americans. Since so many Huguenots left the French Atlantic coast for America, it is not surprising perhaps that some of the same trends are shared.

Château de Kerjean

29440 Saint-Vougay

Ferme Musée du Léon

29440 Tréflaouenan

May 22, 2001

Musée Départemental Breton

21 bis Avenue de la Gare, 29000 Quimper

May 23, 2001

Chris Swan

Rounding out the Western leg of our decorative arts *tour de France* were visits to selected sites in the Bretagne region, in particular, Château de Kerjean, a small farm museum, and the regional history Musée Départemental Breton in the town of Quimper. The Château is near the village of Saint-Vougay, midway between Brest and Morlaix. Upon arriving, it was clear from the ocean air that we had arrived near the coast at the place that Louis XIII described as, “*L’une des plus belles maisons du royaume.*” (One of the most beautiful houses of the kingdom).



David Bayne

Lit clos (1664), Château de Kerjean, Bretagne.

The original manor house was constructed in 1420–30 for the Ollivier family whose wealth derived from the regional linen industry. After 1500, ownership passed to the architect Jean Barbier who rebuilt the stone château with the permission of the King. It has survived relatively intact from that time to the present as one of France’s premier examples of French Renaissance architecture. Today the château is owned by the state and administered by the Saint-Vougay District Council Ministry. We were greeted by one of the principal interpreters, whose willingness to speak English for us was yet another example of French hospitality. The château is partially furnished with 17th and 18th-century furniture reflecting the life of the aristocratic families in those periods. The collection is highlighted by a number of stile-and-panel grain coffers, blanket chests, and especially the enduring *lit-clos* (enclosed bed cabinets). The quality of the wooden artifacts in the château was rivaled only by the early Renaissance carved structural interior of the chapel.

Having made the long journey to northern Brittany, we added a worthwhile short detour to the Farm Museum of Léon, near the village of Berven. This was a “living history” site similar to the Ferme de Pierre Allègre we had visited in the Auvergne. The museum is a farm



Patrick Albert, CCQ

Spoons, Musée départemental Breton, Quimper.

functioning as a tourist attraction (and bar!). In addition to the small 19th-century farmhouse and attached stables, it featured an impressive array of farm wagons and machinery such as tractors, plows, and harvesting machines. Also on display were a 19th-century clog carving lathe that was still in working order. Upstairs in the loft of the wooden barn was a collection of historic photographs of the life of the farm.

Back in Quimper, our last day of touring found us in the regional history museum of the Bretagne, situated in the bishop's palace—an architectural composite ranging from the 12th to the 19th centuries, next to the neo-gothicized cathedral. Dating from 1876, the museum collection houses a wonderful variety of artifacts reflecting the life and history of the Breton region. Objects ranged from a select few early Roman objects and early Christian polychrome wooden sculpture to some of the region's finest faience ceramics. The outstanding furniture collections explained some of the inspiration for the forms and design we encountered in the region. As Americans seeking to understand some of the transitions from Europe to the New World, seeing these simpler vernacular objects in this setting seemed a fitting end to our introductory tour of the French decorative arts.

