

Furniture in France



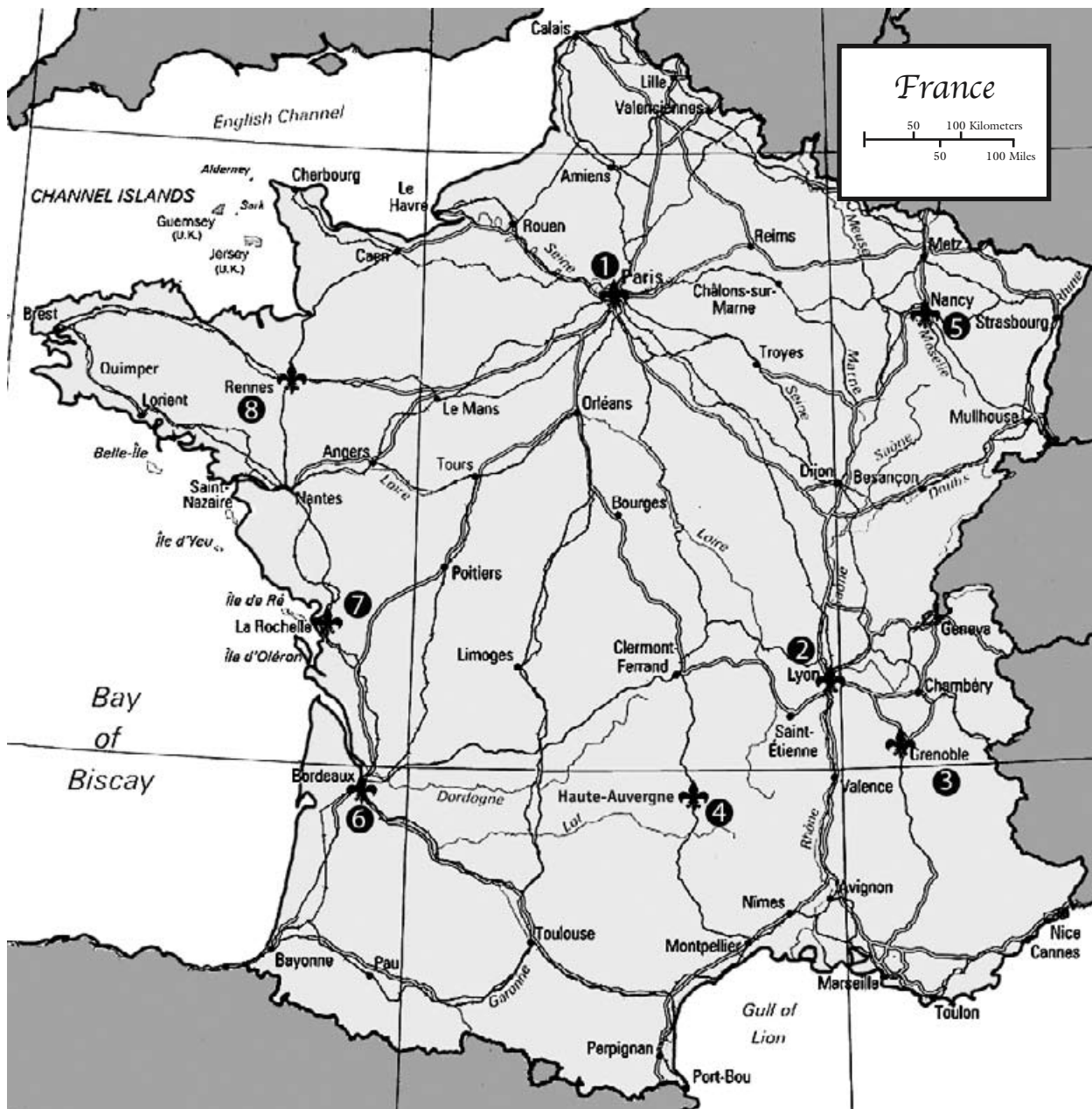
Wooden Artifacts Group
May 2004

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1. *Paris*: Château d'Asnières; Société d'Encouragement aux Métiers d'Art (SEMA); Musée Carnavalet; Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau; Musée Cognacq-Jay; Ateliers Bernard et Gaël Deville, Michel Jamet, J. George, S.A., Bruno Desnoues, Fabrice Gohard, Rémy Brazet, Rémy Garnier; Musée Nissim de Camondo; Ateliers de Versailles; Hôtel Beauharnais; Musée d'Années 30; Laboratoires Champs-sur-Marne; Institut National du Patrimoine; École Boulle; Villa Ferrières

2. *Lyon*: PELLE et Cie; Musées des Tissus et des Arts décoratifs

3. *Grenoble*: Musée Dauphinois; Château de Longpré; Ferme du Chazeau; Musée Hector Berlioz

4. *Haute-Auvergne Region*: Ferme de Pierre Allègre; Musée de la Haute-Auvergne

5. *Nancy*: Villa Maïorelle; Musée de l'École de Nancy

6. *Bordeaux*: Musée des Arts décoratifs; Musée d'Aquitaine

7. *La Rochelle*: Musée de Nouveau Monde; Hôtel d'Orbigny-Bernon

8. *Rennes*: Musée de Bretagne; Ecomusée du Pays de Rennes; Parlement de Rennes

cover photo by F. Carey Howlett

Preface

David Bayne

Furniture Conservator, New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The Furniture in France 2004 trip originated as a complete surprise. During the 2001 trip Kathy Gillis startled me on the streets of Lyon, saying, “David, this is great! Let’s do another one!” I thought she was joking, since during all the planning for that first trip we had never considered the possibility of repeating it. At that moment, on the streets of Lyon, it was even more impossible to imagine a repeat performance. Throughout the entire FiF 2001 trip I was repeatedly astonished and delighted at how well things were going. It seemed to be tempting fate to try another trip. It literally “could not get any better than this!”

But Kathy persisted, and after I bowed out, she formed a grant-writing committee with Joe Godla and Tania Wilcke. Gradually, through 2002, they honed a proposal with the assistance of Foundation of the American Institute of Conservation Board members Katherine Untch and Mary Striegel. Eventually, the proposal was submitted by Penny Jones, the Executive Director of the FAIC, to the Florence Gould Foundation. Once again, I received that call we all want to hear: We have the money and the trip is reality! All of the participants are very grateful to the staff and Board of the FAIC and to the Florence Gould Foundation for their generous support.

It fell to Paul Miller of The Preservation Society of Newport County, Brian Considine of the J. Paul Getty Museum, and myself, as the “content providers,” to determine the itinerary. Paul provided a curatorial perspective, with a concentration on the late 19th century, whereas Brian arranged visits to Parisian workshops and many collections of 18th-century furniture. As before, I concentrated on the possibilities outside of Paris and worked with Gilles Auffret, our logistics coordinator, to take us from the mountains to the sea. As much as possible, or desirable, we followed the itinerary taken in 2001. We wanted to have a balance between the glories of Paris and the mysteries of the countryside. We also wanted to balance the internationally acclaimed workshops of masters such as Rémy Brazet and Michel Jamet with those of lesser-known restorers, but all of the highest quality.

From all indications we succeeded, and the 2004 participants were amazed at the outstanding skills we witnessed and the wonderful generosity we experienced at all the places that we visited. Many of us came back thoroughly “Frenchified” and singing the praises of the French and the glories of France. We are deeply grateful to our French hosts and to Paul and Brian for sharing with us their years of contacts. Without their help we never would have had the opportunity for the behind-the-scenes visits and tours that we so much enjoyed.

An example of one of the new sites that Brian Considine included in 2004 was a visit to a fire-gilding studio. We were able to squeeze small contingents of our group into the Paris shop of Bernard and Gaël Deville and finally see a trade that

has not been practiced in the United States for many decades. Paul Miller was able to provide us with access to several new places. From the 18th-century Château d'Asnières to the late 19th-century Villa Ferrières, he introduced us to a wide range of styles and some very interesting people. Certainly not human, but very animate, were the amplified sounds of wood-boring insects actively chewing inside a chair at laboratories in Champs-sur-Marne. The regional itinerary was largely unchanged from 2001, except for a day spent at the Musée de Bretagne and the Parlement de Rennes. Both of these venues gave the group a chance to experience aspects of the contribution to the French decorative arts by Brittany.

Some of the same venues that were visited in 2001 felt different in 2004. For example, the Opéra Garnier tour in 2001 was led by an architect who took us from the Phantom's lair beneath the stage to the panorama of the roof. But in 2004 we were given a "behind-the-social-scenes" tour that explained the invisible 19th-century social duties and expectations. Each space bustled with ghosts from all the classes, from Emperor to maidservant, entering and exiting from each of the grand spaces. Another example of the differences was the visit to La Rochelle. This time we met Florence and Dominique Chaussat, who explained the individuality of the *meubles de port*, with all the details that an American regional furniture devotee could ask for.

Fortunately, the travel agent, Paul Moore of Crown Travel International, provided us once again with a full range of services and booked the airlines, hotels, and buses for us. One of the biggest challenges for both trips, though, was finding a logistics coordinator. A group of twenty people traveling together needs to have someone who does nothing but make sure the buses and taxis are there on time, and that the group makes it to the station with *all* their luggage. That's a lot of turnstiles. After a search, Gilles Auffret agreed to help us out. He researched hundreds of metro and bus connections, described them all on multicolored charts, and then never lost a soul. As social director, he made all the arrangements for our excellent soirée at the Brasserie de Chez Jenny. Great job, Gilles! He was familiar with conservation through his wife, Stéphanie Rabourdin, whom we had met in France on the first trip. It was an opportunity for us to extend a relationship from one trip to the next. They excellently guided us through nine different cities and the French language and culture, without missing a beat.

No matter how thorough the planning, some themes emerge that nobody expects, for example, the direct influence of the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War and World War II. Monuments such as the Opéra Garnier, or the Hôtel de Beauharnais or the Villa Ferrières, would not be the same without these German influences. Another addition to the program was Eleanor of Aquitaine. Her decorative arts heritage is minimal, but her legend is fascinating. As it turned out, two members of the trip were Eleanor "buffs," and in Bordeaux and La Rochelle they

regaled us with stories of her red-haired beauty as we coincidentally followed her travels.

One of our goals was to deepen the connections with the French conservators, curators, and restorers that we formed on the first trip. Although we invited all that we met to visit us as soon as possible, we hope that in the next year or two we can do more. There are so many skills and techniques that the French have either preserved or invented with which we are not familiar. We want to learn more about how they do things and how we can adapt them to our preservation needs. It would be fascinating to be able to collaborate with a French colleague on a project. The next step in the Furniture in France effort is to secure funding so that American conservators can host a French visitor and share ideas not only on techniques but also on conservation philosophy and education. There is so much to be shared by both the French and Americans, and the process of learning about another culture is both professionally and personally satisfying.

During the course of the trip I was sometimes so focused on keeping the group together or thinking about whether the next day's agenda was viable that I would forget to notice the here and now of what we were seeing. I am very grateful to my marvelous colleagues for reminding me just how spectacular some of the visits were before I missed them. This was, as to be expected, a great group to travel with. Furniture in France 2004 was a spectacular success, and it was a marvelous experience to be a guide, an organizer, and a participant. I am very grateful to all the people associated with the study trips, and I hope that more people, both French and American, can share at least a part of the experience through our post-trip publication.

The essays that follow are meant to complement the publication from the Furniture in France 2001 trip. For 2004, we asked the participants to provide us with topical essays rather than their impressions from each venue. The essay topics were their own and were stimulated by what they wanted to learn from the study trip. Our goal is to answer some of the questions that all American conservators might have about French practices as well as to compare and contrast issues that only a participant would have discovered. The second book unites the informative descriptions of the venues (2001) with useful discussions of specific conservation topics. It is hoped that both books will be volumes one and two on any conservator's bookshelf, French or American, who is interested in the state of conservation in both countries. None of the essays have been peer-reviewed, but they have been copy edited; we apologize for any inaccuracies or misinterpretations that may be found in them.



Perspectives

Paul F. Miller

Curator, Preservation Society of Newport County

Furniture in France as a study-tour concept, in both its versions, was never sectarian. In first defining the ambitious scope of what might be appropriate for an audience of conservators, curators, and professional cabinetmakers, it became readily apparent that the architectural context for which the regional schools and periods of French furniture were made held great analytical potential. The particular importance in the French tradition of architectural furniture suites underscored the symbiosis in design, finish, and execution between a given work and its contemporary backdrop. Unfortunately for the French national collections, and fortunately for American public and private holdings, political and social upheavals have largely separated original inventories from their intended settings. Seeing period French pieces, therefore, in American institutions, one tends to overlook possible artistic links to interior architecture, which might provide valuable clues as to the historic finish and intent of their maker.

One of the primary aims of this trip was to familiarize the participant, above and beyond the appreciation of the enduring poetry in gesture and tradition of artisans in the *métiers d'art*, with the contextual and chronological range of illustrative public and private buildings, imagining them in their heyday, carefully observing their present restoration, and sensitively appreciating possible design links with the American historic experience.

For the eighteenth-century chapter, a visit to the ongoing restoration site of the Château d'Asnières provided our group with insights into period furniture inventories and their arrangement, French classical-era floor plans, and through archaeology, the implements and practices of Louis XV-era technology, ranging from installation sketches and mounting designs for wall paneling to the actual hardware of hooks and nails. Similarly, at the Parliament of Rennes, a stylistic layering from Louis XIV to the Third Republic and its replication following a disastrous fire reminded us of the difficult choices made when faced with superimposed decorative surfaces, and the agonizing choices made in choosing a time line sympathetic to the building's history, sponsors, modern function, and code. A quick visit to the German Embassy's Hôtel de Beauharnais helped us to understand the fleetingly elegant chapter of Empire decoration and the complexity of seemingly sedate seat furniture. The château de Fontainebleau bore ample evidence of royal patronage from the Renaissance to the Louis's to Napoleon III's Orientalist apartments. With this latter bit of private architecture as an introduction to the Second Empire style, we moved on to its public apotheosis with the Paris Opera, where opulence of styles and materials met the technological advances of the age and set an

international standard. These same standards were actively and eloquently evoked through the medium of textiles and the staggering production of the Lyon silk industry. Summarized by a visit to the workshops of Prelle & Co., where period and modern looms coexist, we glimpsed into the firm's archives, witnessing centuries of design and technical exploration. The technical innovation of the industry and its impact on upholstered surfaces was further revealed through a subsequent tour of Lyon's Musée des Tissus.

Finally, the Nissim de Camondo house museum presented us with the not unfamiliar image of a Belle Époque connoisseur's vision of furnished eighteenth-century period rooms, a conceptualization not alien to American collectors and curators of the early twentieth century. That this vision turned its back on the creative organic vitality we admired with the production of the École de Nancy and saw evoked in the Art Nouveau period room installations of the Musée Carnavalet was found by all to strike a poignant note. Lastly, the important and not sufficiently celebrated collections of the Musée des Années 30 introduced us to the Art Deco movement in all its manifestations, from the lesser-known contemporaries of Ruhlmann to urban architectural ensembles, fine arts, and architectural ephemera of an age mixing nascent modernism with romantic exotism.

Fittingly, just as a visit to the Ateliers de Versailles confirmed the renewed devotion of the French state to the restoration and conservation of its national holdings of fine and decorative arts, so did our visit to the laboratories of Champs-sur-Marne serve as a counterpoint, reminding the participants that the same research, analysis, and intervention are applied to the structure of national historic monuments. Much was learned of our French colleagues' formation, equivalent methodologies, retention of traditional practices, and indeed of their passions. Much remains to be absorbed and cross-referenced on our parts, hopefully with the on-site exchange visits of our counterparts. Undeniably, the FiF experience provided a broad scope of knowledge that will become validated as applied professionally in the years to come.

Brian Considine

Conservator, J. Paul Getty Museum

The first Furniture in France trip broke new ground for American (and Canadian) conservators traveling as a group to immerse themselves in the world of French conservators, suppliers, craftsmen, and collections. Participants from the countries represented gained an awareness of their respective backgrounds, their challenges, and their priorities. Perhaps more important, they established a bond that clearly had the potential to endure and to foster future exchanges. One of the great surprises was the warmth of the interpersonal engagements; the two groups decidedly had a great deal in common: shared passions as well as a deep interest in each other's backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences.

Furniture in France 2001 generated sufficient enthusiasm to stimulate the organizers to build on its success with a second trip. We refined the itinerary by sending a questionnaire to all of the participants on the first trip, asking them about the visits that they would repeat, those they would not repeat, and visits in which they would have been interested. With this in mind, we put together Furniture in France 2004's itinerary based on the first trip, the questionnaires, and of course, the availability of our hosts. For me, some of the highlights of Furniture in France 2004 that were not part of Furniture in France 2001 were the visit to Messrs. Deville, Fabrice Ouziel's tour of the Château d'Asnières, and a wonderful dinner given for the group by Rémy Brazet. One of the great differences between the groups was having the strong textile and upholstery expertise and interest on Furniture in France 2004 offered by Nancy Britton, Mark Anderson, Gisèle Haven, and Clarissa deMuzio.

Like Furniture in France 2001, our trip to France was a great success not only for what we saw but because we engaged our hosts in a dialogue about what material culture means and how best to preserve it. Once again, I had the privilege of sharing with the others on the trip the collections, ateliers, and most important, 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 toward 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 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. We now look forward to bringing a group of French conservators to the United States.

French—American Exchange

Stéphanie Rabourdin Auffret

Study trips such as Furniture in France can result in a long and beneficial exchange between the countries involved, in this case, France and America. Susan Walker and I thought that it would be interesting to present my own experience as an example of the possible outcomes of FiF trips. In May 2001, I met a group of American conservators and curators during FiF 2001. I spent a day with them, talked with many of them, and found the idea of such a trip very interesting. After this first contact, I kept in touch, especially with the three organizers David Bayne, Brian Considine, and Paul Miller, and also with Patrick Albert, a furniture conservator from Québec.

During the summer of 2001, I spent two months at the J. Paul Getty Center as a volunteer in the Decorative Arts Conservation department, working with Brian Considine and Arlen Heginbotham (another FiF 2001 alumnus). There I studied French furniture in the museum collection for my PhD dissertation. While there, I was able to learn the techniques used in America to study and treat a piece of furniture. It was interesting to discover how different the approach to our profession is in these two countries, each one having its own tradition.

Thanks to the contacts I established previously, I was able to visit American colleagues during the fall of 2002 over a period of three weeks. I first visited Patrick Albert in Québec, where he is the head of the furniture conservation workshop of the CCQ (Centre de Conservation du Québec). We also visited Parks Canada in Québec and the ICC (Institut Canadien de Conservation) in Ottawa. Then we met David Bayne in Vermont, at the Shelburne Museum. The day after, we visited the conservation facilities of the Bureau of Historic Sites at Peebles Island, where David Bayne is the head of the furniture conservation workshop. This trip was

made possible thanks to David, who asked me to come as a consultant to examine the French 18th-century furniture in two historic mansions, Staatsburgh (Mills Mansion) and Vanderbilt Mansion. While there, I met Susan Walker and Frank Futral (later part of FiF 2004), and I again met Paul Miller.

After a week in the Albany area, I visited different museums and conservation workshops along the East Coast:

- ❖ In Boston, I visited the Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) workshop, where I was a fellow in 2004.
- ❖ In Wilmington, Delaware, I visited Winterthur with Michael Podmaniczky, who was part of FiF 2001, and Mark Anderson, who was a participant of FiF 2004.
- ❖ In Philadelphia, I visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art with David deMuzio, who attended FiF 2001, and I met his wife, Clarissa deMuzio, who was in FiF 2004.
- ❖ In New York, I met Mecka Baumeister at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I have been a fellow since September 2004.

All that was made possible by the contacts I established during FiF 2001. This experience confirmed the idea I already had that France and America had a lot to exchange, especially because of their very different backgrounds.

A few months after these visits, I decided to pursue this exchange between our

two countries and applied for a fellowship at SPNEA. Joe Godla, the head of the conservation department, and I first met in France five years ago, when he was doing a three-month wood-carving training in a Parisian workshop. Thanks to our experiences in each other's country, we both knew how an exchange between French and American approaches to conservation could be beneficial. Joe also thought that it would be an interesting experience, and he offered me the position.



Figure 1. The “French welcome” at Atelier Jamet.

For FiF 2004, David Bayne asked me to join the group to help with the translations. I was very happy to have the opportunity to be part of this second experience, to meet new American colleagues and to help them discover different sites of my own country. This trip again gave the opportunity to French and American conservators and curators to meet each other and to exchange their own experiences. It was a unique occasion to meet colleagues from another country and to establish great contacts. As there really are not specific illustrations for my topic, I am providing two photos of the “French welcome,” to show how we enjoy having our American colleagues in our country! (fig. 1)

I really hope that these exchanges will continue in the future. According to my own experience, it seems to me that the best way to nurture improvement in our profession is to exchange our knowledge. Each country has its own tradition, its specific training, its personal approach to conservation, so we have a lot to learn from each other. The American approach to conservation gave me another look at my work; it allowed me to evolve because it is complementary to our own approach to this profession.



Brian Considine, Mark Anderson, Catherine Grégoire (curator), Bill Lewin, Susan Walker, Cathy Mackenzie, Julie Wolfe (in front of Cathy), Alf Sharp, and Jim Hay at Musée Cognacq-Jay.

List of Participants

Mark Anderson

Conservator, Winterthur Museum,
Wilmington, Delaware

Gilles Auffret

Logistics Coordinator, Paris, France

Stéphanie Rabourdin Auffret

Conservator and Fellow, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York City, New York

David Bayne

Conservator, Office of Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation, Peebles Island, Water-
ford, New York

Nancy Britton

Conservator, Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York City, New York

Brian Considine

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

Clarissa Barnes deMuzio

Soft Furnishings Fabricator, Glen Court
Design, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

JeanMarie Easter

Private Conservator, Easter Conservation Ser-
vices, Indianapolis, Indiana

Frank Futral

Curator, National Park Service, Hyde Park,
New York

Hugh Glover

Conservator, Williamstown Art Conservation
Center, Williamstown, Massachusetts

Mark Harpainter

Private Conservator, Berkeley, California

Deborah Anne Hatch

Curator, Private Collection of Ann and Gor-
don Getty, San Francisco, California

Giséle T. Haven

Conservator, Isabella Stewart Gardner
Museum, Boston, Massachusetts

James Hay

Conservator, Canadian Conservation Institute,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

F. Carey Howlett

Private Conservator, F. Carey Howlett &
Associates, Inc., Callao, Virginia

William Lewin

Private Conservator, Baltimore, Maryland

Cathy Mackenzie

Student Furniture Maker, North Bennett
Street School, Boston, Massachusetts

Paul F. Miller

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

Cynthia Moyer

Private Conservator, West Newbury, Massa-
chusetts

Alfred Sharp

Furniture Maker, Woodbury, Tennessee

Susan B. Walker

Curator, Staatsburgh State Historic Site,
Staatsburg, New York

Julie Wolfe

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

An American Perspective on the French Furniture Tradition

F. Carey Howlett

It's a fact—many of us who study and conserve furniture in the United States rarely stray from the well-bounded confines of the Anglo-American furniture tradition. Our perspectives on French furniture are grounded mostly in a limited, if generally accurate, notion of France as a wellspring of technical and stylistic ideas that had both direct and indirect influences upon our own tradition.

Immersing ourselves in a comprehensive study of French furniture for its own sake, if only for a few weeks, both broadened these old perspectives and brought about entirely new ones. As an exploration of the depth and range of the French furniture tradition, Furniture in France exposed participants to outstanding examples of high-style production, remarkable provincial versions of high-style forms, and wonderful traditional vernacular furniture. We observed contrasts between the French and Anglo-American traditions, but some interesting parallels as well. We also gained more insight into the shifting and selective influence of French design on British and American furniture, and discovered a few surprising influences of Britain and the Americas upon French furniture, at least in some parts of France.

Royal Furniture

A visit to Fontainebleau early in the trip offered the most obvious contrast between the French and Anglo-American traditions. Fontainebleau embodies the supreme wealth and power of the French royal court of the 17th and 18th centuries—and of the post-revolutionary First and Second Empires. Struck by the audacious show of wealth somewhat foreign to American sensibilities, one feels the irony of how the artisanry inherent in the royal furnishings is, at first glance, a secondary consideration. These objects were designed to enhance and reflect the glory of the ruling elite, and one must look beyond the ostentation to appreciate the exquisite workmanship of the makers. Royal patronage obviously had a profound, positive influence on the arts in France: the furniture at Fontainebleau reflects unparalleled standards of workmanship, quality of materials, and achievements in design. Lucrative commissions from the crown afforded such *ébénistes* as Boulle, Oeben, and Riesener the opportunity to develop their skills to the highest level. It is no wonder their work became so influential in France, Europe, and abroad.

Imitating the Royals

Nonetheless, the influence of France's foremost 18th-century *ébénistes* on British and American furniture design is not so obvious in their commissions for Fontainebleau and other royal palaces: the luxury and scale of these objects is far too grand. Rather, it is apparent in the furniture they produced for the homes of the wealthy, where the same attention to design and technical detail appears on less lavishly ornamented objects built on a more familiar scale. (fig. 1) In the domestic furniture in collections such as that at the Musée Cognacq-Jay, housed in a late



Figure 1. Small writing table by the Parisian ébéniste Oeben, ca. 1760 (Musée Nissim de Camondo). Though missing original ormolu mounts above its legs, the desk epitomizes high-style French rococo furniture with its curvilinear form, rich marquetry, and delicate structure.

17th-century mansion in Paris's Marais district, utility coexists with luxury, making it closer in spirit to the high-style furniture of Britain and North America. Here, the Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassical furnishings of the late 17th through the early 19th centuries betray both direct and indirect influences upon the Anglo-American tradition.

Regional Variations

With our understanding of 17th- and 18th-century French furniture informed chiefly by the production of the best-known Parisian cabinetmakers, it was a revelation to study some of the distinctive regional furniture made by sophisticated cabinetmakers located far from the French capital.

At times, regional variations were a function of geography. Furniture from the cities of Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and other Atlantic coastal towns, for example, exhibits a rich,

almost profligate use of exotic tropical woods—readily available timber shipped to these ports from the Americas. In addition, Bordeaux, because of its long ties to England, produced furniture (particularly case pieces) betraying a decidedly British sensibility: dark solid woods, stolid forms, restrained ornament, and chests of drawers with hardware placed much like British examples.

Regional variations also reflected the idiosyncrasies of particular cabinetmakers. The work of Jean-François Hache, a skilled third-generation cabinetmaker working in Grenoble, shows sophisticated technical and stylistic influences from a year he spent working with the Parisian artisan Oeben. But Hache's furniture bears numerous distinctive characteristics. He used figured veneers from woods indigenous to the Grenoble area as substitutes for the exotic species used in Paris. Brass mounts on his furniture were rarely chased as they were in Parisian examples, perhaps because of the paucity of skilled metal artisans in Grenoble. Much of Hache's furniture is also characterized by highly contrasting light and dark marquetry, expressing a nonacademic freedom and graphic boldness not often seen in high-style Parisian furniture. (fig. 2)



Figure 2. Commode by the Grenoble ébéniste Jean-François Hache, ca. 1760-65 (Musée Dauphinois). Hache, though influenced by his year working with Oeben in Paris, made distinctive use of highly contrasting woods, generally species native to the Grenoble area.

Regional variations in French furniture are fascinating partly because of their parallels to regional differences in American furniture. Hache's work in relation to Parisian prototypes, for instance, is analogous to the work of Winchester, Virginia, cabinetmakers influenced by the furniture from Baltimore, or Connecticut River Valley artisans displaying a distinct Boston influence. In each case, the work produced away from the cultural center, although sophisticated, shows use of locally available materials and the relaxation of certain technical standards while others are maintained. But perhaps the most interesting parallel is an unbridled exuberance, often lacking in the academic prototypes, that is expressed in both French and American furniture made outside the primary urban centers.

19th-Century Historicism

France led in the proliferation of eclectic revival styles during the 19th century, an epoch collectively, if dubiously, termed the Victorian era in Britain and America. The French use a more apt term to describe this prolonged explosion of revival styles: "historicism." This term is useful, as it does not arbitrarily tie the epoch to the dates of a particular ruler, enabling us to see historicism as a design movement that characterized almost the entirety of the nineteenth century, including not only the Gothic, Renaissance, Rococo, and other revival styles dating from the mid to late 19th century, but also the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian revivals that occurred earlier in the century. The term also accurately expresses a chief motiva-



Figure 3. Renaissance Revival bed, ca. 1855 (Fontainebleau). With references to the architecture of the Italian Renaissance, this bed at Fontainebleau, of solid walnut with burl veneers, gilt detailing, and carved trophies and swags, exemplifies the direct influence of French styles on American furniture in the nineteenth century.

tion for this era of revival styles: a harkening back to revered, if somewhat romanticized, virtues of the past during a period of rapid industrial and political change. (fig. 3)

Vernacular Furniture

Beginning in the second quarter of the 19th century, inexpensive, mass-produced furniture in current styles became widely available in the United States, nearly eliminating the livelihood of independent traditional artisans, even in rural areas. To keep up with changing fashions, the few surviving rural shops tended to mimic current styles, and distinctive American vernacular styles disappeared.

The industrial revolution had a much more gradual effect on the French furniture tradition. Early forms, construction techniques, and regional differences persisted in vernacular French furniture well into the 19th century.

The armoires of Rennes and surrounding areas, for example, changed little from the early 18th to the mid 19th century. Forms

remained essentially baroque, with heavy cornices (often double-arched), doors with fielded panels, and bases with shaped aprons and short cabriole legs. Ornament mingled rococo elements (asymmetrical panels, prolific acanthus and *rocaille* carving, elaborate pierced brass escutcheons) with traditional folk motifs (tendrils with flowers and berries, magpies, and geometric designs). (fig. 4) Carcases generally reveal evidence of hand-craftsmanship even on very late examples. Often, the only details that readily distinguish a mid 19th century example from a piece made 100 years earlier are its carved date or the presence of late hardware. Examples from the 1820s and 1830s, for example, may display an incongruous juxtaposition of rococo ornament with late classical stamped brass rosettes.

Rethinking the French Influence on the Anglo-American Tradition

The Furniture in France study trip provided valuable insight into the breadth and

depth of the French furniture tradition. The varied expertise of the trip leaders made this possible. Participants are indebted to Brian Considine for his knowledge of 18th-century Parisian furniture and of the 21st-century artisans who continue working in the tradition; to Paul Miller for his comprehensive knowledge of 18th, 19th-, and 20th-century French history and decorative arts and its influence on American collectors; and to trip organizer David Bayne for his profound interest in and knowledge of French vernacular furniture.

As a measure of the success of the trip, participants now have a greater sense of the complexity of the French tradition and its influence upon British and American furniture. With complexity comes questions, and the trip richly provoked far more questions than it provided us with rote answers. We can certainly continue to accept some of the standard great themes of furniture studies dealing with the historic transmission of technical and stylistic ideas (e.g., the very indirect influence of French decorative arts, passing through a filter of British tastes and sensibilities, upon high-style American colonial furniture, giving way to more direct influences after the American Revolution).

But what about lesser influences? As just one example, what about the vernacular French tradition and its transmission to America through French immigrants late in the 17th and early 18th centuries? We know there was a significant influx of Huguenot immigrants to the American colonies following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. In rural eastern Virginia, for instance, a region typically characterized as a bastion of British influence during the colonial era, many of the prominent families are of Huguenot ancestry. French surnames such as Beau-

champ, Cralle and Latane survive with correct French spellings but with pronunciations long ago anglicized to “Beachum,” “Crawley,” and “Lattany.” Is it possible that some American colonial furniture forms and design elements, particularly those having no directly identifiable British prototypes, are anglicized versions of French Huguenot furniture?



Figure 4. Detail, door to an armoire, Rennes, ca. 1825 (Musée de Bretagne). Traditional styles and craftsmanship persisted in French vernacular furniture well into the nineteenth century, as seen in the mix of baroque, rococo, and folk elements on the door of this 19th-century armoire made in Rennes.

Little research has been done in this area, with just a single study by the late scholar John Bivins suggesting a Huguenot prototype for early turned chairs from parts of North Carolina. The fact is that the typically Anglocentric studies of early American furniture tend to be oblivious to possible influences from other cultures—particularly cultures long ago absorbed into the Anglo-American tradition.

Which is why projects like the Furniture in France study trip are so beneficial. They not only enable scholars to participate in vital, new cross-cultural exchanges with like-minded colleagues elsewhere, but may even provoke new research leading to the fascinating rediscovery of long-lost cross-cultural connections.

Reflections upon the Influence of Culture on Training in Furniture Conservation

James Hay

How can a young person who aspires to become a furniture conservator obtain the requisite training to become one? This is a good question, but one that continues to resist having a clear answer. There is no one single successful path to recommend, either in France, Canada, or the USA.

This much is clear: based on the educational and career paths of my professional colleagues in Canada, and reinforced by those of my French and American colleagues on the second Furniture in France study tour, there are a number of routes to becoming a furniture conservator. Even though there are several institutional/academic programs that teach not only conservation, but furniture conservation in particular, many excellent practitioners continue to enter the field via other routes.

Although the routes vary, here's what you need to have, wherever you may be: raw talent, perseverance, good manners, good work habits, and luck. Perseverance is required to gain experience through on-the-job training and professional training. You'll need good manners and work habits in order not to be thrown out of the shops you'll need to work in for years in order to acquire experience. As for luck, luck always favors the well prepared. You still need some of it to get your chance.

It is abundantly clear that Americans are dead keen on their own culture, but they're barely a patch on the French, who can justifiably claim world leadership in a number of fields interesting to furniture conservators. The French think it is important the way things taste. It is very French to want to eat good food, and to be able to tell the difference between good and bad food. The result is that excellent food is ubiquitous in France and can be found even in a humble train station cafe.

It is also very French to take care to make things look nice. People watching is excellent in France, and people dress to look smart. In France, even hardware stores can look smart! The French have made their mark on building design, on



Figure 1. Student at École Boulle working on his Rublmann desk.

the design of gardens and parks, and on the arts of interior decoration. French fabrics, draperies, upholstery, carpets, decorative carving and painting, chair design, furniture design, furniture surface decoration in dozens of styles, and hardware designs are all first rate. At the high end of fashion, the market for French goods is world wide, and for good reason. With consistent high style, graceful innovation, and determined insistence on quality, the French have been creating beauty for a thousand years. It is a French tradition.

French style and training in furniture conservation are combined in not just one program, but in several, and no one program seems to dominate the field. Although France has had a number of revolutions that turned the country upside down, there remains a tradition of support for the fine decorative arts that began with Louis XIV in the 17th century. Because of popular support for the arts, this tradition is every bit as strong under democracy as it was under the kings. The guild traditions go back to the Middle Ages, and although the guilds have been tamed, the profound craft skills

have been enshrined in the modern world in the officially supported furniture conservation programs at the Institut National du Patrimoine and the École Boulle. The French have never abandoned promoting the craft skills; industrialization did not destroy the apprenticeship pattern of teaching there, as happened in North America. Admittedly, North Americans had other things on their minds during the 19th century.

The exquisite hand skills fostered by the French programs have a profound effect on the mentality of conservation over there. Conservators in France are prepared to pursue interventions far beyond what North Americans are comfortable with. For example, the French are quite capable of completely removing the veneered surface of a piece of furniture to repair the substrate, finishing by reattaching the entire veneered surface: neatly, cleanly, nearly invisibly. They are comfortable with that, and we are not. I believe this is because they have about 800 years of successful traditional practice to draw upon, and we do not. We have good reason not to be comfortable with such a profound intervention, and the ultimate reasons can be found in different national histories. As usual, Canadian attitudes are some-

where between UK and French practices on one hand, and American ones on the other, without falling into complete agreement with either.

It is a matter of culture. You may as well argue taste. So, there are different approaches to conservation training between France and North America.

Concerning different routes, let me offer the following example of how one French colleague managed to gain her training. During her second year at university, a conversation with a friend led to an informal visit to a restoration shop, where she was introduced to her future employer. They actually discussed what working there might entail for her, but she hesitated to take the plunge and returned to university. Five months later, the idea of furniture conservation drew her back again to the shop, where they again discussed the possibility of her working there. With a remarkably modern turn of mind, the shop master encouraged her to remain in school, even if she sought to learn cabinetmaking and restoration by hands-on involvement. He foresaw that an academic background would provide an excellent foundation for the hand skills that she could learn only in a shop environment, and that each kind of knowledge would further inform the other. And that is exactly the path she chose.

For her, the program at the Institut National du Patrimoine, created by the French state to train both curators and conservator/restorers, was not an attractive option. It is an intense four-year course, soon to become a five-year course. Admission is tough, by competition, so you have to have had years of experience just to pass the entrance exams; there are the best instructors, and there are no tuition charges. What's not to like? Well, the students are not paid, either, so that she would have had to support herself in every other respect for four years. She judged the training experience there invaluable, but also unaffordable. Her alternative path was not easy; she was forced to stay completely focused to maintain her school marks while working sixteen hours a week in the shop, but she graduated without being in debt. That's a condition as desirable in France as over here. It wasn't easy, but it was possible; she found a way to obtain both her skills training and her academic background. That seems to be the common theme in becoming a furniture conservator: it isn't easy, but you have to find a way.

We have that much in common. What else we have in common is a search to identify and preserve what is authentic about the artifact being preserved. To me, the North American programs excel at applying the brakes to treatments, before treatments begin. "Nothing too much," as the Greeks said. There's a bit of Puritan restraint in the face of rococo exuberance in this comparison, but there are these cultural differences to notice. I think the point of travel, and of such exchanges as Furniture in France represents, is to experience the cultural differences by being there, and to come to see the point of a different point of view. France may not be perfect, but there is so much to admire.

A Comparison of Conservation Training Programs at the Institut National du Patrimoine & Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation

Mark J. Anderson

Furniture in France 2004 provided an opportunity to visit an internationally known professional training and research facility, the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), which is authorized by the French government for the training of both conservators and curators. France, like other countries, is struggling with issues of certification and training for their conservators, and a recent law passed by the French government, the *loi musée*, requires conservators who treat cultural patrimony to be legally certified if they work on any object overseen by government agencies or funded by public grants. Degrees conferred by the INP convey the right to treat cultural patrimony.

Training conservators with the appropriate level of craft, science, critical thinking, and management skills is a difficult endeavor, and the INP uses an approach that differs in many ways from the admission process and curriculum followed at the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC). The varied prerequisites and the well-established structure of both programs ultimately graduate conservators who have different levels of expertise in similar fundamental areas of training.

The INP program prerequisites and admission process (www.inp.fr) follows the European scheme. Students entering the program must hold the equivalent of a French baccalaureate degree (i.e., a secondary education degree), and they must also be between 20 and 30 years of age when applying. In France, the baccalaureate is usually conferred at age 18, but two or more years of preparation are often required, as the INP's entrance examination exceeds the level of what is typically taught for the baccalaureate. Before application to the INP, candidates often pursue work in an elected craft discipline, for instance, working in an atelier of a gilder, carver, or specialized art conservator.

The INP admission testing includes written and practical examinations in art history, chemistry, physics, drawing (technical or academic), color matching, manual skills, history and technology of materials, and foreign language: a total of 17 ½ hours. There is an interview by a panel of experts that evaluates the applicant's assessment of an artifact and a four-day practicum designed to gauge aptitude, previous training, and hand skills in a declared area. An applicant for the furniture specialty is required to build a miniature piece of furniture in the studios of the INP, starting with rough wood and progressing to a joined and finished piece of furniture. During our visit, we examined an impressive solid-wood and veneer armoire, fully functional on a miniature scale.

WUDPAC admission requirements (www.udel.edu/artcons) stipulate that the candidate must hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, preferably in science, studio art, art history, anthropology, or archaeology, and satisfy course requirements in several key areas pertaining to art conservation. Applicants must have successfully completed one full year each of inorganic and organic chemistry, all with laboratories, to satisfy the preprogram science requirement. Also required are a minimum of six classes in art history, museum studies, archaeology, or anthropology, and five classes selected from the studio arts and crafts, such as drawing, painting, three-dimensional design, printmaking, ceramics, jewelry, or woodworking.

In addition to the academic prerequisites, WUDPAC applicants must have completed at least 400 hours of conservation experience. Letters of reference from recognized conservation professionals addressing suitability for the field; career potential; and craft, communication, research, and problem-solving abilities are required. The range of preprogram work experience may extend from 10 weeks (i.e., 400 hours) to many years of work in a specific field. In 2001, WUDPAC established a prerequisite skill criterion for the furniture specialty. Applicants who major in furniture conservation must demonstrate basic competency in furniture making and woodworking.

My observations are based on a brief visit to the INP, so I am relying on the invaluable translations from their web site and the numerous queries posed to faculty by St  phanie Rabourdin, our French translator for *Furniture in France 2004*.¹ St  phanie is a practicing furniture conservator and PhD candidate at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne and is a 2004–05 Mellon Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I will paraphrase her comments describing the INP curriculum.

In the first year at the INP, students have coursework in science, art history, drawing, foreign language, computer skills, photography, and preventive conservation. One and a half days per week are devoted to work focused on the student's declared specialty. During the following summer, more preventive conservation work is carried out.

Second-year study includes biology and microbiology, the study of conservation history, and foreign language. The focus on one's specialty becomes greater this year, and two full days per week are spent in the workshop. Training in "old" or traditional techniques of workmanship also takes place during both the first and second years.

The third year at the INP focuses even more specifically on the specialty and the methods of conservation relating to that specialty, with continuing work in applied science and computer skills. Training in law and art history occurs in the third year. Two full days per week are devoted to time in the workshop, with the emphasis on more challenging projects. A three-month internship abroad takes place at the end of the third year.

¹ Email communications and telephone conversations conducted in fall 2004.

The fourth and final year (this program will soon be extended to five years) concentrates on completing a complex conservation project that may involve the demonstration of substantial expertise in manual skills along with complete documentation of the project. Specific upper-level lectures are held throughout this year.

In contrast, the WUDPAC program offers three years of graduate instruction, with the first year devoted to discrete 10- to 15-day units in paper, textiles, library materials, photographs, organic objects (including furniture), inorganic objects, and paintings. Four semesters of science are taken during the first year. Students also take two elective courses in connoisseurship, history of technology, or museum/material culture studies. Preventive conservation (15 days) is taught to all students during this year, and some elect this as a minor field of study during their second year. At the conclusion of the first year, WUDPAC fellows, with faculty advisement, declare an area of specialization.

After a ten-week summer work project, which may focus on assessment, preventive conservation, or conservation treatment, WUDPAC fellows begin the second year of study, emphasizing studio and laboratory work in their major. Training in the manual aspects of the specialty is carried out through tutorials, but advanced-level conservation science and history of technology courses continue, and a technical study is completed during this year. A second summer work project (often with an international focus) then takes place.

The third and final year is devoted to a treatment-oriented internship at a major museum or regional center, with a WUDPAC faculty and a host institution supervisor responsible for advanced training. There is no final culminating project as in the INP. The WUDPAC students present an illustrated talk to academic experts and members of the public describing their third-year work, supported by a comprehensive written and photographically documented portfolio. They must pass the oral examination administered by the advisory committee before the Master of Science Degree in Art Conservation is awarded.

When considering the two programs, one has to acknowledge the strong emphasis that the French place on predeveloped hand and craft skills in the declared specialty. Conservators-in-training enter the INP program with skills comparable to those of artisans holding the government *certificate d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP),² and the furniture-making practicum gauges the applicants at this level. Unlike the WUDPAC candidates, the INP students have the combined advantage of very strong preprogram craft skills and their further development through sustained studio practice over the course of at least four years of intensive training.³

Regarding science education, it appears that the INP is oriented toward practical applications used in treatment, whereas WUDPAC training incorporates a strong analytical instrumentation component as well as material science for conservation treatment applications. French conservators observed in other professional set-

² A certificate recognizing basic competence in a craft or trade.

³ The INP program will soon become a five-year course of study.

tings often relied on conservation scientists for analysis and scientific protocol that determined the technical aspect of treatment. This appeared to be the case even for UV microscopy and sample interpretations beyond the use of normal light microscopy. I observed conservators and scientists routinely collaborating in the larger institutions, with curators often overseeing significant aspects of conservation treatment.

The WUDPAC website (www.udel.edu/artcons) provides a general description of the six courses that make up the 18-credit science component taught in the first four semesters of the MS program. These courses include detailed study of inorganic and organic materials, with a focus on materials used by the artist and conservator and how the materials age and deteriorate over time. Because the WUDPAC program focuses on graduate-level instruction devoted to the development of treatment protocol, the WUDPAC graduate is trained in treatment research and analytical theory and obtains hands-on experience in the use of analytical equipment, enabling graduates to be informed collaborators with museum scientists.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF), UV-VIS spectroscopy, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR), Raman spectroscopy, gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC-MS), scanning electron microscopy with elemental analysis (SEM-EDS), X-radiography, IR reflectography, and UV and polarized light microscopy are required areas of instruction in the WUDPAC curriculum. Exposure to these analytical tools prepares the WUDPAC graduate to develop and critically assess treatment protocols and long-term stability issues for a wide range of artifacts.

Owing to the Master of Science degree requirements and the *broad-based* instruction in the art conservation specialty areas during the first year of study, WUDPAC fellows have a relatively short period of time to practice or develop advanced craft-based treatment skills in their major. These skills may be more fully developed in postgraduate fellowships or during the early years of professional practice. Postgraduate development of craft technique stands in contrast to the strong specialty craft skills that INP students possess upon graduation. What constitutes a suitable level of craft “mastery” is a topic that is becoming increasingly germane as restorers, specialty technicians, and conservators interact in the broader museum field and warrants continued discussion by conservation educators.

For me, an unexpected benefit of Furniture in France 2004 is a renewed interest in the tangible benefits of combining strong craft prerequisites with rigorous graduate training. For *appropriate* specialties this approach would yield a continuing supply of hands-on conservators with the scientific and connoisseurship experience for advanced decision making in art conservation. This amalgamation would represent the enormous strength of both the INP and WUDPAC programs.

The Extraordinary Gilded Wood of the Ancien Régime

Cynthia Moyer

The quality of craftsmanship of gilded wooden furniture, frames, and architectural interiors we found on our visit to France in May of 2004, particularly within Paris, is exceedingly fine. I bring to mind specifically our visits to the Musée Cognacq-Jay, the Musée Nissim de Camondo, and the Hôtel Beauharnais, now the German Embassy. In other urban centers, including Lyon and Bordeaux, where we visited their decorative arts museums, and in Nancy at the Musée Lorrain, it appeared to be decidedly less refined. In the Parlement de Rennes, dating from the late seventeenth century, the gilded and painted paneled chambers we saw after restoration following a devastating fire were grand and impressive. It became clear over the course of our travels that in rural domestic settings gilding was not used to embellish the often elaborate carving we found, such as on case furniture in Brittany, for instance. Other than on picture and mirror frames, paint was the preferable and affordable surface coating for room panels and their furnishings, as was apparent at the Château de Longpré near Grenoble and in Bordeaux, again at the Musée des Arts décoratifs. This stands to reason because outside of the church, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the period of the *Ancien Régime*, the best-quality rooms and furnishings incorporating gilding on wood were produced for royal patrons primarily within Paris and the Ile-de-France, who could well afford such extravagance. This rarified level of taste set a standard for the aristocracy and nobility throughout the court around Paris and the rest of the country. But even after the French Revolution and the temporary demise of the monarchy, the products of this extraordinary period of patronage were again embraced by certain citizens of the New Republic and Napoleon I's Empire. Furthermore, successful businessmen and entrepreneurs had always striven toward attaining this level of refinement in their houses. As the monarchy reestablished itself later on in the nineteenth century, an even bolder and more opulent display of wealth incorporating the finest craftsmanship and materials became sought after during the period of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie, as we saw at the opera house, the Palais Garnier, and at the Villa Ferrières, built by Baron James de Rothschild of the well-known banking family.

The demand for the production and the care of such high-quality goods has supported the painter and gilder's craft throughout the centuries, both in fabrication and restoration. It is still to this day executed by hand by the skilled craftsman or woman. In turn, their work remains inextricably tied to the joiner and woodcarver and to the designer and architect, all of whom have provided the wood chairs, consoles, frames, moldings and panels within architectural interiors and, later, modeled plaster substrates, which gilding embellishes.

Gilding and gilding restoration is still taught by the apprenticeship system in France and leans heavily on traditional materials and methods. Over the course of our visit it became clear that though the École Boulle teaches related crafts



Figure 1. Two giltwood fauteuils from the Sené suite in the collection at the Musée Nissim de Camondo.

like woodcarving, chair making, and upholstery, there is no formal instruction taking place at the school in gilding on wood. In addition, at the conservation training facility Institut National du Patrimoine (INP, formerly IFROA, the Institut Français pour le Restoration des Oeuvres d'Arts), while there is training for treatment of polychrome sculpture and panel paintings (which often incorporate water gilding techniques) and joined wooden objects, marquetry, and textiles, there is no department specializing in the conservation of gilded wooden decorative objects. The Centre de Recherche et de Restoration des Musées de France (CRRMF), with workshops at Versailles and at the Louvre, has gilding restoration taking place on site, but to the best of my understanding, those undertaking such work are subcontractors previously trained in the gilding craft. The analytical laboratories for the Monuments Historiques at Champs-sur-Marne mainly carry out studies on textiles and substrate architectural materials such as stone, metal, and wood and are concerned primarily with preventive

conservation. More recently, a group of trained gilders in a two-year certificate program, the *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*, have been coming into the work force having one year of academic training with the second year taking place in workshops as apprentices.

It became clear that it is in Paris alone that the pinnacle of refinement of the gilded surface was attained on a very finely carved support, exemplified by the work carried out during the reigns of Louis XIV through Louis XVI. We were witness to objects of this quality in the collection at the Musée Nissim de Camondo, which included a suite of seating furniture by Georges Jacob and one by Jean-Baptiste Claude Sené. (fig. 1) We were privileged to see the gilding restoration work being carried out on the extremely finely carved painted and gilded panels from the Hôtel de la Bouexière, now owned by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, being restored by the staff at the Atelier Robert Gohard. (fig. 2) In French gilding, only in Paris is the gesso recarved with such intricacy on such masterful woodcarving beneath. At the Parlement de Rennes, we visited the judicial chamber rooms dating from the late seventeenth century. The walls are covered in painted and



Figure 2. Water-gilding restoration on a panel from the Hôtel Bouexière in the Atelier Robert Gohard.

gilded panels framed with carved, gilded moldings of extraordinary quality and workmanship, and they are being restored with both oil-gilding and water-gilding methods by qualified ateliers whose proposals were granted based on a bidding system. We were guided throughout the project by Yves Gilbert, the owner of the woodworking firm working on three of the rooms, who also restored the carvings on the Minneapolis paneled room at Fabrice Gohard's atelier. The craft of gilding in France, this important and ubiquitous *métier*, is learned and passed down to and carried out by a select and exclusive group of craftspeople contributing to some of the finest decorative arts objects in the western world.

Soft Furnishings in France

Clarissa deMuzio

Furniture in France 2004 has been an amazing opportunity to immerse myself in not only the decorative arts of France but also its culture and society. The impression that I retain is of a country that values a well-developed social and professional hierarchy. The French appreciate and respect propriety and etiquette, and also the adherence to standards set up within and among organizations. This was most eloquently demonstrated by our organizers' introductions and expressions of gratitude at each venue that we visited. On a professional level, there are numerous organizations, such as Les Grand Ateliers au Couvent des Cordeliers, whose purpose it is to support and promote the best of traditional craft

in France. And in training programs, such as at l'École Boulle and the Chambre d'Apprentissage des Industries de l'Ameublement (CFA), the structure of training and the standards for completion of levels of mastery appear to be comprehensive.

Before the official FiF 2004 program began, I was able to visit two small ateliers. My interest in such businesses is twofold: I am always enthusiastic to see the physical plant of an operation like my own, and I am very curious about the training of people who work there. The first atelier specializes solely in soft furnishings, as I do. Soft furnishings might most efficiently be described as any textile fabrication meant for interior décor, which is not attached to a frame: draperies, cushions, loose covers, but not upholstery. (I was delighted not to have to explain this to anyone in France, as soft-furnishing fabrication is a well-defined specialty, such as marquetry or gilding.) The atelier is run by the daughter of the founder, and their work has been primarily for private residences, some as far away as Hong Kong and New York.

The workroom itself is really two small rooms in adjoining buildings. I was somewhat relieved to see that things were run in a similar way to that in my workroom. Work tables, sewing machines, fabric storage, etc., all familiar and understandable. I was mostly struck by the minimal space available for the large pieces that were being constructed. There must be projects completed in the tiny space that aren't seen in their entirety until installation.

In addition to the business owner, there were three women working. One woman was there as an apprentice; she is completing a training program. The other two employees are program graduates. The daughter owner, a program graduate, had served her apprenticeship not under her mother, as might have been expected, but with other workrooms. Objective training seemed to be very important and is considered in some way to add to the legitimacy of the business practice.

The second visit was to a very small upholstery shop that had one room in the back for sewing soft furnishings. It was there that I was able to get more of a glimpse of the hierarchy of craft training in France, and the frustration of the young graduates of training programs for whom work opportunities are fairly limited. The soft-furnishings work was clearly set up to augment the upholstery, but it is not the primary aspect of the workroom. There were two women sewing, one of whom had completed her training and was planning to take her final exams in June. She expressed her eagerness to find work outside of France, as she felt her prospects for long-term employment were very limited.

A third atelier, which I visited with FiF 2004, was La Maison Brazet. Rémy Brazet is a third-generation upholsterer. In addition to residential clients, M. Brazet has done work for important museums and historic interiors such as at Fontainebleau and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Although well grounded in traditional techniques, the workroom also does contemporary work using modern materials. M. Brazet's business has the largest scope of work of any of the workrooms I was able to visit, and the ethical discussion concerning restoration vs.



Figure 1. Upholsterer's needles at a work station at La Maison Brazet.

conservation has the most resonance relative to his work. (This is a topic for another paper, one I'm sure a fellow participant has approached.)

This workroom, still small by American standards, employs four women in the soft-furnishings workroom and five or more men upholstering. (fig. 1) All employees are either working through, or have completed, training programs. M. Brazet offers his employees a contract after a trial period. This may be the case with all of the workrooms. I hadn't thought to inquire about such a formal agreement at the other small businesses I visited. As with the other workrooms, I was impressed by the enormous amount of work being handled in the undersized spaces.

The quality of the workmanship in all of the workrooms was wonderful. Clearly, M. Brazet has the opportunity to work on more prestigious objects than the other ateliers, and the objects that are completed under his hand are superlative. However, in all cases the work was approached professionally, and the results were beautiful. (fig. 2)

I am in awe of the number of people who are program trained to produce such work. I was able to sneak a quick look in on the final exams at CFA where the students are each given the same task to perform in a set amount of time. For the upholstery students, a small side chair was to be built up and upholstered with show fabric and trim from a bare frame in 24 hours. The soft-furnishings students were fabricating elaborate swagged bed skirts and coverlets.

There is little or no interest in traditional techniques for soft furnishings in the United States outside of museum reproductions. While it is possible to take weekend workshops in some aspects of soft furnishings, most instruction is in how to make things with as little actual sewing as possible. New workroom supplies are introduced every year that are meant to take all of the craft out of drapery making, in particular, and replace it with "sew by numbers" fabrication. I find it very difficult to find anyone who is interested in sewing soft furnishings, let alone someone who actually knows how. I have received most of my training "on the job," as I have had the great fortune to be able to examine period objects in museum collections in order to learn traditional techniques. I have learned further by taking apart for reuse draperies made by mid 20th-century craftsmen such as Ernest LoNano.



France has a tradition of training craftsmen. The areas of study are specific, and there are standards of achievement that merit professional recognition. Training is rigorous and exams for certification or graduation are demanding. I have looked into the Association for International Practical Training in Columbia, MD, as a means for inviting a program-trained soft furnisher to work with me, as I am very interested in furthering the connection I was able to make with the French profession of soft-furnishings fabrication.

Figure 2. A decorative element for a set of draperies, made from the border trim used on the draperies, made by the soft-furnishings side at La Maison Brazet.

Assessing the Development of Upholstery Conservation in France

Nancy Britton

During Furniture in France 2004, as we visited École Boulle, the INP, the Chambre de l'Apprentissage (my own side trip) and several ateliers, I could not avoid contrasting the current state of upholstery and furniture (its practice and training), and its reconstitution within the conservation framework and the larger cultural environment, with what has been going on in this country. In any professional realm, there are the *individual practitioners* who each learn to practice their profession according to their ethics, training, and skills; their *field*, consisting of the professionally agreed-on ethics and hierarchy; the *employer/client base*, composed of both institutions and individuals; and, finally, the *cultural influences* that bring to bear social and contextual issues on each of the above (individual practitioner, field, employer/clients). Significant differences exist within each of these four areas between the Americans and French, resulting in each country responding differently to the advent and development of the conservation profession. By contrast, upholstery's development as a conservation field has striking similarities.

Place and Structure of Conservation and Restoration in France

During the FiF trip, as we visited the ateliers, institutions, and training programs for restorers and conservators, many of the differences between the American and

French systems and their respective pressure points were exposed. The French have had a long tradition of fine furniture making since the 17th century, and as a necessity for maintaining these objects, fine furniture restoration as a separate profession has evolved. In addition, we visited galleries for contemporary furniture makers. These highly skilled artisans were using traditional techniques in expressive and innovative ways, indicating that contemporary furniture design and construction were still appreciated and patronized in French culture.

In relation to other European countries today, France has somewhat isolated itself in the last two decades from the general movement toward embracing conservation as a separate profession. This is consistent with France's historical furniture market, which was largely internal (royal-sponsored and consumed). Some restorers have embraced conservation techniques at the shop practice level, an introduction that has occurred in several ways. Foreign clients have requested specific conservation protocols that are consistent with their approaches (i.e., conservation-sensitive American institutions patronizing French restorers for their skill levels), or apprentices introduce these techniques from their training, or the restorer's personal proclivity has led him to adopt practices that are more sympathetic to his ethics as an individual practitioner. Evidence for this flow of information is exemplified in the AIC-sponsored French and American Collaboration colloquium in October of 2003, in which a French upholstery and soft-furnishings businessman presented a suite of seating furniture treated for an American institution, using variations on long-established upholstery conservation techniques developed by American textile, furniture, and upholstery conservators.

On the cultural level, the French support and encourage professional furniture making and restoration with extensive specialized schooling at École Boulle. This and other institutional programs have roots extending back to the apprenticeship training of the 18th century. The individual practitioners (furniture restorers and upholsterers) are largely self-employed, with only a few employed by large government cultural institutions. Cultural institutions are the most prestigious and well-paying clients and contribute to defining the status and hierarchy of the individual practitioners (the French ateliers). To date, restorers and a small subset that have either embraced conservation practices or have entered the conservation training programs subsequent to the traditional restorer's training have comfortably shared their field and client base.

Upholstery and Soft Furnishings

Of the trades being taught at École Boulle, I was most struck by how far the training for upholstery students has strayed from the original conception of the 18th-century upholsterer. This perception may reflect upholstery's "drift" over time; it is practiced very differently today from the way it was in the 18th century. Today's furniture restorers may be holding more of the direct legacy of the 18th-century *ébénistes* and *menuisiers* than their upholstery counterparts are.

In France, upholstery is taught in the trade schools, schools that often include a cabinetry program and a soft-furnishings (drapery) program. (figs. 1 & 2) In the ateliers, upholstery and soft furnishings are often paired (as in Rémy Brazet's workshop), and occasionally the soft furnishings are specialized and large enough to constitute an entire practice on their own. Artisans continue to practice traditional methods. By contrast, in the U.S., upholstery shops are generally either stand-alone sole proprietorships or slightly larger operations (under twelve employees) with widely varying practices and skills (i.e., the custom shop). A few of the largest upholstery businesses undertake the making of custom draperies, which are just as often part of very large shade and window-dressing businesses whose sewn draperies are outsourced to large-scale sewing fabrication factories servicing multiple clients. Training takes place either on the job, or occasionally in an adult education class offered by an accomplished upholsterer, or in a short technical training course. While this range of business structures is also present in France, there remains a greater emphasis on and cultural appreciation for the atelier, or custom shop, and its attendant traditional practices.

In spite of the traditional training in France, upholstery lacks any separate niche in the conservation training facility (the INP), which has a furniture and textile conservation department. French museums patronize traditional upholsterers (such as Brazet), and some prominent institutions with large furniture collections retain traditional upholsterers on staff (as at Versailles). As I was told at École Boulle,



Figure 1. École Boulle: upholstery samples in progress.



Figure 2. École Boulle: different forms in progress.

when I inquired about the content of the three-year curriculum that is weighted toward modern materials, most of the upholstery students will go into industry, that is, work in a factory setting rather than a custom shop. (fig. 3)

The Effects of France's Shift to Conservation

The current tensions between restorers and conservation/conservators have occurred because pressures in the wider culture have disrupted the professional field. The government requiring its institutions to use certified conservators has redefined the field formerly occupied solely by the restorers. This external occurrence from the top has created tensions among the individual practitioners as they scramble for their identity in a new aspect of their field, conservation. The recent government preference for conservation has also reduced the restorer's accessibility to a major and prestigious market.

The trickle-down effect is that the newly defined field of the conservator has yet to be fully professionalized (code of ethics, professional organizations, etc.). The individual practitioner is struggling with mission, values, and new certifications. The intra-field conflict has led to personal discussion and arguments; witness the recent article and subsequent discussion between a group of traditional, long-established and highly esteemed restorers (many of whom are allowed to function as conservators) and a recently trained furniture conservator (J. Perfertini, "De l'ébéniste au restaurateur du patrimoine mobilier" and the response by Un Collectif d'Artisans Restaurateurs-conservateurs attentifs à la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine in "Lettre ouverte à un quarteron d'intégristes"). While both conservators and restorers have shared the same field to date, now they are struggling to separate into different fields and possibly a different market. The professional conservators' organization is still nascent with regard to these issues.



Figure 3. Students at work on modern materials at École Boulle.

The professional realm of the conservator is now established in France. When government institutions established a policy recently to patronize only conservators, a shift occurred in the cultural values and beliefs, requiring the government institutions to display a preference within the field of restorers/conservators for the field of conservation. Interestingly, this major shift is occurring primarily among the furniture restorers. Textile conservators are not in competition with another powerful sharer of their professional field, and the role of conservation is more defined. Upholstery as a conservation specialty is only on the brink of being defined, and it may yet be awhile before an upholstery-trained restorer becomes conservation-trained.

The Development of Upholstery Conservation in the U.S. and France

Upholstery conservation has been one of the most recent specialties to develop in the U.S. For a new field to develop, an awareness of the need to preserve these original materials must occur. This happened in the U.S. early in the 1980s. Initially, the first conservators to develop an interest in the conservation of original upholstery materials were furniture conservators, who were the professional group in closest proximity to these materials. Relatively quickly, textile conservators entered the field, as the materials and techniques are most closely akin to the practice of textile conservation.

Recently, this process has been mirrored at the INP, which has both textile and furniture conservation training programs. A furniture conservator-in-training with no background or skills in upholstery is taking on a project for which techniques and materials lie outside his skill set. The question is, why is this happening again in another culture, where trade skills for upholstery are alive and well? And in a context where there is a recognized textile conservation lab and training program?

I suspect that several factors are in motion here. The first might be that recognizing the need to conserve original upholstery materials has yet to make the list of conservation concerns in French institutions. Accepting and developing the upholstery and furnishings textile specialty depends on cultural institutions recognizing and using the practitioners of this specialty. Even though a major furnishings atelier, Brazet, has used upholstery conservation techniques in their work for American institutions, they do not use these techniques for their French institutional clients. Of interest here is that the preservation of original upholstered material is beginning in a conservation training program, one with both a textile and furniture component.

Some of the resistance to focusing on the conservation of furnishings may be that cultural institutions' furnishings restorations support the traditional Lyon silk-weaving industries.

Other factors are less tangible. Since France's cultural institutions are predominantly government run, there is little room for diverse solutions among individual sites. The long history of multiple and comprehensive restorations has sometimes resulted in little original furnishing material remaining, resulting in less obvious and less accessible opportunities for studying original techniques and materials. Upholstery and textile furnishings are, after all, some of the most fragile objects and subject to a level of deterioration that significantly alters them from their original opulent appearances. Of most concern is that the lack of regard for a prerequisite of accomplished technique prior to treating original upholstery may be a bellwether. This suggests that there is a lessening regard and emphasis on hand skills in French conservation training and the conservation community when compared with the traditional restorers' emphasis. This is similar to what we have experienced in this country in the fields of textiles, furniture, and upholstery.

Trends in Conservation Training and Upholstery Conservation

Textile conservation has a long tradition of recognizing specialties within it: tapestries, ecclesiastical textiles, costume, archaeological textiles, and ethnographic textiles. Increasingly, institutions and clients in this country seek after developed upholstery conservation skills. France is in a good position, with its long-standing trade schools, to utilize the specialized training in upholstery and to encourage those graduates who exhibit the necessary skills and propensities for conservation to seek further training in the established conservation schools where both textiles

and furniture are being taught. While at the INP, we saw examples of the hand skills of applicants to the programs, a required part of the application process.

Other European countries with long-established conservation training traditions are moving into upholstery conservation from the textile conservation end more rapidly (Switzerland and Germany). Those with established conservation professions and strong traditional upholstery trade programs are moving directly into upholstery conservation as a specialty of textile conservation, but demanding some traditional training in upholstery techniques (the UK and beginning in Sweden).

In the U.S., in contrast, the pool of applicants to conservation schools has increasingly shown diminished hand skills necessary for the specializations of textiles and furniture. The current cultural pressure here (job market, institutions who hire fewer conservators and need generalists) is for less specialization. Conservation training programs are responding by designing their curriculums for more general conservation backgrounds, including environmental and storage issues, and incorporating more familiarity with scientific and analytical methods and general materials science. Most American training programs acknowledge that if hand skills are not present at the student's entry, the program's demanding curriculum will not permit significant development prior to graduation.

Conclusions

A major difference between the U.S. and France is that in the U.S. the individual practitioners introduced the shift to conservation. This could occur because of the fluid field definitions of the individual practitioners, the responsiveness of the cultural institutions, and the development of training programs. In France, conservation has been mandated from the top down with government regulations. The practice of restoration is deeply embedded and could only respond to changes in its significant client base, the government institutions. The French institutions have, in turn, been responding to the pressure exerted by the increasing interdependency of the international and European museum/cultural property community who had already embraced and established conservation practices. Many conservation ideas have infiltrated the manner in which some French practitioners in traditional businesses approach cultural objects in collections.

As art conservation internationalizes, the evolved approach of the U.S. and the hand-skill strengths of the French conservation community may be viewed as complementary to and as resources for one another. This may prove to be particularly important in high hand-skill specialties, such as textile, furniture, and upholstery conservation.

Reference

Gardner, Howard, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon. 2001. *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. New York: Basic Books. The framework for examining and contrasting the French and American systems was drawn from the above resource, one I highly recommend.

Workshop Aesthetics

Mark Harpainter

“The value of beauty, then, is that along with human contact it enables us to break out of the otherwise impregnable spiritual isolation of which every one of us is born and to feel ourselves at home in the world. Beauty and friendship enable us to get outside ourselves and to live as we ought to live, in concord with the world we are part of, and to feel ourselves part of it.”

—David Pye, *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design*

Whatever forms of spiritual isolation the members of FiF 2004 were breaking out of, we all certainly found a welcoming abundance of beauty and friendship everywhere we traveled in France, but nowhere more so than in the many ateliers and workshops we visited. Most of these were in and around Paris, encompassing a spectrum of both commercial and private, high tech and low, traditional and modern. They encompassed a wonderful variety of spaces, from small off-street jewel-like ateliers, to elegant Parisian storefronts, to royal palaces housing state-run conservation laboratories. Much of the trip was about visiting primary sources, a sort of pilgrimage really, and placing our own memories and experiences with

French objects in a living cultural context.

I have always regarded the opportunity to visit an artist or artisan’s studio or workspace to be among the rare opportunities and great privileges in life. To enter such a space, unlike viewing a static collection, is to experience a living, breathing, dynamic place full of possibility and potential, the crucible for the creative process. Because these places are alive and constantly changing, the patterns of use are visible everywhere.

In fact, they are in a sense quite concentrated, and being in them elicits a sort of detective-like curiosity, at least among those of us who make our livelihoods in the same sort of venue. One’s attention is inevitably drawn to the scraps and bits, tests and trials, patterns and models, shavings, drips, sweat, spills, curiosities, and dust that collect like tide pools in the corners (even though we assume there has been a little tidying up for the foreign visitors). Our roaming gaze takes in the interesting objects in various states of repair and, of course, the tools that make that process possible. We observe the way they are



Figure 1. The carving atelier of Bruno Desnoux.



Figure 2. Handworking detail and finish at Garnier Hardware.



Figure 3. The wooden hand-drawn wagon used by the father of Patrick George, hanging from the rafters of his veneer warehouse.

organized and parked, the order and proximity to the bench where most of the work happens. Some tools used constantly almost without thinking, others used occasionally only on the most careful reflection or perhaps after a serendipitous flash of insight. Other tools have been adjusted or modified carefully by the user for a very specific task, handled with reverence, the way a musician tunes an instrument.

The carving tools are all laid out, like piano keys ready to sound just the right notes, on the carver's bench in Bruno Desnoues's studio. (fig. 1) The metal chasing tools are clustered in small cans like satellites around the vises at Deville Bronziers or Garnier Hardware. (fig. 2) There is the quiet rustle of incomparable silks and textiles across impeccably clean worktables, the purr of the sewing machine or attentive silence of fitting and hand-stitching in Rémy Brazet's upholstery studio. One hears the carefully controlled scraping of the recarver's tools and sees the abundant natural light illuminating the frosting of white dust infusing everything in Fabrice Gohard's gilding workshop. And in almost every studio of character there are the old, venerable, retired tools, now given a place just to remember the service they gave in familiar skilled hands and the sheer pleasure and satisfaction accumulated with their use. One has to look a little more carefully to find these old friends, as they are out of the normal traffic patterns now, like the old wooden hand-drawn wagon Patrick George pointed to in the rafters of his veneer warehouse, once used by his father to haul veneer around the streets of Paris and out to Versailles. (fig. 3)

It's probably a little too easy for us Americans to romanticize the French workshops we visited, most of them small and intimate in scale and exuding a sense of European tradition. Yet who could resist such reveries, when approaching quiet inner courtyards off the

bustling streets with vines climbing the walls, windows admitting natural light, people going about their work with quiet concentration. At Michel Jamet's workshop, with five or six benches, a number of younger restorers worked on a variety of projects from Boulle-work veneer repairs to polishing with shellac. As was the case everywhere we visited, they were happy to share and relate what they were doing. Monsieur Jamet patiently and thoughtfully answered all questions, later leading little groups into his musty basement veneer storage, even handing out a few samples to all.

Speaking as one who has worked daily in private practice for twenty-two years in an old studio with lots of character and patina, the emotional connections and fraternity experienced with the access to these wonderful spaces was uniquely pleasurable and satisfying on a very visceral level. In an attempt to compare these places with those here in America, I am struck mostly by a sense of commonality and familiarity, with the predictable yet fascinating variations in tradition, style, and detail. As we gathered toward the end of each visit around a table laid with a wonderful spread of food and wine, the brimming sense of pride and generosity from our hosts at times seemed boundless. We found in all these special places, more than anything, a common ground and easy sharing of a simple love of life and livelihood with our French counterparts and colleagues—the true value of beauty and friendship.

Tips and Suggestions

Alfred Sharp

While there were innumerable instances of sublime inspiration during our travels, some of the finest “Aha!” moments came from hearing the specific little tips that often just drop casually out of a discussion. Many might have been considered “common knowledge,” but following are some of the tips that struck many of us as marvelously arcane and/or useful. Thanks to “Dahveed” Bayne for submitting the cultural tips here included, delightful reminders that these trips are about much more than workplace exchanges.

To rehydrate old glue on marquetry, brush on a mix of 2/3 bone and 1/3 nerve glue. (I had never heard of nerve glue before, and apparently most others hadn't either.) Sand when dry, then begin polishing.

To flatten veneers, brush on a mix of 10 parts water, 1 part alcohol, and 1/2 part glycerin. (Any more glycerin might cause problems with glue adhesion.) Apply pressure at about 50° C (similar to Tage Frid's formula).

During FiF 2001, the group saw an Hache desk taken apart and found that the drawer bottoms were made from crotch walnut. The restorer claimed that using knot wood was good because it prevented the thin boards from splitting.

Use parchment to line drawers so wool sweaters, etc., don't snag.

Place heat-sensitive fax paper over lost veneer spots and rub with a brass rod to make a template for the repair piece needed.

Never use applied gold leaf to gild a royal mount—the lap lines will show eventually.

Mercury gilding involves crushing gold leaf in a mortar and pestle, then mixing it thoroughly into (obviously liquid) mercury. The mixture is painted onto a bronze mount, then a hot flame is applied, vaporizing the mercury and leaving the gold behind. Several applications may be necessary. Clearly, great care must be taken because of the poisonous nature of the fumes.

Use obsidian to burnish gilded bronze mounts.

How to distinguish electroplated gold from mercury/fire gilding: Electroplated gilding stops sharp at the back edge of the mount; with mercury gilding you can see the brush marks lapping over onto the back.

Wear sabots (preferably fashioned from birch wood) when using a broad axe.

Sandarac varnish (asserted to be able to bring original colors of the wood back to the surface, certainly beautiful whatever the case) is made from the following: 390g ethanol, 77g sandarac resin, 31g *mastic de larmes* (“mastic tears,” one assumes pre-dissolved in turpentine, 1 to 3), 15g gum elemi, and 15g oil of lavender. Sandarac must be applied with a brush; it cannot be padded on, although a little sandarac, heavily diluted with alcohol, can be used with a pad and rottenstone to do the first application to fill the pores. Push hard, then clean with more alcohol and scuff sand. Brush on three to four more coats, sanding between each coat. If you wish to polish the final surface, use a greater amount of shellac on your pad than sandarac, to prevent sticking.

Always serve a sauterne with fois gras.

Boulle work is applied with fish glue. Don’t remove the tarnish from the back of the brass; it helps the glue stick better.

A garage door opener makes a good drawbridge activator. (Château de Longpré)

Faux tortoiseshell is made with cow horn. (Never use the plastic stuff; it doesn’t last.) The best part of the horn is the inner surface of the tubular portion of the horn, which is softened in boiling water, then peeled to about 1 mm thick. The horn sheet is sanded, then polished with turpentine and Tripoli. A paste of lime and urine(!) is applied in spots to both sides of the horn veneer, to create a sense of depth. The paste chemically burns the horn, and in about four hours the spots will appear.

Water gilding should always be done on a tilted surface, so that water flows away from the freshly gilded areas, and from top to bottom so new water doesn’t get on earlier gilding.

Gesso carving tools are not tempered, just quench hardened, hence are resharpened very often. A new tool has steel extending to the very back of the handle, so

that it can be advanced, reshaped, and sharpened many times.

Hand looms can accommodate a limitless number of different colors of thread, machine looms only 16.

80% of Prella's silk comes from Brazil and environs; Chinese silk is no longer of adequate quality.

A sonogram can measure insect activity deep within wooden parts.

In restoration, make sure your saw makes the same thickness saw kerf as the original maker's saw made. (fig. 1)

You can use Nivea body lotion to clean ivory.

To discourage people from sitting in historic chairs, use stiff, hard upholstery to make them uncomfortable; then supply comfortable, modern chairs as well so guests will be less likely to use the historic ones.

Tie your babies into cradles and then hang the ensemble from a peg on the wall to keep them away from rats.

The all-time best is from lumber and veneer supplier Patrick Georges (approximate age 60), while hanging fifteen feet in the air from a veneer crate, with one foot on a tipping sawhorse on top of another stack of lumber: "Vous devez être sportif pour cette metier." (You must be adventurous for this profession).



Figure 1. The virtue of this saw is that it can be easily registered against a very broad guiding surface, assuring a very clean and accurate cut. Any laid-out line, angled cut, or even compound angles can be located at the bench or jig top and sawed without any fussy setup or gauging. A fixture such as a shooting board would be the best way to use this saw, but by no means essential if the bench top is flat and square to the vise.

Conservation of Boulle Marquetry

Hugh Glover

I collected information on French methods used in the conservation/restoration of Boulle-style marquetry surfaces with veneers of tortoiseshell, horn, brass, pewter, copper, etc., during our visits to a private restoration shop, a national conservation lab, a national conservation training program, a college for applied crafts, and a veneer supplier:

- ❖ Atelier Jamet, a private furniture restoration/conservation shop. Michel Jamet, owner, 43 rue des Cloys, Paris 75018, France.
- ❖ Ateliers de Versailles, a government-sponsored conservation lab. Petite Ecurie du Roy – 2 avenue Rockefeller, Versailles 78000, France. www.chm.unipg.it/chimngen/network/lbtech/LOUVRE.html
- ❖ Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), a national conservation training program. 150 avenue Président Wilson, Saint Denis La Plaine 93210, France. www.inp.fr/
- ❖ École Boulle, a college with applied craft training. 9 rue Pierre Bourdan, Paris 75012, France. www.ecole-boulle.org
- ❖ J. George, S.A., veneer sawyer and supplier of wood veneer, tortoiseshell, horn, etc. Patrick George, owner, 96–100 avenue Galliéni, Bagnolet 93170, France. www.george-veneers.com.

Old treatments

Many historic Boulle-style furniture objects have been altered in the past or taken apart and reassembled for copying and study. Twenty and more years ago, conservation treatments were more invasive and included lifting of large areas of veneer, replacement of substrates, and use of less reversible adhesives. Abrasives have also been used on many exposed surfaces for leveling and polishing, resulting in thin veneers and loss of engraved detail. A cabinet at Ateliers de Versailles, for example, had interior drawer fronts that retained crisp engraving and old varnish, while outside surfaces had thinned veneers and faint engraving.

Veneer removal

It has been speculated that the acidity of the oak substrate may contribute to the common lifting-veneer condition. Removal of metal and shell veneers is avoided in all but the most extreme treatments. If sections of veneer must be removed, then if possible, just one veneer type is removed, using methods appropriate for that material (e.g., nonaqueous for shell). Veneer removal is very slow and painstaking, completed with thin metal blades and alcohol, after the surface has been faced with fine woven textile and neoprene adhesive.

Tortoiseshell

The import of tortoiseshell has been regulated since the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Old-stock tortoiseshell is still in use, and French restorers are apparently entitled to supplies of confiscated shell for use on museum objects. J. George supplies old-stock tortoiseshell and is licensed to export (except to the U.S.), but his stock is fast diminishing. Imitation plastic tortoiseshell is considered too regular in color and markings, and restorers generally prefer cow horn, which can be custom colored.

Tortoiseshell plates (scutes) are flattened with moisture in a press, thinned with cabinet scrapers, and prepared for fret sawing by adding a wood veneer backing with fish glue. The top view of the shell enables the selection of markings for matching purposes. A tracing is applied before sawing on a marquetry bench or scroll saw (see “Sawing,” below). Any necessary color (red, blue/indigo, carmine, green, etc.) on the underside of the shell (or horn) is applied with pigment in white glue (PVA emulsion). Originally, pigments or colored paper were applied with protein glue.

Horn

Horn as a substitute for tortoiseshell was researched by E. Grall (Grall 2000), in a final paper at INP. Grall notes an 18th-century patent for preparing horn to imitate tortoiseshell; also, horn veneer has been used since at least the 17th century, and it is found on pieces otherwise veneered in tortoiseshell. J. George describes the best horn as coming from Madagascar, but supplies are depleted and a better source now might be Texas. Cow horn is prepared by removing the tip, cutting it open, pressing it flat with hot water and press, slicing it to the desired thickness with a bandsaw, scraping it with a cabinet scraper, and polishing it with tripoli or Micro-mesh® with mineral spirits. An opened horn is about 5 mm thick, and the interior face is clearer and more desirable. An old recipe for coloring clear horn veneer is being investigated at INP, involving a caustic paste of lime, urine, and rice, applied to both horn sides to achieve depth of color.

Brass

Brass sheet is stocked in different thicknesses and different alloys for color matching. The outline of missing veneer can be traced by rubbing a brass stylus on fax paper positioned over the area of loss, or with a laser photo. The new brass is sandwiched between two wood veneers with white glue, and a paper design is glued on top in preparation for sawing with marquetry bench or scroll saw. Distorted original brass veneer is carefully removed from its substrate and flattened between a polished steel plate and hammer, and any nail holes are similarly closed.

Sawing

Two efficient saw devices are in use for cutting marquetry packets or single pieces of veneer; a marquetry bench (hand-operated horizontal saw and foot-operated vise, (fig. 1) or an electric-powered, cast iron, over-arm scroll saw with a vertical



Figure 1. A student at École Boulle operating a marquetry bench. The jaws of the vise have been modified to reduce kerf gap.

saw blade inside a solid table. Veneer packets are secured with nails, tape, and/or glue, and small tape tabs or spots of glue are inserted through sawn slots to continue to hold the packets together during sawing. The width of the saw blade is matched to the kerf of the original work being copied.

Gluing

Cold fish glue appears to be universally used to secure old or new veneers. The glue for tortoiseshell may be lightly darkened with pigments, probably to contribute to the color at the kerf gap. Old animal glue beneath lifted veneers is generally left in place in order to maintain the level and to preserve historic detail. The old glue and the back side of the veneer are cleaned with water before regluing with new fish glue. Old glue would more likely be removed from areas of missing veneer that are due to be replaced. The back side of detached or lifting brass veneer may, or may not, be lightly scraped to remove oxidation, depending on the conservator, and it is cleaned with water before gluing with fish glue. We saw veneer on shaped surfaces clamped with cauls of unheated sand bags, and heard a description of cast resin forms for cauls.

Polishing

If varnish is to be renewed or added, then the assembled marquetry is final polished with charcoal powder or Micro-mesh®. New varnish coatings are usually shellac applied with a pad (*varnis au tampon*) and worked to fill crevices and to produce a final, smooth finish.

Conclusion

Decorative marquetry has been popular in France for centuries, and each decade has witnessed superlative craftsmanship in its design and production. We saw that those skills continue today through teachers and students of traditional techniques, contemporary makers, restorers, and the conservation profession.

Reference

Grall, Elizabeth. 2000. "Etude et restauration d'une épinette de Löwe, 1678, du Musée de la Musique. Recherche d'un matériau de substitution à l'écaille de tortue."

Fabrication of 18th- and 19th-Century Gilt Bronzes and Their Care in France

Julie Wolfe

French bronze workers were esteemed craftsmen in the 18th and 19th centuries, and their skills were highly valued and specialized. The French guild system dictated who could work on bronzes, and before 1776, they separated the *fondeurs-ciseleurs* (casters) from the *ciseleurs-doreurs* (gilders). It is apparent that the *ébénistes* (furniture makers) worked on mounts in close transaction with the bronze workers. Unraveling the process of production can be complicated when numerous craftsmen were involved; for example, the mounts for a Benneman secretary have been referenced as having numerous craftsmen carrying out the different steps, including a sculptor, chaser, gilder, caster, and moldmaker. Because of the breadth of collaborative influence in the production of gilt bronzes, as well as the fact that mounts are rarely signed, ascribing authorship and firm authentication can be a challenge. Furthermore, original and later surface treatments, past and recent cleanings, and possible reuse can complicate our true understanding of their initial appearance and affect the resulting strategy for their preservation.

Gilt bronzes were predominantly cast, and while they have been referred to by French metal workers as "bronze doré"—implying a gilt bronze containing copper and tin—numerous technical studies show the base alloy to be a brass containing copper and zinc. Early references point to the use of brass for amalgam gilding, for example, Boulton (1760–1770), who recommended using an alloy with 5% zinc, or d'Arcet (1818), who recommended 18% zinc, 3% tin, and 1.5% lead. When visiting Garnier in Paris, a furniture and architectural hardware company that began in 1832, the interest in current fabrication techniques that distinguish modern hardware from the 18th or 19th centuries was addressed. As the company utilizes at least three different foundries for their work, they explained how alloys were chosen by the foundry based on the intended application and finishing required for the hardware. We were given a sample of cast brass during our site visit that has subsequently been analyzed in the Museum Research Laboratory of the Getty Conservation Institute using X-ray fluorescence, and was found to contain around

31% zinc, less than 1% tin, 2% lead, and traces of antimony, nickel, silver, and iron. In comparison, we see on average around 19% zinc, 1% tin, 1% lead, and traces of antimony, nickel, silver, iron, and arsenic on Baroque gilt bronzes from furniture mounts and decorative arts in the Getty Museum's collection. The modern Garnier alloy shows higher zinc content and lower levels of trace impurities as compared with the Baroque brasses. With continued work building alloy databases, we may improve our technical analyses of gilt bronzes.

While electroplating has been used increasingly since the mid-19th century and is now the predominant method, prior to then mercury amalgam gilding was the most common method applied by the French craftsmen. The technique for amalgam gilding has been well documented in the literature, and although the technique is now rarely used, the Furniture in France group was able to visit a Parisian bronzier, the Atelier Deville, which still "fire gilds," and Messrs. Deville provided a demonstration of the process. Located in the Faubourg St. Antoine section with artisan workshops still clustered together as they were in the 18th century, the Devilles' shop receives as-cast bronzes for chasing and finishing. He sends the bronzes to an electroplating shop for gilding most of the time but does occasionally do fire gilding in house. Both electroplated and amalgam gilt bronzes can be chased, burnished, and surface enhanced the same way; Deville described how the amalgam gilt bronzes, however, always have a greater richness and flexibility in finishing. He uses heat treatments to redden the tonality, and chemical baths such as potassium-based solutions to clean and enhance the color of the gold. There are numerous references for surface enrichments of gilt metals describing a range of techniques such as chasing, heat treatments, acids, and varnishes. Often, surface enhancements were done to avoid the more costly approach of repeated amalgam gilding, mostly done to add greater richness on bronzes for royal collections. Ungilt and only-varnished bronzes were common in the 18th century, however, original surface coatings as such are rarely found.

The cleaning and restoration of gilt bronzes started even during the time that they were made, as there are archived work orders from the 18th and 19th centuries contracting bronze workers to restore bronzes by regilding. There is no one preferred method used by American conservators for cleaning gilt bronzes, as the approach may range from minimal solvent cleaning to even partial or complete regilding. Few publications unify our understanding of the best approach to cleaning gilt metals. During the course of our travels in France, it was interesting to observe conservation approaches for gilt bronzes. Of the many collections visited, it was noted that institutions tend to want the gilt bronzes cleaned to restore brilliance to the gold surface. Parisian furniture restorer Michel Jamet discussed the cleaning of gilt bronze using soap, water, and a proprietary cleaner called "M. Propre" ("Mr. Clean"—not to be confused with the American product). Gilt-bronze mounts on lights and mounts on a Benneman commode at the Château de Fontainebleau, as well as mounts on a Riesener commode at the Ateliers de Versailles, had been cleaned by conservators using Panama wood. (figs. 1 & 2) Panama wood (*Quillaja saponaria*), also known as soapbark, appears to be



Figures 1 & 2. Left: Gilt-bronze mount on lamp at Fontainebleau that has not been cleaned. Right: Gilt-bronze mount on lamp at Fontainebleau that has been cleaned using Panama wood.

commonly used in France to clean gilt bronzes. The inner bark of Panama wood contains a detergent which is around 9% saponin—a water-soluble glucoside. The botanical name is derived from the Incan word *quillean*, meaning “to wash,” as the Incans used it as a natural detergent. When added to warm water, a frothy, soapy solution forms, and preparations made in the Getty conservation laboratory showed a mildly acidic solution with a pH of 5. It was also interesting to see it used as a wetting agent at the Atelier Deville to wet their obsidian while burnishing. Reflecting on the fabrication and care of gilt bronzes during the Furniture in France study trip has strengthened the understanding that conservators and curators must appreciate original appearances in order to greatly improve their care and conservation.

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Conservation Upholstery in France

Giséle Haven

The most rewarding moment of the study trip for me was the revelation that upholstery conservation was officially recognized in France. We visited the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), which provides high-level training for curators and conservators of cultural heritage. Founded in 1900, the Institut merged in 1996 with the Institut de Formation des Restaurateurs des Oeuvres d'Art (IFROA). There, Michel Jamet, who had so generously welcomed us to his private atelier the week before, is responsible for the specialties associated with furniture. Under his direction, and with coaching by Xavier Bonnet, one of his students, Amaël Gohier, is researching and developing techniques of upholstery conservation. This is a very important new curriculum that goes against the grain of the traditional way upholstered furniture is still being treated nowadays in the museums of France. Routinely, the frame is stripped of any remaining material and reupholstered using traditional materials and methods that are taught in the national schools like l'École Boulle. When the nailing surfaces are too damaged to sustain the stress of a new generation of nails, they are sawed off and replaced by strips of new wood glued to the frame.

The conservation of the bedroom furniture of Thierry de Ville d'Avray that Rémy Brazet executed for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was the ground-breaking project in which many of the most gifted French restorers collaborated, including Michel Jamet and Xavier Bonnet. To my knowledge, this project was the first one executed in France using noninvasive techniques.

Knowing that these techniques have been used in the U.S. and England for more than a decade, it is interesting at this turning point to revisit the convictions that have prevented noninvasive upholstery from being practiced in France. I have had many discussions on this subject with my French upholsterer friends, Claude Ossut and Joel Bernard, who are retired professors of upholstery at l'École Boulle. The last of these discussions took place at the end of our trip at the restaurant Chez Jenny in Paris where we had invited our hosts and friends for a farewell

party. I enjoy these discussions; they are stimulating and fun. Arguments have been a feature of French culture ever since the Jesuits started teaching disputation in the French universities during the Renaissance.

The positions are well established, the discussion is often very heated, ridicule and verbal intimidation are fair play, losing one's temper is tolerated, but no one is expected to be convinced easily and to change position: My friends do not recognize the value of noninvasive techniques on historical frames. Their reluctance to do so comes from a fundamentally different point of view: for them the function of a chair as seating furniture is as important as its function as an object of esthetic, historical, and sociological interest. This position eliminates most of the conservation techniques in which the outside appearance of a chair is replicated but with the chair no longer capable of supporting the weight of a seater.

The other point of contention is that for them it is essential to treat a piece using the same tools, techniques, and materials used by the original artist. Upholstery conservators are more sympathetic to this argument, although they are aware that the "traditional techniques" have evolved through the ages and are not historically correct when applied indiscriminately to all periods.

Confronted with the sobering fact that upholstery documents are very rare and disappearing fast, it is important to view our dissensions as potential assets and to join forces to bring upholstery conservation to the level of professionalism that the others branches of conservation enjoy.

"Brilliant" Conservation Approaches

Frank Futral

As a curator for Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site (the estate historically called Hyde Park), I am responsible for contributing an informed perspective that directs appropriate levels of preservation for our cultural resources. Furniture in France 2004 provided a special opportunity for me to consider fundamental questions regarding the presentation of the historic interiors under my custody.

A challenging issue with historic interiors in the United States is the often overlapping approaches regarding restoration and conservation (original intent vs. original fabric). Approaches in the United States favor conservation over restoration in an effort to maintain an object with as much of its original fabric as possible. The sign of age is a quality that we value highly in historic objects. This approach can, however, result in the misrepresentation of historic interiors. For example, at Hyde Park, we stabilize and inpaint our giltwood furniture rather than restore it to its original brilliance. On the other hand, this same object may have reproduction upholstery replicating the fabric's original appearance. Textile components that reproduce historic upholstery materials and window treatments are usually fabricated with the brilliance of their original color. At Hyde Park, the freshness of reproduction drapery and upholstery contrasts with the aged qualities of original

carpets and tapestries, or decorative surfaces of furnishings. This hybrid approach results in a visually confusing interior presentation.

Consideration of these philosophical approaches was challenged by what I encountered in France. I was particularly interested in the French tendency to restore furnishings and interiors, for royal residences in particular, to their intended brilliance. Public interest in Versailles, for example, is certainly based to a large degree on perceptions of how kings live. Expectations for royal palaces, though, may be very different from expectations for other historic interiors. The fabulous wealth necessary to build the royal palaces of France was to some extent a representation of the power and prosperity of the state. The decorative details of a royal palace like Versailles should perhaps appear perfectly brilliant if they are to accurately represent the way a king lived or the way a king represented the state.

Is it appropriate for a Gilded Age millionaire's mansion in the United States to adopt this same approach? The extravagant scale of a Vanderbilt mansion like Hyde Park makes an immediate impression, one that was not overlooked by the family responsible for the most significant houses of their era. With respect to overt references to royalty, comparison of the Vanderbilts of the Gilded Age to the Medicis of the Venetian Republic is not so subtle at Hyde Park—the Medici family coat of arms is everywhere present in the public rooms of the mansion. Art flourished under the patronage of the Vanderbilt fortune just as it did under the Medici or the Bourbon Kings of France.

In the five years that I have served as curator for the Vanderbilt Mansion, I have considered the importance of these qualities in accurately representing historic interiors for a millionaire's mansion. The Vanderbilts and their millionaire compatriots brought to the United States a new appreciation for French fashion and with it, the best aspects of French design and craft, and a tradition of visual spectacle. Since beginning my study of nineteenth-century French furniture and interiors at Hyde Park and related houses, I have come to understand the significance of this visual quality. As a result of my study abroad, I am able to recognize the interpretive merits of representing the intended appearance and its brilliance made possible by the Vanderbilt family's immense fortune.

The extravagance exercised by the nineteenth-century French *ébéniste* or *tapisier* for the American millionaire was once reserved for the European royal household. The interiors of the Vanderbilts' Hyde Park, and of other Gilded Age estates, were designed to equal, if not rival, the quality and craftsmanship of the grandest houses in France. Mrs. Vanderbilt's bedroom at Hyde Park, with its *entrelac* balustrade surrounding the bed, is a deliberate reference to one of the primary architectural features of a royal bedchamber. Its grandeur, its pretension, and its overt reference to old-world royalty is unmatched by any bedroom in the United States. In every detail, the Hyde Park interiors and their furnishings were intended to represent wealth. In an effort to preserve this artistic heritage, we must at least ask if this intent, and its essence, is a character-defining feature. Furniture in France 2004 provided an excellent opportunity to consider these issues. I look forward to

continuing this dialogue with colleagues here and abroad with the goal of finding a balance between conservation and restoration approaches that maintains but also promotes the highest ideals of the artistry expressed in the very objects we wish to preserve.

Looking for French Connections

William Lewin

Looking for French connections to Thomas Jefferson's gilt mirror and picture frames was one of my reasons for joining Furniture in France 2004. In 2003 my wife Davida Kovner and I completed on-site treatment of the two large gilt pier mirrors in the parlor at Monticello. This has led to continuing collaborative research with Susan Stein, curator, into the provenance of the mirrors and frames belonging to Jefferson. In the past, the pier mirrors have been attributed by an entry in his account books, which list the purchase in Paris and the cost of shipment to America. New analytical information from my treatment and the overall style of the mirror frames has cast doubt on this attribution. The trip to France was my opportunity to gather first-hand knowledge of 18th-century architectural elements and frame moldings related to this research. I was also interested in examining original period gilt surfaces for future reference in my conservation practice.

Walking through the mid 18th-century Château d'Asnières (c.1750), located outside Paris, with *architecte en chef* Fabrice Ouziel, there were many reminders of Monticello. (fig. 1) Each room has a different frieze and neoclassical entablature. The windows at both houses utilize a similar design feature: in some locations the first-story windows extend above the floor on the second story. While Asnières has a grand staircase and Monticello does not, both houses have small winding staircases. There is much evidence that Jefferson was fascinated and later influenced, as



Figure 1. Château d'Asnières.

he built Monticello, by the new buildings of 18th-century France, especially Hôtel de Salm and his own residence Hôtel de Langeac.

I was quite unprepared for the surprise we found at Asnières, which related indirectly to my research. Original green paint, dating to the 18th century, had been found on the *boiseries* and was also revealed during cleaning tests on the window shutters. Later, we saw another original 18th-century example of green-painted *boiserie* at the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Bordeaux. This reminded me of the first layer found on cross sections of the outside profiles on Monticello's pier mirrors. The outside profiles were over-painted to match the wall color each time the room was repainted, and the first layer was green. I spoke with Fabrice Ouziel, with translation help from Paul Miller, about the green paint and interior color schemes in 18th-century France. (fig. 2) Green-painted interiors with crimson damask window draperies were “the style” during Jefferson's time in France (1784–1789), and M. Ouziel's research has confirmed this interior scheme for the main salon at Asnières, which is undergoing restoration.

Since my return, I have shared my findings with Susan Stein, who related that green paint has been found in other rooms. At present, the parlor is painted white because there has been no conclusive identification of the original color scheme. The window treatments are crimson draperies, which are reproductions of the originals ordered by Jefferson in 1808. Ms. Stein enthusiastically plans to reopen the paint study and would like to collaborate with Fabrice Ouziel, which we hope culminates in a visit to Monticello.

I never found French models or references for the pier mirrors linked to Thomas Jefferson. The French frames I saw were high style, ornately carved with combinations of classical moldings. The trip confirmed my belief that the frames are English inspired.



Figure 2. Fabrice Ouziel inside Château d'Asnières.

The visit to the Château de Fontainebleau provided the opportunity to examine original gilding on First and Second Empire chairs in the private apartments of Napoleon I. Curator Yves Carlier guided us through the château, removing the original cloth covers on two *bergères*, upholstered and gilt armchairs. The upholstery and gilding on both chairs was in remarkable condition. The condition of the underside belies all cautionary advice given for the authentication of period furniture. The wood surface and webbing were clean and bright, with little evidence of darkening or wear. M. Carlier explained that the objects remain in such good condition because Fontainebleau was seasonally occupied for two months by the court and closed down during most of the year. Everything, including the walls, was covered with protective fabric covers.

I have never seen such pristine, intact gilding from this period. The overall effect of the gilding on the First Empire chair was soft, the difference between the burnished highlights (on the rails and selected elements in the carvings) and the flat matte ground minimized by the tone or sealer. The gilt surfaces on the Second Empire chair were a contrast of crisp, highly burnished gold leaf next to matte surfaces. The entire legs of the chairs were burnished. Similar chairs seen in American collections have restoration gilt surfaces and are not representative of these originals. I am currently beginning preliminary discussions regarding the treatment of *bergères* owned by two historic houses. The chairs at Fontainebleau will serve as an important reference for their treatment.

This trip has stimulated a new line of research with Monticello, which may include collaboration with Fabrice Ouziel, and has provided a wealth of reference material that will be used for conservation treatments in my lab.

Scenes from the Art Nouveau in Nancy

Cathy Mackenzie

It is a Sunday afternoon in May. We are walking down rue Vieil Aître in Nancy. There are tree branches hanging out over walls to provide some shade, narrow sidewalks, and cars parked at the curb, and then rising up on the corner: three floors of smooth tan stone. The flat planes of stone are relieved by writhing wrought iron supports for the sweep of a glass canopy over the door, and a roofline rising and falling and rising again against the sky in multiple peaks and slopes.

Even today, Jika, the villa built for Louis Majorelle and his wife, Marie, just over one hundred years ago (1901–02) looks modern. Majorelle was at the height of his career when he had this house built. He intended it to be a showplace for his work and his philosophy. Most recently, the building has been used for municipal offices, and the rooms no longer have the majority of their movable furnishings. Part of the Art Nouveau aesthetic was the melding of furniture and architecture to create a complete environment; thus most of the rooms still contain representative

elements of their decoration, blending practicality and beauty. For instance, in the dining room the freestanding fireplace and chimney of green, blue, brown, and gray flambé stoneware is functional as a heat source, a room divider, and a cozy spot to sit (on the smooth sloping “arms” to either side of the hearth). It is also part of the food iconography appropriate to a dining room, with ears of wheat in relief on the chimney. Flambé stoneware was invented in 1889, a modern industrial material when it was used in the house.

This house being built was one of many watershed moments in the Art Nouveau movement in Nancy around this time. The 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris was the height of success for Art Nouveau in France. Majorelle’s work was evolving toward a more extensive use of gilded-bronze mounts, compared favorably by some critics to those used by eighteenth-century *ébénistes*.

1901 marked the formal founding of the École de Nancy Alliance Provinciale des Industries d’Art. Émile Gallé was the heart of the Art Nouveau movement in Nancy—pumping energy and life into the community through his writings and the practical force of his business. Gallé believed that the future of furniture making and the decorative arts lay not with the glorification of the individual craftsman but with the collaborations of skilled workers and industry designers to make things of beauty for the masses. This debate is still very much with us today: What is the place for the lone craftsperson? How much should hand tools be relied upon in a machine age? Many of the participants in the École de Nancy had businesses that were “semi-industrial.” By 1900, Gallé’s business employed 100 people (Debize, 1999, 16), and five years later Majorelle had over 150 workers (Debize, 1999, 19). Gallé advocated for the literal depiction of the landscape, vegetation, and wildlife of the region around Nancy. This related to the political situation. Less than ten years before Gallé inherited his family business, the region of Alsace and most of Lorraine were lost to Germany as a result of military defeat. This was a wound to national pride as a whole but particularly keenly felt around Nancy, which suddenly found itself on the border. Gallé’s espousal of the regional flora and fauna and his efforts to train and employ skilled workers would fit into our own age’s movement to encourage consumers to “buy local.”

Although the members of the École de Nancy espoused a commitment to create things of beauty and function for working people, the pieces for which they are most remembered today are the high-end items. While these necessitated a greater commitment in terms of time, effort, and skill, they would not have been possible without the success of the line of pieces sold to the general public. Such a masterpiece is “Dawn and Twilight” (1904) on display at the Musée de l’École de Nancy, just down the road from Majorelle’s villa. (fig. 1) The silhouette of the head and footboard are quite simple when compared with other examples of Gallé’s work, which bristle with ornamentation. The marquetry panels are framed by smooth curved moldings, which spring down to form small feet. The marquetry panels themselves are virtuosic renderings of two huge insects spreading their wings out to envelop the occupant of the bed and the Nancy landscape depicted



Musée de l'École de Nancy

Figure 1. Émile Gallé bed, "*Aube et Crepuscule*" ("*Dawn and Twilight*")

thereon. The headboard bears a moth sweeping down over a darkening landscape where a herd of cows moves along a winding path while the setting sun lights the trees on the horizon. A sprinkling of mother of pearl sparkles down from the moth's wings like a dusting from the sandman. The footboard represents dawn as an upward-sweeping butterfly whose wings, striped with sparkling mother of pearl, seem damp and heavy with morning dew. The butterfly's body is a heavy, smooth stone set into the panel—a bright focal spot in the center of the composition. Although this bed stands on its own as a distinct work of art, the Musée de l'École de Nancy contains an example of a unified interior in the dining room designed by Eugène Vallin and Victor Prouvé in 1903. The design relies more on sinuous curves than outright plant forms. A large fireplace surround seems to grow out of the floor and reach up to the ceiling, where it blends into the cornice molding before being pulled into the vortex of curved ribs spinning into the elaborate lamp hanging down over the dining table. The sideboard has a massive presence that counters the ceiling and anchors the room.

So what happened to the movement? There are many reasons to explain why the Art Nouveau movement crashed only fifteen years after its great success at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1900. What we are now accustomed to as the rush of modern life was just beginning. The writer Charles Peguy felt that France had changed more in the period between his boyhood in the 1880s and the eve of World War I than it had since the time of the Romans (Jones, 1994, 227). With a pace of change so great, it was inevitable that public taste would swing in another direction. There were tensions increasing across Europe leading up to World War I, and it was a time when the critics marked upon the perceived frivolity of the Art

Nouveau. In Nancy, the breakdown of the movement was more personal. Gallé died suddenly in 1904, and Victor Prouvé was selected as next president of the École de Nancy. His personal feelings on the debate of craftsmanship vs. industry fell on the side of craftsmanship, whereas Gallé's had gone the other way. There was dissention within the group, and by the time war broke out in 1914, the movement had lost momentum. Although individual artists kept working, their styles mostly changed to accommodate public tastes.

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18th-Century French Furniture in the Late 19th Century

Susan B. Walker

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, newly rich multimillionaires in the U.S. had a wealth and power that was unprecedented in American history, and many accordingly began identifying with European aristocracy and looking to them as role models. These Americans built mansions and furnished them along the lines of what they saw in Europe, and for some, this meant buying 18th-century French furniture.

As curator at Staatsburgh State Historic Site, formerly the country house of Ogden and Ruth Livingston Mills, *Furniture in France 2004* provided the opportunity to go to the source of all this inspiration and, among other things, to compare the Millses' collection with that of some of their French counterparts. It was also interesting to relate the Millses' late 19th-century academically correct reproductions (made in France) to what I saw at the École Boulle, where students are trained in 18th-century styles and techniques, and at the various craftsmen's ateliers, where traditional techniques and materials have long been used.

Among the many sites that the group visited were the Villa Ferrières, la Musée Nissim de Camondo, and la Musée Cognacq-Jay, all housing collections of mid 19th- to early 20th-century men of wealth: James de Rothschild, Moïse de Camondo, and Ernest Cognacq, respectively. James de Rothschild built his house between 1855 and 1859, during the reign of Napoleon III (Second Empire), when Louis XVI style was enjoying a revival. At that time, however, a less than academically correct version of the style satisfied buyers. At Villa Ferrières, the goal was to display lavish wealth rather than to recreate authentic 18th-century interiors. Rothschild's motivation for filling his home with luxurious and showy furnishings is probably not that different from what inspired many 18th-century aristocratic patrons.

Moïse de Camondo and Ernest Cognacq both collected 18th-century furniture out of an appreciation of its artistic merits and with the intention that their collections would constitute, or become part of, a museum. Whereas Cognacq was not a connoisseur and worked with intermediaries, Camondo was a knowledgeable collector who replaced his parents' Napoleon III townhouse with a building inspired by the Petit Trianon, to create an 18th-century residence to house his collection. Cognacq started collecting rather late, around 1905, and although his pieces are elegant, they are not of royal provenance (with the exception of a *lit à la polonoise* made by Georges Jacob). Camondo, 21 years younger than Cognacq, had been collecting for some time by that date, and his collection has a more impressive provenance. (fig. 1)

Much of the furniture in both collections is of the late Louis XV style, a choice that had to have been affected by contemporary aesthetics in France. During the late 19th century, there was a taste for gently curving plant-like forms and floral motifs, which figure in the marquetry and carving of late Louis XV furniture and also in the new, Art Nouveau design of the time. The group saw examples of Art Nouveau furniture at la Musée Carnavalet and at la Musée de l'École de Nancy that with its floral marquetry and inspiration from plant forms was reminiscent of work by Oeben.



Figure 1. Interior, la Musée Nissim de Camondo.

Late 19th- and early 20th-century buyers, unlike those of the Second Empire, looked for original 18th-century pieces. They (or those buying for them) were more knowledgeable than earlier collectors because a series of prestigious auctions of 18th-century furniture in the 1880s and 1890s, and an exhibit of furniture of royal provenance held at the Petit Palais in 1900, brought outstanding examples into public view. Camondo's recreated 18th-century townhouse included historic architectural elements, such as the boiseries; his collection of 18th-century furniture also included some end tables and cabinets that are academically correct reproductions.

The Millses, American Gilded Age multimillionaires, were less motivated by a connoisseur's interest than they were by the desire to reflect high fashion and to impress their peers with their wealth and social standing. In this, they were more like the Rothschilds of Ferrières than like Cognacq or Camondo; it would never have occurred to the Millses to consider their household furniture as "a collection." Like Cognacq, they used intermediaries (Stanford White and the firm of Allard and Sons) but their collection of originals and late 19th-century reproductions is not focused, the way the Cognacq and Camondo collections are; rather, their furniture represents the whole range of 18th-century styles. The Millses furnished Staatsburgh with pieces from (and reproductions of) the Louis XIV, Régence, Louis XV, and Louis XVI periods. None of the 18th-century makers are known, and most of them were not as accomplished as their more famous peers



Staatsburgh State Historic Site, NYS OPRHP, Taconic Region

Figure 2. The library at Staatsburgh, the country house of Ogden and Ruth Livingston Mills.

were, whose work we saw throughout the trip. What was important to Americans like the Millses was prestige, and displaying themselves in a setting reminiscent of the ultimate in aristocratic associations delivered this. (fig. 2) What's more, displaying such a range of styles could make it appear as if the Millses had acquired the pieces over several generations, as would have happened in aristocratic families. It is also worth noting that Art Nouveau did not have a major impact in the U.S., which suggests that aesthetic factors influencing the late 19th-century interest in French 18th-century furniture were different in the U.S. from those in France.

Were the Millses typical of American Gilded-Age multimillionaires with an interest in 18th-century French decorative arts? It should be pointed out that Staatsburgh was the Millses' *country* home; although we have no information about the contents of their house, Oceanview, at Newport, we do know that their houses in Paris and New York City contained 18th-century French furniture that was of much higher importance. Pieces from these collections have recently come to auction at Sotheby's in New York City (2002) and Christie's in London (2005), for example, a commode made by Pierre Roussel, a pair of *encoignures* made by Mathieu Criaerd, and a highly important pair of Louis XV Boulle marquetry and ebony *bas d'armoires*. So why did the Millses furnish their country house with unsigned pieces of lesser quality? They entertained guests of the same social set and importance there as they did in their other houses. It may be just that the Millses preferred not to have their finer pieces at Staatsburgh, where the entertainment was geared toward athletic, outdoor activities, ranging from golf, tennis, and riding, to ice skating, tobogganing, and ice boating. How does the furniture in the *country* houses of their peers compare? This is a question that warrants further research.

Resonating Comparisons with the Getty Collection

Deborah Hatch

As curator for the private collection of Ann and Gordon Getty in San Francisco, I would like to share how knowledge gained from *Furniture in France 2004* relates to specific conservation issues and works of art in this collection. The Getty's main residence contains 18th-century furniture by renowned Parisian *ébénistes*, with the top five most valuable pieces made by André Charles Boulle. What better way to appreciate his work than to visit the atelier of Michel Jamet, École Boulle, Versailles, and Fontainebleau. Consequently, I now have a keener eye for genuine Boulle versus the later pieces produced by the workshop run by his sons.

For years I have read about the division of labor in the highly revered "Louis-Louis" guild system. I was therefore profoundly moved by the experience of walking down the Rue St. Antoine where famous *ébénistes* worked hundreds of years ago, and then meeting a craftsman who proudly demonstrated his skills, honed by years of apprenticeship and passed down from generation to generation. I now

truly believe that these skills—carving, chasing, marquetry, gilding, sculpting bronze, or polishing—are in their genes.

I finally comprehended the true meaning of the word *maître* when I met Michel Jamet. I brought an old invoice from his shop with me, but the whole thing was indecipherable. With the help of Stéphanie, our translator, and his assistants, I dissected the *facture* and its technical French terminology. I am now able to describe each phase of the restoration of a pair of Boulle pedestals previously owned by Hubert de Saint-Senoch. We also inspected a commode by Leleu and closely examined the maker's stamp. The Gettys own a Leleu/Baumhauer cabinet from Houghton House, with the provenance of the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville, Louis XV's great *maréchal*.

There were more comparisons to enrich my eye at the Musée Nissim de Camondo, where I sought out the furniture made by Nicolas Foliot, Pierre Garnier, and Adam Weisweiler. I also found a superb Weisweiler example at Musée Cognacq-Jay that I could stylistically compare to the Gettys' lacquer desk. One cannot appreciate the aesthetics and subtleties of these *ébénistes* by looking at photos in a book!



Figure 1. Biennais lamp in the private collection of Ann and Gordon Getty.

One of the most memorable sites was Fontainebleau. During our behind-the-scenes tour with Yves Carlier, I was thrilled to encounter two Imperial silver-gilt lamps by Biennais that were commissioned for Madame Mère, Napoleon's mother. Initially, Yves Carlier was incredulous when I told him there was one in the collection I curated. (figure 1) Now we have corresponded and are discussing the possible date that the Getty lamp was gilded (in view of an old inventory he knows of) and the markings. I am discussing with Yves the fact that the lamp is catalogued with the shade as being later. It was crucial to see the Fontainebleau lamps in pristine condition, as the Gettys' shows corrosion and needs cleaning. Julie Wolfe, a metal conservation specialist and fellow FiF participant, was able to make recommendations for the proper treatment, and thanks to her suggestions, the lamp is now being treated by Elizabeth Cornu at the DeYoung museum.

The visit to the Prelle workshop in Lyon was an exceptional highlight, as Mrs. Getty had commissioned a number of silks from this illustrious

firm. I had only visited the Paris showroom once on a buying trip. Mrs. Getty had had Prella copy a Russian 19th-century silk for the chairs in her music room—*très cher!* After seeing the jacquard handlooms in operation, I think the cost per meter for this exquisite textile was more than justified. It is my hope that we can commission a reproduction of a favorite 1708 Lyon *Bizarre Japonnais* silk from Mrs. Getty's collection of period textiles. I spent two years trying to organize Mrs. Getty's archive of antique textiles and sorely needed the crash course in the history of French textiles that we received at the Musée des Tissus in Lyon.

With regard to upholstery, I also hope that we can attempt "*a chassis*" conservation on the Spencer House chair or the David Garrick chair in the Getty collection. I had not seen firsthand this noninvasive technique until Ulrich Leben showed us the Beauharnais Molitor chairs at Michel Jamet's shop. (Coincidentally, I had read a treatise on conservation upholstery by Mark Anderson, another participant on the trip.) Because the Getty residence is a "living museum," the furniture gets much wear, and we are constantly reupholstering. Ulrich has been a curator for the Rothschilds, owners of Spencer House in London, and I was able to mention the five Spencer House chairs in the Getty collection. Mrs. Getty is making reproductions of the famous Spencer House "Palm Room" chairs by John Vardy.

The French have managed to preserve their traditional craftsmanship; I was astounded to see how they can still produce costly, labor-intensive reproductions that honor the integrity and history of the object, when today's society demands less skillful short-cuts and cheap labor. I know this first-hand, as I watch Ann Getty and Associates (Mrs. G's interior design firm) attempt to create affordable reproductions by seeking out vendors in third-world countries.

We had a very good exchange of dialogue at the Champs-sur-Marne LRMH labs. I was fascinated to see their computer setup and equipment for monitoring the mandible clicks of woodworm. I had encountered a serious pest infestation in the Getty collection so had listened to active *anobium* during that trial. On a previous occasion, during lunch with the assistant curator from the Ecomusée Ferme de Pierre Allègre, I shared a lively discussion about anoxia and freezing treatments for integrated pest management (IPM). She directed me to seek out Dominique Durier (aka "Madame Mites") at LRMH, as Dominique had advised her on her pest treatments. It was distressing to hear how little money there is dedicated to an adequate IPM program in these country sites.

The dining room at the Getty residence contains two very important pairs of *ormolu girandoles de cheminée*, dated 1744 (the royal "C" *couronne* is stamped on the front) with the provenance of Joseph-Antoine Crozat, the famous French financier, to Jose Maria Sert, Patino, and Givenchy. I saw similar girandoles in a ballroom designed by Jose Maria Sert at the Musée Carnavalet. The catalogue notes state that these girandoles were designed by Pineau. During an unforgettable moment at Château d'Asnières, we all got to see drawings on the walls by Pineau that were revealed after the wall coverings had been removed.

Furniture in France 2004 has renewed my enthusiasm for preservation and French history, thus enhancing the private tours I give to museum groups. It certainly helped to view objects “in situ” at the houses and museums we visited; I can now better place the works in the proper context of 18th- and 19th-century domestic French interiors. In addition, although the Gettys have always employed highly skilled craftsmen, I now have many new resources for artisans using old-world techniques.

Craft and Art in France (or, The Need to Keep Up the Good Work)

JeanMarie Easter

The experience of Furniture in France 2004 was truly an education in craft and art in France. Where does one stop and the other begin? Take the silk industry, for example. In Lyon, at the Musée des Arts décoratifs, we learned about the history of silk production in France. In the 15th century, traders from Italy and Spain brought their goods for sale to trade fairs in Lyon. The desire to keep French money in France prompted the French monarchy to sponsor a French silk industry. In 1536, Francis I invited two Italians to settle in France and granted them a monopoly on silk weaving, and subsequently Lyon became the center of cultivation of silk worms brought from China and Japan. In 1605, Dagon invented the first draw-pull loom, which created larger repeats; this draw-pull loom was perfected over the 18th century until it was replaced by the Jacquard loom in the early 19th century. All the great fabrics of the 17th and 18th centuries were produced on draw-pull looms overseen by gifted designers. Lyon became the place for the kings of France to procure their fabric, and silk production became more of an art and less of a craft. For example, Catherine the Great had a silk portrait commissioned. We also learned that tapestries were considered more important than a painting. Paintings were hung in a château in place of a tapestry when the occupants were not in residence, as the tapestries traveled with the occupants. The paintings remained to fill up the vacancies left on the wall.

The Musée Cognacq-Jay was a gift of Ernest Cognacq, who founded the Samaritaine department stores. He set up a museum next to his luxury department store so his employees could go over and become more educated about the pieces they were selling in the store. It was also intended that visitors to the museum might be attracted to the shop. Aesthetics were as important to French culture as eating was. And as culinary expertise in France is elevated to an art form, so were the crafts elevated to art.

The Hache family produced three generations of furniture makers working in Grenoble. In the 17th century, the first Hache, Noël, worked in Toulouse, using exotic woods, which was very unusual at this time. His son Thomas came to Grenoble and married the daughter of an *ébéniste*. Jean François Hache, the grandson of Thomas, produced marquetry with exquisite, colorful floral designs. The craft of making furniture had been elevated to an art form.

The French believe in maintaining craft traditions and have the schools in place to teach the skills. At the École Boulle the curriculum consists of marquetry, cabinet making, chair making, restoration, finishing, upholstery, chasing, architectural woodwork, and mathematics. These classes are taught in depth. In the restoration program, museums lend pieces so the students may practice on them. This is a very practical approach to learning these arts, and they are treated as arts.

Traditional techniques are taught and take much time to perfect. Furthermore, the materials, for example, the fabric and horsehair used in upholstery, are expensive. There are always ways around the expensive and traditional methods, yet that is what reduces the art to a craft. The making of trim is a very time-consuming process. A trim ordered by Napoleon for bed hangings in the room at Fontainebleau formerly used by Marie Antoinette cost \$10,000 per meter to reproduce in 1986. Can reproduction of such a costly item be justified? My feeling is that the art and the technical knowledge should not be lost, whether or not the need exists for a trim costing \$10,000 a meter. This is history that cannot afford to be neglected and not passed down to the next generation. It is part of a cultural heritage that, if lost, cannot be replaced. What connects us to history is the ability to recreate, on some level, what has been done in the past. As a painting student studies and has to recreate a masterpiece, so too, the student of conservation must be able to replicate the technique that has passed from one generation to the next. This ability is necessary to go on and improve the way in which a piece may be conserved. It is also necessary to understand the evolution of furniture, fabric, and the decorative arts from one generation to the next as well as from one country to the next and one city to the next. I am in awe of the French because this aesthetic for beauty seems to be in their blood, and I revere that.

