

**From the Grotesque to the Exotic**  
**The Evolution of Rococo Ornament in the Decorative Arts in France**

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**Master's Programme**

**September 2000**

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The focus of this exhibition is to illustrate the evolution of rococo ornament in France across a wide range of the decorative arts. In so doing, the character of ornament and the rococo will also be revealed, illustrating the synthesis between the two at this time. The exhibition does this by examining four main sources of ornament characteristic of the rococo period; those of the grotesque, the figure, nature, and the exotic. Whilst the origin and subsequent development of each of these ornaments in the context of the rococo will be examined independently, the aim of the exhibition is to illustrate the interactions between the four. Influences on ornament outside the artistic spectrum will also be examined, such as the political and economic events of the time, and the changes in society and taste. Although there is always a certain mystery to the evolution of artistic creation, some parallels can be drawn between the realm of ornament and the world in which it lives. This is because ornament is constantly subject to change, reacting to current influences upon it. This exhibition sets out to illustrate why and how this is particularly true of the era of the rococo.



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my tutors, Deborah Lambert, Ian Cox, and Patrick Bade, for their time and advice.

I would also like to thank Isabelle Neto, Assistante de Conservation, Musée Cognacq-Jay, Paris, for her correspondence, provision of catalogue information, and generous help with illustrations.

Thanks also to Violaine Courtin, Assistante du Conservateur, and Mme Wetter, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, for their correspondence, in particular on my behalf with the Photothèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris, and for the provision of catalogue information.

I would like to thank the Wallace Collection, London, for providing illustrations for me, and in particular Emma Baudery, Assistant to the Press Rights Officer, for her swift reply to my request.

I would also like to thank Angus Patterson, Department of Metalwork, and Amanda Rutherford, Department of Furniture and Woodwork, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for their provision of catalogue information.

Thanks to the Photothèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris for the provision of illustrations.

Finally, I would like to thank Dom Peyton for his photographic expertise and the loan of some decent camera equipment.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **I. Understanding rococo ornament**

In order to illustrate the evolution of rococo ornament it is important to understand exactly what the terms refer to in the context of the decorative arts. Ornament should not be confused with its contemporary definition, where it refers to an actual object placed on a person or in surroundings to add an aesthetic quality. Ornament in the exhibition's context is the decoration that is placed on functional objects rather than the objects themselves. Since the second half of the fifteenth century, through the engravings of ornamental designs, man has created a world where ornament is separated from the functional object it decorates, existing as a minor but certainly autonomous branch of art<sup>1</sup>. The nineteenth century use of grammars of ornament increased the independence of ornament still further; such grammars provided a means of giving an historical style to an object through the addition of ornament. Thus, ornament became associated with the different styles of art history established by the art theorists of the nineteenth century.

Contemporaries called the rococo the *gout moderne*, Blondel referring to it in 1738 as the *gout du siècle*, illustrating their awareness of the change occurring in decoration. In the final edition of the Dictionnaire in 1935, the rococo was described as “un genre...à la mode au XVIIIème siècle...caracterisé par la profusion des ornements contournés”<sup>2</sup>. It was a style that manifested itself in decoration, creating a fantastical organic world on whatever surface of object it adorned. Within this world, the spectator could become immersed, just as the Dictionnaire in 1842 advised: “Aimer le rococo. Tomber dans le rococo. Cela est bien rococo”<sup>3</sup>. By the nineteenth century, with the increasing trend towards defining art history, the term rococo had been coined, presumably derived from the use of the French word *rocaille*. The rococo is also called the Louis XV style. However to use this term implies a connection between the political events of France at this time, which is misleading as its evolution started long before the regency of Louis XV, and was taken over in popularity by classicism before his death. If ornament plays its own individual role in defining a style, and the rococo is one such cohesive style which established itself in France throughout the first half of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ward-Jackson, P., *Some Mainstreams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500-1750*, (Victoria and Albert Museum), pg 3.

<sup>2</sup> Kimball, F., *Le Style Louis XV*, (Paris, 1949), pg 11.

<sup>3</sup> Kimball, F., *Le Style Louis XV*, (Paris, 1949), pg 11.



eighteenth century, what was the evolution of the rococo as illustrated through its ornament?

## **II. Structure of the exhibition**

By way of introduction, the exhibition compares two commodes<sup>4</sup> (see catalogue plates 1 and 2), the first attributed to Alexandre-Jean Oppenord (c.1639-1715) and the second to Bernard Van Risenburgh II (after 1696-c.1766), in order to set the stylistic parameters of the exhibition, and to some extent its time period. The Oppenord commode, made c.1695, belongs to the later reign of Louis XIV; its architectural form and ornament, with its heavy gilt bronze mounts, classical motifs, and majestic symmetry, reflect the courtly interior within which it would be found. B.V.R.B.'s commode, in contrast, made c.1750-60, has a serpentine<sup>5</sup> smaller form, delicate asymmetrical gilt bronze mounts, organic motifs, and a synthesis between its exotic materials and western decoration, reflecting the femininity and intimacy of rococo ornament at its height. At first glance, the two may not seem that similar, and indeed over half a century separates their production; however the very beginnings of the rococo style are being established in the Oppenord commode's swelling sides and use of grotesque marquetry. From here on a new vocabulary of ornament was to evolve, its origins dependent on the baroque and yet autonomous from it, effected by influences outside the conventionally classical.

The exhibition draws upon four main sources of ornament; the grotesque, the figure, nature, and the exotic. The ornament of the grotesque will be examined from the point of view of its evolution under Jean Berain and his successors, and also of the use of its ornamental elements across a range of decorative media. As the figure played an increasing role in the central design of the grotesque, this will be the focus of the next chapter, examining the figure as an ornament in its own right but also as a motif to be placed within other decoration. The subsequent two chapters will analyse the origin of the use of nature, and the exotic, examining their increasing influence on and synthesis with the ornament of the rococo. To develop these sources of ornament further they will be placed in some political, social, and economic context, to add a broader perspective to the understanding of their development. By way of conclusion, the introductory two commodes will be reassessed in the light of the exhibition's argument, followed by a

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<sup>4</sup> See glossary.

<sup>5</sup> See glossary.

brief examination of the history of these ornaments after the rococo period. In this way, the constantly evolving life of ornament will be illustrated, in the context of both its synthesis during the rococo period and throughout the course of art history.

## **Chapter 2 – The Grotesque**

The most common meaning of the term grotesque<sup>6</sup> refers to something that is considered to be bizarre or absurd. As a technical term it refers to a type of ornament fashionable in Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It consists of an elaborate architectural framework of straight lines interrupted at intervals by c and s-scrolls, symmetrically disposed, supporting a mixture of animate and inanimate, often fantastical objects, implausibly combined.

### **I. The origin of the grotesque ornament**

Originating in Rome two thousand years earlier, the grotesque had been lost for centuries. The Golden House of Nero was one of the first and most important sources of the grotesque discovered for the Renaissance artist with its painted and plaster decoration in rooms that resembled caves. It was these chambers, or grottoes, that gave the Roman form of decoration its modern name. Filippino Lippi, Signorelli, Perugino, and Pintoricchio, all used the grotesque as a filling on wall decoration. However it was not until Raphael's scheme in the Vatican loggia that the grotesque became organised into a complete decorative system, establishing itself as the basis of European surface ornament until the nineteenth century<sup>7</sup>. A band work border came to be introduced in the sixteenth century, notably by Rosso Fiorentino, which gradually intruded upon the design, functioning as a scaffold. It also became customary to have a point of focus in the middle of the design such as a human figure enclosed in a cartouche with band work spreading over the remaining space. The influence of the arabesque<sup>8</sup> can also be seen by the end of the sixteenth century, adding an oriental flavour to the grotesque with its elaborate strap-work.

### **II. The development of the grotesque ornament under Jean Berain I**

Jean Berain I (1640-1711), as *Dessinateur de la Chambre et du Cabinet du Roi* which he became in 1674, played a crucial role in the evolution from baroque to rococo, in particular through his development of the grotesque. At this point, as Jean Mariette said of Jean Berain's work, the grotesque adopted a truly French spirit becoming the

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<sup>6</sup> See glossary.

<sup>7</sup> Snodin, M., and Howard, M., *Ornament, A Social History since 1450*, (New Haven and London, 1996), pg 37.

central motif in French decoration: “il avait pris dans ce que Raphael avait si heureusement imaginé dans ce genre sur le modèle des anciens, ce qui lui avait paru devoir faire un meilleur effet; il l’avait réduit en une manière particulière, conforme au gout de la nation française”<sup>9</sup>.

Looking back to the grotesque formula of Charles Le Brun (1619-90), Jean Berain’s early style shows paired band work often breaking and interlacing, with scrolls ending in bill hooks, or developing into bird’s heads with hooked beaks. The 3D central pavilion is present, either canopied or with suspended drapes or wreathes, framed by grotesque decoration springing from the band work structure. The Louis XIV *bureau mazarin*<sup>10</sup> (see catalogue plate 3) attributed to Bernard Van Risenburgh I (c.1660-1738) is a good example of the influence of such designs on furniture at this time; the technique of Boulle marquetry<sup>11</sup> lending itself well to the reproduction of the grotesque ornament with its rich variety of ornate materials. Several elements clearly correspond with the evolution of the grotesque at this time. For example, the foliate architectural structures on the drawer fronts act as scaffolds for other decorative motifs; there is also a central focus to the design on the top consisting of two figures under a draped canopy over a framed scallop shell. The use of exotic birds and monkeys, and the straight and curved scrollwork ending in foliage, is all characteristic of the grotesque designs of Jean Berain.

Jean Berain moved towards a greater transparency and weightlessness of composition. In the marquetry toilet mirror of 1713 (see catalogue plate 4), attributed to André Charles Boulle (1642-1732), one can clearly see that the band work has become the dominating factor, providing a frame work for the slender floral motifs and light hearted figures. The relief has decreased, whilst the ornament has become more enriched, with fine acanthus tendrils and c-curves becoming the main theme<sup>12</sup>. None of the laws of gravity or rules of perspective apply: the oscillation between 2D and 3D confuses the perception of volume. When looking at Boulle marquetry from this time it is clear that Boulle is taking inspiration from the designs of Jean Berain, disseminated through his engravings. For example, in Berain’s engraving for a grotesque design from the 1690s, (see comparative plate 2), although architecture still dominates, some but not all of the developments of his later style are illustrated. Herms support iron work structures

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<sup>8</sup> See glossary.

<sup>9</sup> Rodon, C., and Font, O.A., *Peintres de cartons pour tapisseries*, (Paris and Liège, 1936), pg 24.

<sup>10</sup> See glossary.

<sup>11</sup> See glossary.

implausibly on their heads, with intertwining acanthus, and scrolling band work dominating the composition; the foliage is lighter and there is also a greater sense of 3D to the central motif.

### III. The use of individual elements of the grotesque ornament

The grotesque as an ornamental motif is readily transferable to any surface. For example, the scrolling strap work can be transferred into a variety of ornamental motifs, such as the lambrequin<sup>13</sup>. The faience<sup>14</sup> Rouen dish (see catalogue plate 5), with its circular *style rayonnant*<sup>15</sup>, illustrates this transformation. The band work has become a pendant ornament in its own right, repeated at regular intervals around the border and centre of the dish's decoration. One can also see the use of the diapered background, found on grotesque designs, and interestingly on the apron of the *bureau mazarin* (see catalogue plate 3). The similar use of the lambrequin on metalwork can be seen on the Boulle *contre-partie* marquetry candle stands (see comparative plate 3), with tripod bases each consisting of three volute-shaped feet with lambrequins between gilt bronze fringes<sup>16</sup>. Female gilt bronze masks crowned with laurel and with drapery below the chin are mounted to the tops of the lambrequin marquetry which are similar in effect to the central motif of a grotesque design surrounded by its band work structure.

As the band work in grotesque ornament was often used in isolation without the grotesque, as illustrated by the lambrequin, it came to be used as decoration around the edge of a ceiling. The strap work would grow out from the cornice creating elaborate patterns of its own, whilst the centre of the ceiling would have a similar circular decoration. Thus the entire grotesque ornament did not have to be replicated to achieve the same decorative effect. Nicolas Pineau also illustrates the effect of Jean Berain's grotesques in his engraved design for sconces, consoles, and mirrors, from the late 1720s, which shows a light rendering of *bérainesque*<sup>17</sup> ornament (see comparative plate 4). The intertwining straight and curving strap work creates similar polygonal compartments reminiscent of Saracenic ornament; the strap-work that intertwines at the base of each

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<sup>12</sup> Kalnein, W., and Levey, M., *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France*, (Middlesex, Baltimore, and Victoria Australia, 1972), pg 232.

<sup>13</sup> See glossary.

<sup>14</sup> See glossary.

<sup>15</sup> See glossary.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture, volume II*, (London, 1996), pg 616.

<sup>17</sup> See glossary.

design is also reminiscent of the lambrequin pendant derived from Berain engravings illustrated on the Rouen dish and Boulle candle stands.

#### IV. The development of the grotesque ornament after Jean Berain

Although Jean Berain had already begun to dissolve the architectural supports of the grotesque towards the end of the seventeenth century, his successors, in particular Claude Audran (1658-1734) developed it even further. With Audran and the *ornemanistes* of the early eighteenth century, the grotesque became even more delicate and shallow, the dynamic plasticity of the baroque being eliminated. A comparison between the textile of 1699, the design provided by Audran for the series at the Gobelins (see comparative plate 5), and his later panelling in the salon at the Chateau de Réveillon from around 1730 (see comparative plate 6) illustrates this change. Audran has eliminated the 3D aspect to the central motif and replaced it with a scene in a 2D medallion; more noticeably the band work has become fine in the extreme, moving towards the edge of the design, and no longer covering every inch of the available space. In Watteau's sketch for a grotesque (see comparative plate 7), made between 1715 and 1720, one can see the freedom with which the artist represents the composition, illustrating how far the evolution of the grotesque has come since the early days of Berain's measured engravings.

The figures in these later grotesques of the eighteenth century also become more animated, the men and monkeys becoming more involved in the scrolls that surround them. This can be seen in the painted leather screens with grotesque designs after Christophe Huet (1700-59) (see catalogue plate 6). The exoticism is more pronounced as monkeys scatter the delicate scrollwork. Dressed up in fantastical costumes, the monkeys seem to take on human characteristics whilst interacting with each other. Jean Berain's mainly exclusive classical vocabulary of characters was also developed by his followers to include more exotic figures, fair theatres, and oriental costumes. For example, Gillot, Watteau, and Lancret explored the genre of the grotesque by adding *commedia dell'arte* figures, gallant pilgrims, Turks and Chinese figures. However the basic features of Berain's work are still present in all of the above; the lines of band work, alternately straight and scrolled, the acanthus foliage sprouting from them at intervals, the interlacements, and the tendency of the lines to form polygonal compartments<sup>18</sup>. This is

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<sup>18</sup> Ward Jackson, P., *Some Mainstreams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500-1750*, (Victoria and Albert Museum), pg 28.

testimony to the far-reaching effect that Berain's work had on the ornament of the grotesque, and consequently the role he and his grotesque designs were having on the developing ornament of the rococo.

## **Chapter 3 – The Figure**

The arts of the grotesque, the *fête galante*<sup>19</sup>, and the *fête champêtre*<sup>20</sup>, operated at the edges of artistic endeavour as constituted by the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* and as defined by the theory of a hierarchy of genres<sup>21</sup>. However, in the context of the evolution of ornament, these minor genres played the dominant role in the evolution of the figure.

### **I. The influence of the *commedia dell'arte*, and the *fête galante***

The figures of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*<sup>22</sup> had been the subject of increasing representation in French art since their first appearance at the court of Catherine de Medici during the Renaissance. Under the rococo, the representation of these theatrical characters coincided with the development of the genre of the *fête galante*; elegant couples strolling through idyllic landscapes or sumptuous unreal architectural settings, flirting decorously in theatrical costumes. Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) is seen as the first pioneer of this minor genre in French art, his paintings incarnating the elegant leisure and staged manners of the aristocracy.

Watteau owes much to the influence of Claude Gillot (1673-1722) and Claude Audran. Gillot, like Watteau, had been interested in theatre, and visited theatres and fairs to study the characters and establish a repertoire of subjects. It was probably through this connection that Gillot and Watteau met c.1704-5<sup>23</sup>. Through working with Audran, who was introduced to him by Gillot c.1708-9, Watteau was introduced to the art of ornament, Audran being one of the best exponents of the ornamental grotesque at that time. Therefore, by the age of twenty-five, Watteau had developed both his taste for theatre and his ability for ornamental design. Although very few of Watteau's ornamental works survive, from what does remain the influence of Gillot and Audran is discernible. A good example is the Nointel panel, "L'Enjoleur" (see catalogue plate 7), painted by Watteau around 1707-8 for the Marquis de Nointel. Like Gillot and Audran, Watteau uses foliate scrolls, scallops, pedestals, and leaves, placing his gallant figures in the centre on a type of stage. The central motif has a 3D aspect to it, and is surrounded by a border of foliate

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<sup>19</sup> See glossary.

<sup>20</sup> See glossary.

<sup>21</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 177.

<sup>22</sup> See glossary.

<sup>23</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 18.



scrolls, pushed to the edge and no longer intruding on the central figures, as developed in the later grotesques of Audran. Watteau's own style is also apparent, depicting his subject matter in a gentler, more delicate, and therefore more rococo way than either Audran or Gillot had achieved.

Watteau's work was a popular model for the decorative arts, his designs having influence far beyond his death in 1721, appearing frequently on objects of the mid-eighteenth century. Designs of his characters were favoured by Sèvres, Meissen, and Dresden, with motifs also found on Delft faience and Portuguese ceramic ware. The Watteau designs favoured by Meissen featured the *commedia dell'arte* characters, such as Harlequin, produced on their own or to adorn creations in gilt bronze, such as the Waddesdon clock (see catalogue plate 8). Here, a porcelain representation of Harlequin is seated under an arbour playing the bagpipes, surrounded by birds, flowers, and foliage. The assemblage reflects the influence of the *commedia dell'arte* figures and also the parkland atmosphere of the *fête galante*. Watteau's painting "The Gallant Harlequin" (see comparative plate 9) is an example of his *fête galante* art that inspired such reproductions in the decorative arts. Harlequin is pictured in an Arcadian-like landscape, which is both rural and courtly. He flirts with Colombine, whilst others, including Crispin, read books and play musical instruments.

## II. The use of the figure within other ornamental motifs

Perhaps one of the reasons for Watteau's success as an *ornemaniste* was that his designs could be put to a variety of uses, and none more so than in the case of his figures. For example, "La Balanceuse" and "L'Escarpolette" (see comparative plate 10) are both engravings by Louis Crépy after Watteau. The same structural frame work as Watteau's "L'Enjoleur" has been used to frame "La Balanceuse", placing the scene on a perspectival platform surrounded by gentle grotesque-like scrollwork. Jacques de Lajoue (1686-1761) has designed his cartouches<sup>24</sup> (see comparative plate 11) to suit the particular figure within them. Above, a figure of a woman is pictured in an architectural ornamental garden; thus the surrounding cartouche is made up of architectural elements, such as fountains and cascading water, similar to details that could be found in an ornamental garden. Below, a figure of a woman is depicted under a tree in a more rural setting; consequently the surrounding cartouche is made up of more vegetal decoration,

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<sup>24</sup> See glossary.

featuring flowers, branches, and fruit<sup>25</sup>. Subjects and figures created by Watteau thus became an integral part of the decorative repertoire with Watteau being the best model one could have in the sphere of interior decoration.

The name François Boucher (1703-70) is often associated with Antoine Watteau; from a younger generation, Boucher continued the development of the minor genres in the later years of the first half of the eighteenth century. His work tended to evoke the more frivolous side of eighteenth century *gallantry*, erotically charged and dominated by love<sup>26</sup>. His themes were also used in the decorative arts, like those of Watteau, deriving from engravings after his paintings or, in some cases, from drawings that Boucher executed specifically for the purpose. For example, the pair of Sèvres flower vases *a oreille* (see catalogue plates 9a and b) depict cherubs in the style of Boucher. The cherub of fire carries a magnifying glass and a torch, similar to Boucher's drawing "L'Astronomie"; the cherub of water carries a horn running with water, the cherub of earth carries fruit, and the cherub of air, a pair of doves. Boucher's cupids were a motif commonly used in the decorative arts, particularly in cartouches on gilded porcelain; they tend to sport around on clouds or appear as more earthly infants engaged in some type of activity, often with erotic symbolism<sup>27</sup>.

A similar use of the cartouche to frame ornamental figures can be seen in the use of decorative paintings during the rococo period. Wall panelling takes on similar forms to the cartouche used in engravings, and on ceramics and silver, making the general effect of the painting more decorative. An example of this is the series of paintings by Natoire in the oval salon of the Hotel de Soubise, depicting the story of Cupid and Psyche (see comparative plate 12). The ornamental use of such paintings was accepted by the eighteenth century painter and patron as a luxury object that was designed to please the eye<sup>28</sup>. In the case of the Natoire paintings it is rare that we can still see them in their originally intended position. The panels fit into the elegant surroundings of the room; the rhythms of the figures within the paintings echoed by the movement in the ornamental cartouches that surround them and the delicate colours picked up in the rest of the room, thus uniting the painted and architectural decoration<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Lajoue et l'art rocaille*, (Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1982), 261-2.

<sup>26</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 303.

<sup>27</sup> Svend, E., and De Bellaigue, G., *Sèvres Porcelain*, (London, 1987), pg 97.

<sup>28</sup> Conisbee, P., *Painting in Eighteenth Century France*, (Oxford, 1981), pg 30.

<sup>29</sup> Conisbee, P., *Painting in Eighteenth Century France*, (Oxford, 1981), pg 31.

### III. The influence of the *fête champêtre*

Coinciding with the development of the *fête galante* was the genre of the *fête champêtre*, epitomised by Boucher's pastoral scenes, nature being the ideal background for a nostalgic atmosphere to illustrate an ideal rather than realistic depiction of rustic life. In this genre, the aristocracy could be placed in a pastoral setting that appears to have all the refinements and ceremony of high society. Therefore the influence of the *fête champêtre* painting on the decorative arts was very similar to that of the *fête galante*. Pastoral scenes were reproduced on ceramics, wall panelling (see comparative plate 13) and tapestries, which were frequently used as covers for furniture, as on the marquise settee by Nicolas Heurtaut (b.1720) (see catalogue plate 10). Boucher was in fact the main designer for the Beauvais tapestry factory, producing sensuous designs similar to his painted pastorals. Here, we see an amorous couple reclining in a pastoral landscape, the carved and gilded scrolling forms of the chair acting in exactly the same way as the gilded cartouche on the Sèvres vases or the framing on the wall panelling at the Hotel de Soubise.

The taste for *bergerie*<sup>30</sup> also reflects this increasing desire to evoke rural life as something to be idealised by high society. The gilt bronze perfume burner with Meissen pastoral figures and Vincennes flowers is one such example (see comparative plate 14). Here, village figures are placed around a little hut, with a bird above the door, hens pecking on the ground and a cow eating grass on the right of the scene. The ensemble therefore reflects the interest in rural life, portraying it as something that is genteel, peaceful, and picturesque with no regard to reality. The ornamentation that accompanied pastoral imagery, such as the organic carving on the Heurtaut settee or the porcelain flowers and gilt bronze foliage on the perfume burner, was evidently derived from nature. Nature, whether illustrated through the use of the figure or not, came to traverse all manners of the decorative arts, from foliage carved into furniture to swirling *rocaille* creations in silver and porcelain.

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<sup>30</sup> See glossary.

## **Chapter 4 – Nature**

Nature has always been used as a rich source of ornament to celebrate the natural world. During the era of the rococo, however, its influence reached new heights, featuring in ornament on every surface imaginable.

### **I. Fluidity of form and asymmetry**

An increasing fluidity of form, and eventually asymmetry, coincided with the developing representation of nature in rococo ornament. The early stages of this evolution can be seen in the form and decoration of *régence* furniture. The commode attributed to Charles Cressent (1685-1770) in the Wallace collection (commode, see catalogue plate 11) although dated to c.1735, long after the political *régence* had finished in 1723, still illustrates the style of *régence* furniture. Although its shapes remain heavy and monumental, it is already losing some of the austerity and rigidity of the Louis XIV period, gaining subtle undulations of form. The serpentine curve is applied laterally as well as vertically to achieve the full *bombé*<sup>31</sup> shape, and gradually begins to dissolve into the architecture of the legs. The ornament decorating these forms, however, has evolved less quickly; a striking symmetry is still retained, as are the pronounced mouldings and rosettes characteristic of the earlier period. Although there is an appearance of livelier carving, the legs becoming longer, and the drawers *sans traverse*<sup>32</sup>, it is still sturdy in its proportions, with elaborate gilt bronze mounts covering its surface, illustrating its debt to the ornate decoration found on late Louis XIV equivalent pieces.

Pierre le Pautre's (c.1648-1716) designs for chimneypieces (see comparative plate 15) in French royal palaces of 1698 reveal the same evolution of ornamental contour in the development of interior decoration. The low proportion of the chimneypiece in comparison to the height of the room for example and the use of the tall mirror above, are both innovative to this period. The ornament reflects the influence of Jean Berain, the carved mouldings and cresting showing his characteristic strap work and scrolling acanthus. When compared to the design by Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742) for the *Salon à l'italienne* at the Palais Royal, (see comparative plate 16) in 1717, the evolution to greater fluidity of form becomes apparent. The decoration of the Palais Royal was commissioned by the Duc d'Orléans, Oppenord being responsible for the

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<sup>31</sup> See glossary.

changes between 1717 and the early 1720s. Here, Oppenord creates a richer, more sculptural form of decoration compared with that of the late Louis XIV period inspired by the work of Berain. The contours are livelier and the ornament on the panelling bolder.

By the 1730s, all traces of the remaining architectural framework were gone<sup>33</sup>. The collection of panels in the Victoria and Albert museum (see catalogue plates 12a and b) are an example of the development towards a more organic, flowing style in panelling by the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Previously rectangular, these wall panels have become inclined towards each other, interlocking, with cartouches arranged on a slant, the curve being the dominating element. Again this coincides with an unbounded and exuberant passion for natural forms. The central cartouche of 12a joins the top and bottom panels through a network of swirling asymmetrical c and s-scrolls. These are then decorated with vegetal and *rocaille* ornament. Two main sources for this characteristic disequilibrium of rococo ornament are Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750) and Nicolas Pineau (1684-1754). One of Meissonnier's most extravagant examples is his centrepiece design for the Duke of Kingston (see comparative plate 17). He has taken asymmetry and fluidity of form to such an extreme that all trace of the conventional form of the object is barely visible; the silver seems to grow as if it were an organic material.

## II. The *rocaille*

Above all, it was the shell that added novelty to the ornament of the 1730s, as *ornemanistes* attempted to recreate shells, mosses, rocks and foam, known as *rocaille*<sup>34</sup>. Alberti notes the Roman fondness for grottoes, describing that he had seen an ancient grotto in which a spring gushed forth from the wall, encrusted with seashells of various kinds, particularly oysters<sup>35</sup>. Revived in the Renaissance, the taste for *rocaille* soon spread from Italy to France and exerted a considerable influence on artists, such as Bernard Palissy. The grotto then was an early manifestation of the nostalgia for the natural<sup>36</sup>. The early years of the seventeenth century saw the flowering of a number of

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<sup>32</sup> See glossary.

<sup>33</sup> Whitehead, J., *The French Interior in the Eighteenth Century*, (Lawrence King Publishing, 1992), ppg 56.

<sup>34</sup> See glossary.

<sup>35</sup> Ward Jackson, P., *Some Mainstreams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500-1750*, (Victoria and Albert Museum), pg 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ward Jackson, P., *Some Mainstreams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500-1750*, (Victoria and Albert Museum), pg 34.

eccentric species of fleshy ornament, termed the auricular<sup>37</sup>, and inspired by the creatures that lived in grottoes. The auricular fashion only lasted a few decades, but its delight in organic forms was certainly an influence on rococo design<sup>38</sup>. The influence of the grotto was thus two-fold: the hard, scaly forms of rocks and shells, mixed with the curving fleshy forms of the mosses, foam and animals that lived within. The two gilt bronze candlesticks (see comparative plate 18) illustrate the way Meisssonier transformed *rocaille* ornament into an abstract form. The candle sticks seem to grow up out of their bases, the elaborate curving forms appearing to be rock and shell work and at the same time water trickling over them into waves.

The Louis-Gaspard Thévenot covered beaker (see catalogue plate 13) shows the use of *rocaille* in a conventional manner. The motifs of dolphin, water, shells, and foliage are cast separately and applied in relief to the simple tulip form of the beaker. The fluidity from the flowing water motifs on the lid and base is also created symmetrically, making the object a silver one decorated with the organic rather than trying to become organic itself, as is the case with Meisssonier. The influx of shell motifs into the decorative repertoire of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century owes as much to the expanding market of conchology as to the influence of the grotto<sup>39</sup>. For example, Pillement included these engravings of shells in his “Ladies’ Amusement” (see comparative plate 19) to be used as an applied decorative motif. *Ornemanistes* also tried to create curls of rock into architectural settings for figures, as can be seen in Jean Mondon’s design for a centre piece (see comparative plate 20) which attempts to make an architectural backdrop out of c and s-scrolls, on a scale that dwarfs the two figures in front. As a centrepiece, it works as an example of the rococo’s taste for the slightly bizarre.

### III. The profusion of flowers

The influence of nature on rococo ornament naturally included the representation of flowers; depicted in bouquets, garlands, festoons, or singly on a stem, flowers traversed virtually every type of decorative art. For example, the panelling imitating porcelain in the *Cabinet Intérieure de la Dauphine*, at Versailles, (see comparative plate 21) is literally covered with foliage and flowers. The Sèvres wall sconce (see catalogue plate 14) shows how floral ornament-when combined with fluidity-seems to grow out of

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<sup>37</sup> See glossary.

<sup>38</sup> Ward Jackson, P., *Some Mainstreams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500-1750*, (Victoria and Albert Museum), pg 40.

the wall, taking on a life of its own. The use of asymmetry adds to its naturalistic representation. This version is tending towards the transitional in style due to its symmetrical centre scroll. An example of a more naturalistic representation can be seen in the gilt bronze wall sconce from Woburn Abbey (see comparative plate 22). Whether represented naturalistically or in a stylised form, flowers took on the fluidity of the rococo style, appropriate to the rococo's feminine, delicate, and elegant atmosphere. The increased use of the flower as ornament during the rococo period is due also in part to its organic nature. Just as Meissonnier designed his silver in such a way as to make it grow and become an organic form, the representation of flowers did the same.

Floral marquetry was a technique that had been used in France since the early seventeenth century. During the early eighteenth century, however, with the increased interest in nature and organic forms in design, floral marquetry became lighter and brighter, culminating in the introduction of end cut marquetry in the 1740s, pioneered by B.V.R.B., Latz, Dubois, Criaerd, and Baumhauer. The bureau de dame, in the Musée Cognacq-Jay, (see catalogue plates 15a and b) attributed to Jean-François Oeben (c.1721-63) illustrates this lighter representation of flowers in woodwork. In particular, it shows the increasing interest in a more near-sighted representation of specific flowers, in this case exotic flowers such as peonies and prunus blossoms represented in a quite stylised way. The floral marquetry covers virtually every surface of the bureau, squeezing the gilt bronze mounts to the edges as a mere decorative extra rather than the dominating ornament as in the Cressent commode (see catalogue plate 11).

As in the case of the shell, the craze for floral ornament reflects the eighteenth century's interest in the scientific, a desire to explain one's natural surroundings and to reproduce them in the interior. The success of the serpentine line thus became inseparable from fluidity of form, *rocaille* decoration, and a tendency to represent the organic<sup>40</sup>. The step from such natural inspiration to the exotic is small.

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<sup>39</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 172.

<sup>40</sup> Barrielle, J.F., Boisset, J.F., Castieau, T., Dion-Tenenbaum, A., Loze, P., and Nouvel, O., *Les Styles Français*, (Paris, 1998), pg 138.

## **Chapter 5 – The Exotic**

The mystery of the east has fired the European imagination since the Renaissance. Chinoiserie<sup>41</sup> is the term used to describe the style in Western art inspired by the east but combined with elements of western design. By adapting Oriental art to European needs and skills, chinoiserie got further away from its oriental original.

### **I. Defining baroque and rococo chinoiserie**

Due to the trade of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the exotic can be seen in ornament at the court of Louis XIV. For example, Louis erected the “Trianon de porcelaine” in 1670-71, covered in blue and white Delft, Nevers, Rouen, and Lisieux faience. The interior was described by Félibien in 1674 in his “Description sommaire du chateau de Versailles” as “travaillé à la manière des ouvrages qui viennent de la Chine”<sup>42</sup>. However, with its pediments and pilasters, it seemed more to be inspired by the classical. This is characteristic of late baroque chinoiserie; the style is restrained, used to evoke the rich ornament and magnificence of another mighty empire. Louis XIV was aware of the heaviness of the style that dominated at his court. This led him to turn down designs for the decoration of the apartments at the Chateau de la Ménagerie for the young Duchesse de Bourgogne because he felt that they were not light hearted enough. The Beauvais tapestry, “An Audience with the Emperor of China”, (see comparative plate 23) illustrates the beginning of the change in use of exotic motif from the magnificent to the fanciful. The subject is baroque, testifying to the glory of the emperor, but the treatment is beginning to show signs of later fantasy, with fewer classical illusions.

By the 1730s, chinoiserie had established itself into the mainstream of European ornament. This was due in part, to its similarity with the rococo; both depend on the asymmetrical, abstract, and curvilinear. These aspects of oriental design became magnified and elaborated upon in French rococo chinoiserie<sup>43</sup>. Huquier’s “Divinité Chinoise”, after Watteau, (see comparative plate 24) is one of the earliest examples of rococo chinoiserie, made in the 1720s. At this time, Watteau turned his inspiration from the *commedia dell’arte* to the east, in line with the increasing appeal of the exotic. Essential to Watteau’s work is the spirit of fantasy, just like in his *fêtes galante*. In

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<sup>41</sup> See glossary.

<sup>42</sup> Jacobson, D., *Chinoiserie*, (London, 1993), pg 36.

<sup>43</sup> Honour, H., *Chinoiserie, The Vision of Cathay*, (New York, 1973), pg 88.



contrast to the earlier Watteau, Boucher's chinoiserie work is endowed with a sense of Parisian sensuality. For example, in his "Chinese Garden" (see comparative plate 25) it is as if his figures are oriental in face but have momentarily succumbed to the fashion dictates of Paris<sup>44</sup>. His figures are more solid and voluptuous, and any sense of magnificence has long since disappeared.

## **II. The influence of eastern ceramics and lacquer ware**

The Ming dish (see comparative plate 26) is an example of the early blue and white imported wares that were widely imitated in Europe. For example, on the Rouen dish (see catalogue plate 5), in line with the trend in late Louis XIV chinoiserie style, virtually all trace of the east has gone. The border has been transformed into a symmetrical design, influenced more by the work of Berain than by Ming ware. By the eighteenth century, however, a greater variety of imports were available, such as the popular kakiemon<sup>45</sup> style with its light decoration and asymmetrical pattern. For example, the Saint Cloud tureen (see comparative plate 27) is an attempt to imitate kakiemon ware by the west. However, Saint Cloud has misunderstood the importance of sparse ornament, covering the western version in design. Amongst the attractions of imitating eastern ceramic design was the interest in collecting the original and mounting them, to make them conform to the current decorative style. This can be seen in the celadon green vase (see catalogue plate 16), mounted in gilt bronze as a ewer. Objects had been mounted for centuries: silver mounts were favoured in the earlier reign of Louis XIV, being replaced by gilt bronze under the rococo. The ewer not only illustrates the asymmetrical and curvilinear metalwork of the rococo but also the taste for celadon particular to France in eighteenth century Europe.

Lacquer<sup>46</sup> was also an import of great popularity. Under the rococo the tops of seventeenth century cabinets became the fronts of commodes, and the sides and doors became the sides. Panels were not usually large enough for the whole front of a commode, and therefore the familiar break front facades readily accommodated three lacquer panels, the gilt bronze mounts concealing the joins between the panels. Again, the asymmetry of eastern design is complimented well by the graceful curves of rococo mounts. The work of Bernard Van RisenBurgh II (see catalogue plate 2) illustrates the

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<sup>44</sup> Honour, H., *Chinoiserie, The Vision of Cathay*, (New York, 1973), pg 92.

<sup>45</sup> See glossary.

<sup>46</sup> See glossary.

peak of rococo style, with his commode's slender elegant curves combining the use of Japanese panels and French japanning<sup>47</sup> work. Just as French potteries and porcelain factories sought to imitate the ornament found on eastern ceramics, furniture makers tried to imitate the effect of lacquer, especially as it was a rare and expensive commodity. The highest quality japanning is *Vernis Martin*<sup>48</sup>, illustrated overall on the blue and white commode by Criaerd, (see comparative plate 28). This shows blue and white to still be the colours most associated with the east following the importation of earlier ceramic ware.

### III. Tributaries of chinoiserie ornament

Several tributaries of ornament can be distinguished amongst the generic term of the exotic during the rococo period, the use of monkeys-or *singerie*<sup>49</sup>-being one of the most popular. By the seventeenth century monkeys had become associated with China, as they were exotic animals native to lands far removed from Europe. This is characteristic of the late seventeenth century interest in the exotic; there was no real distinction between the origin of the motifs used, due in part to the fact that the European geography of the Far East was still hazy at this time. In seventeenth century Flanders, David Teniers the Younger, a master of subtle, unassuming, everyday life scenes pioneered by Brueghel, produced a number of works featuring monkeys in similar pursuits (see comparative plate 29). The depiction of the monkey in art was not new, but Teniers had depicted them with more human self-assurance, prefiguring their use in rococo ornament<sup>50</sup>.

By the 1730s, rococo artists were seizing upon the monkey because of its exotic connotations and humour; the monkey carries the viewer outside the real world into fantasyland, the land where so much rococo ornament dwelt. Thus the function of *singerie* and *chinoiserie* become one and the same. Nicolas-Quinibert Foliot's (1706-76) *bergère*<sup>51</sup> (see catalogue plate 17), illustrates the use of the monkey as exotic ornament. The otherwise floral and foliate chair gains a sense of humour and fantasy with the addition of the monkey; the circular motif that encircles him also consists of oriental-inspired vegetation similar to the *chinoiserie* landscape designs of Pillement. One of the

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<sup>47</sup> See glossary.

<sup>48</sup> See glossary.

<sup>49</sup> See glossary.

<sup>50</sup> Tompkins, P., *The Monkey in Art*, (New York and Woodbridge), pg 60.

<sup>51</sup> See glossary.

most famous depictions of *singerie* during the rococo period is the *Grande* and *Petite Singerie* at Chantilly, by Christophe Huet in c.1735. Originally commissioned by Louis Henri de Condé, the Duc de Bourbon -a known collector of orientalia- it is now the Musée Condé. The *Grande Singerie* depicts monkeys dressed as mandarins enclosed in rococo gilded *boiserie*<sup>52</sup>. By contrast, the panels of the *Petite Singerie* (see comparative plate 30) show monkeys dressed up in eighteenth century French costume, engaged in everyday activities, in this case hunting<sup>53</sup>.

Turqueries<sup>54</sup> are another stem of the interest in the exotic in rococo ornament. However, turqueries lacked the more fantastic aspects of *chinoiserie* and were certainly a more minor ornament than the mainstream use of Chinese motifs. This may have been due in part to the fact that Turkey aroused less philosophical admiration than China, and that the vogue for turqueries was not sustained by large imports in the same way as *chinoiserie*<sup>55</sup>. Nonetheless, its appeal was similar to that of the monkey; with Turkey's sultanas and oriental baths, it evoked the exotic. There is a certain eroticism in the scene of a perfectly dressed young woman of European appearance with a Grand bearded Turk, as shown in the principal scene on the gold and enamel snuff box in the Wallace Collection (see catalogue plates 18a and b), by François-Nicolas Génard.

The five other enamel panels depict the following scenes. The first shows a young Turk reclining in the shade of a curtain on a large cushion with a long pipe in his right hand; to his left is a low table with a teapot and a cup and saucer, and in the distance is a Roman aqueduct. The second shows a small girl in Oriental costume on a large cushion in front of some columns, feeding some red berries from a branch to a parrot or parakeet held in her right hand, behind, to the left, is an urn from which smoke is escaping. The third is of a fat Turkish boy lying asleep under a bank, with a bow in his right hand and a quiver at his feet. The fourth shows a young European girl in a blue dress seated in front of an ancient building playing the lute, with a cascade to her left. On the underneath panel is a large black moor bending to offer a plate of fruit to a young European woman reclining on a divan, behind whom is a purple curtain with a palm and other vegetation. Each scene evokes a relaxed atmosphere of leisure, some with a certain eroticism; the juxtaposition of oriental and western characters serves to make the turquerie aspects of each scene seem more removed from European reality.

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<sup>52</sup> See glossary.

<sup>53</sup> Tompkins, P., *The Monkey in Art*, (New York and Woodbridge), pg 70-73.

<sup>54</sup> See glossary.

#### IV. The dissemination of chinoiserie ornament through print

As with the decorative cartouche and figure designs, the role of print yet again comes into play with the dissemination of exotic rococo ornament. By the 1740s, for example, Boucher had produced many series of chinoiserie engravings, such as the “Diverses figures chinoises”. They were widely copied and adapted. Chinoiserie wallpapers (see comparative plate 31) were a cheaper option to panelling, although few now survive. They enabled the less wealthy to adorn their walls with the exotic ornament that was at the height of fashion. This wallpaper is taken from a complete set of panels delivered in 1753 for a room in a chateau in the Vosges. The white prunus blossoms are reminiscent of the porcelain factory Saint Cloud’s earliest attempt at chinoiserie ornament, where white prunus blossoms were applied in relief to white porcelain.

Jean-Baptiste Pillement’s (1728-1808) chinoiserie designs were more flimsy and fantastical than any of those of his contemporaries<sup>56</sup>. Some are included in “The Ladies’ Amusement” (see comparative plate 32): a highly important design book and practical guide used by artist-designers and skilled craftsmen for ornamentation of japanned wares, enamels, ceramics, furniture and textiles<sup>57</sup>. In the foreword it is noted that “With Indian and Chinefe subjects greater liberties may be taken, because Luxuriance of Fancy recommends their Productions more than Propriety, for in them is often seen a Butterfly, supporting an Elephant, or Things equally absurd; yet from their gay Colouring did airy Disposition seldom fail to please”<sup>58</sup>. A French fan in the Victoria and Albert Museum (see catalogue plate 19) illustrates the influence of Pillement’s designs, its scene being similar to engravings in his *Amusement* (see comparative plates 33a and b). A couple can be seen in the central cartouche, fishing, dressed in oriental costume, in front of a hut with a pagoda like roof. The scene is almost so fine it appears to be transparent. The fantastical and wispy world that Pillement has encouraged through his work is a far cry from the majestic representation of the east under the late reign of Louis XIV.

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<sup>55</sup> Hughes, P., *Eighteenth Century France and the East*, (London, 1981), pg 11.

<sup>56</sup> Honour, H., *Chinoiserie, The Vision of Cathay*, (New York, 1973), pg 95.

<sup>57</sup> Sayer, R., and Pillement, J.B., *The Ladies’ Amusement*, (London, 1762).

<sup>58</sup> Sayer, R., and Pillement, J.B., *The Ladies’ Amusement*, (London, 1762), pg 4.

## **Chapter 6 – Political, Social, and Economic Context**

### **I. The political and economic effects of the early eighteenth century**

The last years of the reign of Louis XIV were plagued by the Wars of the League of Augsburg, and of the Spanish succession. By 1711, life at Versailles had certainly lost some of its splendour. The Dauphin, the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy and the Duke of Berry had all died, increasing the likelihood of an *Orléanist* regency. This led to a general exodus, from Versailles to Paris, even before the death of Louis XIV, highlighting the switch in influence from court to town<sup>59</sup>. This change was made concrete under the *régence* when the new regent, the Duc d'Orléans, nephew of Louis XIV, officially moved the court to Paris in 1715, not to return to Versailles until 1722. A post-war mood prevailed, with a mixture of licence and greed for money, the regent lacking the power needed to create a unified leadership<sup>60</sup>. The structure of society was loosened still further by the financial crash; there was a depression in land value, easily available credit, low interest rates, and the effects of an inflationary policy<sup>61</sup>. Many were ruined whilst others profited from speculative ventures, penetrating the highest strata of society, marrying into the aristocracy and openly displaying their wealth.

The economic circumstances were thus highly favourable to urban expansion and hotels of the nobility greatly increased in number. The pomp and ceremony of Versailles had already bred a need for relaxation, informality and comfort in interior decoration. Innovative designs had begun to appear at Versailles, in buildings where an informal way of life was the norm, such as the menagerie for the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The use of the grotesque ornament, for example, had also offered relief from the regimentation and authoritarianism of court culture. With the increasingly lavish spending in Paris, however, the decorative arts greatly benefited; the household of a prince or great noble could include a permanent department concerned with architecture and decoration, just like the royal version but smaller. Nobles required magnificence around them, in particular the new rich sought to establish themselves in society through the creation of luxurious surroundings, as a means of asserting their wealth and position<sup>62</sup>. The first thirty years of the eighteenth century thus saw the most luxurious interiors being created

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<sup>59</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 147.

<sup>60</sup> Kalnein, W., and Levey, M., *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France*, (Middlesex, Baltimore, and Victoria Australia, 1972), pg 236.

<sup>61</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 147.

<sup>62</sup> Verlet, P., *French Furniture of the Eighteenth Century*, (Paris, 1991), pg 27.

in Paris with the changes in politics and the economy increasingly encouraging the desire to create a new atmosphere in the ornament of the aristocratic interior.

## II. The role of the *marchand-mercier* in encouraging the evolution of rococo ornament

The *marchand-mercier*<sup>63</sup> played a key role in providing for this renewal of the arts in the centre of Paris. As a major guild, they acted like dealers, specialising in fashionable furniture and satisfying and encouraging their clients' appetite for both novelty and for the exploitation of the possibilities of a variety of techniques used in the same object. They played, for example, a predominant role in the quest for lacquer, purchasing lacquer objects and then organising their transformation into appealing pieces in the *gout moderne*. The B.V.R.B. commode (see catalogue plate 2) is a perfect example to illustrate the use of an imported material by the *marchands-mercier* being transformed into an item of furniture of the highest quality, exemplifying the rococo style. Three panels of Japanese lacquer have been used on the front and sides of the commode, the surrounds have been japanned with *Vernis Martin*, and the joins between the two lacquers hidden by the mounts. The panels have thus been totally assimilated into a rococo piece of furniture whilst still maintaining their exotic origin. The role of the *marchands-mercier* in providing such panels was therefore paramount in enabling rococo *ébénistes* to achieve this look.

The trade card of the *marchand-mercier* Gersaint (see comparative plate 35) illustrates the move of chinoiserie into the centre of fashion towards the mid-eighteenth century. Designed by Boucher, the new title of the shop is to read "A la Pagode", rather than its previous title "Au Grand Monarque" which evokes the style of the court of Louis XIV rather than the more contemporary fashion for the light hearted rococo. An oriental pagode can be seen perched on top of a lacquer cabinet surrounded by all sorts of curious merchandise, such as coral, oriental porcelain and smaller figurines. The text reads "Gersaint, Marchand Jouaillier sur le Pont Notre Dame, Vend toute sorte de Clainquallerie Nouvelle et de Gout, Bijoux, Glaces, Tableaux de Cabinet, Pagodes, Vernis et Porcelaines du Japon, Coquillages et autres morceaux d'Histoire Naturelle, Cailloux, Agathes et generalement toutes Marchandises Curieuses et Etrangeres."

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<sup>63</sup> See glossary.

By supplying materials from the east, the *marchands-mercier* also promoted the imitation of such objects by French techniques. The Criaerd commode, for example, made for Madame de Mailly's bedchamber at Choisy, is entirely lacquered in blue and white *Vernis Martin*, and was delivered to Choisy by the *marchand-mercier* Thomas Hebert. If we look at the gilt bronze mounted clock or perfume burner (see catalogue plate 8 and comparative plate 14) we can see how the *marchands-mercier* have taken the same idea and applied it to the trade and construction of European materials. The perfume burner in particular combines a variety of Meissen figures and Vincennes flowers all elaborately mounted in the French fashion for gilt bronze. Trade in the eighteenth century was therefore characterised by the role of the *marchands-mercier*. It was a time when clients made unreasonable demands to achieve the most fashionable and often bizarre object possible, the *marchands-mercier* and artisans displaying technical mastery and imagination to satisfy these tastes<sup>64</sup>.

### III. The role of status and taste on rococo ornament

The changing ornament in France was also paralleled by the changing character of house and decoration. A new generation of architects was bringing a new use of ornament to the decorative arts, making interior decoration more informal and comfortable than ever before. Personal apartments had furniture that was smaller and more mobile, modern and generally less ornate. The development of the rococo inevitably suited these small intimate rooms. A comparison between the form and decoration of the two bureaux (see catalogue plates 3 and 15a and b) illustrates this parallel change in the interior. The *bureau mazarin* is clearly far more stately, formal, and heavy; it is not designed to be moved but rather to have a certain place within a room from where it can fulfil its role. The smaller *bureau de dame*, in contrast, is an exact example of what was desired in the more comfortable personal apartments; it is small and mobile, and therefore can serve a variety of purposes, also illustrated by the fact that it is mechanical. In relation to the development of ornament in this context, the evolution of the interior suited the evolving rococo style; the rococo was feminine, delicate, and ingenious, and the interior and ornament both encouraged the other to develop in similar ways.

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<sup>64</sup> Verlet, P., *French Furniture of the Eighteenth Century*, (Paris, 1991), pg 12.

In the *ancien régime* expenditure was an indication of status, it was a public act of responsibility governed by moral codes to proclaim and celebrate the presence of rank<sup>65</sup>. The nobility therefore needed to distinguish themselves by increasing the visual symbols of their rank. They vied with each other for the most novel and fashionable ornament and interior, as a way of gaining advantage over each other. It was inevitably in the *appartements de société* that this contest for fashion was acted out. The successive turnover in decoration in these apartments no doubt encouraged the creation of new materials and the elaboration of new styles. The different strata of the nobility evidently had different agendas. Those with high rank sought to maintain it by spending inconspicuously to minimise the resentment of others. Watteau's patrons, for example, differed considerably from Audran's. Audran had worked for the highest in elite society whereas it was the middling and lesser nobility that sought Watteau. For this secondary nobility, the urbanisation of power had gained them titles, but it was still the acquisition of land that generated status. Their taste for pastoralism sustained their hopes and frustrations<sup>66</sup>; Watteau offered nobles a rural metaphor for their pretensions to aristocracy.

Through print, however, ornament became separated from the regulations of decorum and was made available to a wider section of society. Those who might have felt paralysed by the taste of their betters if they actually saw it were encouraged to envy the fashionable interior when they saw it reproduced in print. The printing press therefore did more than just replicate decoration; the life the rococo presupposed was also made more widely accessible. Rococo decoration became removed from courtly and noble culture, and with this became open to criticism as early as the mid-eighteenth century. In the Marquis d'Argens', "Réflexions critiques sur les différentes écoles de peinture" of 1752, for example, he noted that "there is nothing so contrary to perfection in painting as this manner of the grotesque and of the bambochade which entirely removes that spirit of nobility so necessary to sacred and secular history... It is true that they (artists) imitate nature but this nature is extravagant, comique, theatrical, fancifully dressed..."<sup>67</sup>. The criticism of the rococo decorative style thus illustrates the spread of rococo ornament beyond the realms for which it was intended and also the proclamation of bourgeois

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<sup>65</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 81.

<sup>66</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 154.

<sup>67</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 297.



power through patronage in the arts. Méré said of the period, “Under the government of a pedant, pedantry comes into fashion”<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Scott, K., *The Rococo Interior*, (New Haven and London, 1995), pg 136.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusion**

### **I. Retrospective**

In light of the exhibition's illustration of the evolution of rococo ornament, it is interesting to look back at the exhibition's introductory exhibits, the Oppenord commode from c.1695, and the B.V.R.B. commode from c.1750-60 (see catalogue plates 1 and 2). It is the ornament of the grotesque and the figure that seems to dominate in the Oppenord commode, with its grotesque marquetry on the front central panel, and its profusion of gilt bronze masks, be they female, male, or lions' heads. By contrast, the opposite is true of the B.V.R.B. commode; naturalistic, not classical, forms make up the gilt bronze mounts, and the influence of the exotic is its most outstanding feature.

This is not to say that these four sources of ornament influenced the rococo in the order that has been presented. They merged into each other, constantly interacting and effecting the overall evolution of rococo ornament. The figure, nature, and the exotic, for example, can all be present in the grotesque, just as the boundaries between nature and the exotic become blurred with the use of the shell and oriental flowers. The exotic can depict oriental figures and monkeys, once the realm of the grotesque, just as the figure can be adorned with elements from nature.

### **II. Tracing rococo ornament after its decline**

The origins of these four sources of rococo ornament have been established in their relevant chapters, as has their synthesis together under the rococo. What, then, happened to them in the succeeding decades and centuries? The popularity of *commedia dell'arte* figures certainly continued to varying degrees. In the nineteenth century, the characters were reinvented again, Pierrot becoming the emblem for Romanticism with his inner moods and despair; Harlequin and Polcinella, characteristic of the rococo with their light hearted humour, were not melancholic enough for the Romantic and Symbolist artists. Nature, as a constant source of inspiration to man, is evidently omnipresent in ornament, varying only in the way it is represented.

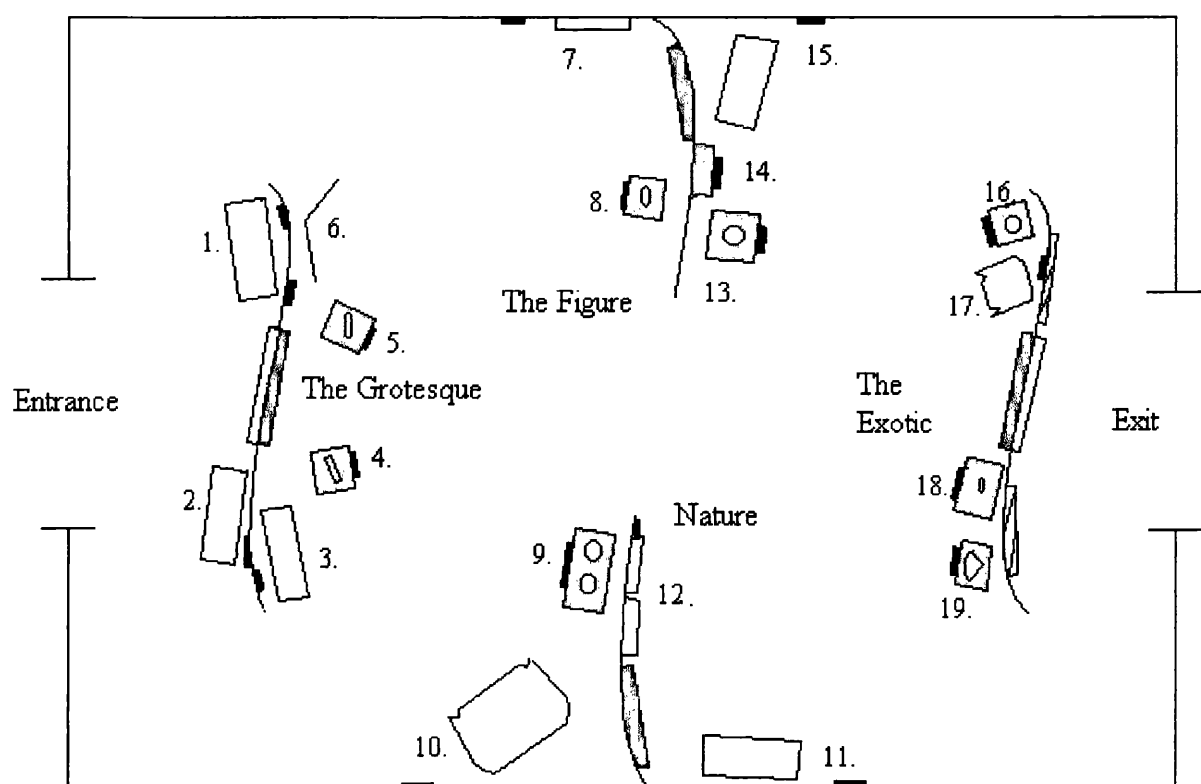
On entering the neo-classical period in the later decades of the eighteenth century, however, the evolution of rococo ornament appears to have come full circle. Exoticism was falling from fashion, playing a less dominant role in the decorative arts; this was due in part to the evolution of porcelain in Europe and all the new decoration that was

produced as a result. The rise of Sèvres to be the leading place of fashion, for example, shows virtually no chinoiserie ornament, deriving its fame from its neo-classical ware that, appropriate to a royal porcelain factory, based itself on a distinctively European style. Exoticism was not to appear again until the turn of the nineteenth century under Napoleon and his campaigns in Egypt, inspired by the late eighteenth century taste for archaeology.

The rival to the use of exoticism as ornament was the renewed interest in the grotesque. As has been illustrated, the use of the grotesque ornament played a dominant role in the evolution of the ornament of the rococo, although as an ornament itself it had ceased to be much used by the height of the rococo period in the mid eighteenth century. The designers of the neo-classical period, with their interest in archaeological accuracy, revived the ornament, using it in what they considered to be its purest antique form, based on accurate depictions discovered in the excavations of the time. It became elegant and graceful and lasted well into the twentieth century as a motif of the decorator's stock in trade.

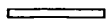



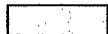
It would seem, therefore, as illustrated by the life of the grotesque, that if ornament is to survive as an independent artistic system, it must be adaptable, continually transforming and renewing itself in line with current trends. The character of rococo art and the society in which it lived enabled four main sources of ornament, taking inspiration from both east and west, to evolve into one cohesive style. It is through the ornamental motifs of this style, therefore, that the spirit of the rococo is truly expressed.

**Appendix**



## **Exhibition Floor Plan**

### **Key:**

- 1... Numbers correspond to catalogue numbers
-  Introduction and Conclusion Labels
-  Section Labels
-  Object Labels, including illustrations of comparative images where appropriate
-  Photos of first two exhibits
-  Display cases for smaller objects

**Exhibition Catalogue**

1.

A LOUIS XIV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED BOULLE MARQUETRY COMMODE

c.1695

Attributed to Alexandre-Jean Oppenord, (c.1639-1715)

The *lumachella*<sup>69</sup> marble top is framed by a gilt bronze moulding, over a frieze of Vitruvian scrolls. The sarcophagus shaped oak carcass is veneered overall with *première-partie*<sup>70</sup> Boulle marquetry of brass and tortoiseshell over a red ground, with gilt bronze banding, and gilt bronze masks. The front has six walnut drawers, flanked by two stiles and arranged in two tiers to either side of a central drop front. The four corners of the commode are mounted with gilt bronze volutes, from which fall acanthus sprays. The legs curve outwards, and terminate in rectangular blocks over gadrooned<sup>71</sup> gilt bronze feet.

Stamped on the back left, EHB, the stamp of E.H.Baldock.

34 ½ in. (87.5 cm.) high; 52 in. (132 cm.) wide; 25 in. (63.5 cm.) deep

Provenance:

Probably de Selle sale, 19-28 February, 1761.

Probably de Billy sale, 15-19 November, 1784.

Probably Dubois sale, 20 December, 1785.

Bought by Mawson, for the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Hertford, Pembroke sale, Christie's, 7 Carlton House Terrace, 5-13 May, 1851.

Hertford House inventory 1870, in the Large Drawing Room.

Hertford House inventories 1890 and 1898 in the Modern Gallery.

Currently in the Wallace Collection, London, museum no. F 405.

Exhibited:

Bethnal Green, 1874-5.

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<sup>69</sup> See glossary.

<sup>70</sup> See glossary.

<sup>71</sup> See glossary.

Literature:

Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Furniture, vol. II*, (London, 1996), pg 632-638

Lièvre, *Musée Graphique*, II, pl. 76

Pradère, *Ebénistes*, pp. 63-4, fig. 10

The commode has been tentatively attributed to Alexandre-Jean Oppenord, father of Gilles Marie Oppenord, and cabinet-maker to Louis XIV. This commode is a good example of late Louis XIV furniture, with its strong architectural form, its elaborate use of Boulle marquetry and gilt bronze mounts, and its classically inspired decoration with figural masks. It is also similar in form and decoration to the designs of Jean Berain (see comparative plate 1); Berain's design shows the same sarcophagus shape, heavily scrolling acanthus, vertical stiles with mounts top and bottom, central mask on the apron, and grotesque marquetry inset into banding.

The commode was to become the principal piece of case furniture in the eighteenth century; as the most expensive and prestigious piece of furniture, the commode became the most elaborately decorated, being placed in the principal reception rooms, and therefore denoting the wealth and taste of its owner. It is therefore ideal to compare two commodes from either end of the exhibition's time period to illustrate its stylistic parameters.

(see catalogue plate 1)

Photo credit: Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Furniture, vol. II*, (London, 1996), pg 633



**Catalogue Plate 1**

Commode, c. 1695, attributed to Alexandre-Jean Oppenord



2.

A LOUIS XV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED JAPANESE BLACK AND GOLD  
LACQUER COMMODE

c.1750-60

Bernard Van Risenburgh II, (after 1696-c.1766)

The *Griotte d'Italie*<sup>72</sup> marble top is moulded, eared, and in serpentine form, over a panelled oak carcass. The front has two long *bombé* drawers veneered *sans traverse* with a Japanese black and gold lacquer panel of a landscape with pagodas, distant hills, and water in an asymmetrical design. It is mounted within a delicate foliate and c-curved framing, with the handles concealed by the central keyhole and lower framing mount; the surrounds are japanned in black *Vernis Martin*. The sides are similarly decorated. The conforming apron dissolves into the arch of the legs in an unbroken undulating line, with angled leg mounts of heavier foliage and c-curves above frond sabots<sup>73</sup>.

Stamped B.V.R.B. and JME<sup>74</sup>.

33 in. (84 cm.) high; 45 ½ in. (115.5 cm.) wide; 20 7/8 in. (53.2 cm.) deep

Provenance:

Original owner unknown.

Acquired by Mr John Jones, a London tailor of 95 Piccadilly West.

Bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of the Jones Bequest, 1882.

Currently in the Jones Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, museum no. 1094-1882.

Literature:

Brckett, O., Catalogue of the Jones Collection, (London, 1930), pg 8

Wilk, C., ed. *Western Furniture, 1350 to the Present Day*, (London, 1996), pg 102-3

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<sup>72</sup> See glossary.

<sup>73</sup> See glossary.

<sup>74</sup> See glossary.

Bernard Van RisenBurgh II became *maître ébéniste* by 1730 and started using the initials B.V.R.B. from c.1735. At a time when French furniture showed relatively crude construction, B.V.R.B.'s concern for quality is evident throughout his work. For example, the bevelled panels allow for the movement of the wood. The swelling *bombé* lines made it difficult to veneer with 2mm thick panels; their survival in good condition is due to the care with which they were constructed. Furthermore, the use of Japanese lacquer and *Vernis Martin* also illustrates B.V.R.B.'s attention to detail and quality, the panels not having been cut regardless of their pictorial content.

B.V.R.B.'s commode illustrates the rococo style at the peak of its development. Compared to the Louis XIV commode, the form has become smaller, more curvilinear and delicate in its proportions, the different elements flowing into each other and no longer defined by separate ornaments. These changes compliment and are complimented by the continuous decoration, which is now more organic and exotically inspired. The panels, typically Japanese in their asymmetrical design, compliment the swirling organic curves of the rococo gilt bronze mounts.

(see catalogue plate 2)

Photo credit: Wilk, C., ed. *Western Furniture, 1350 to the Present Day*, (London, 1996), pg 103

**Catalogue Plate 2**

Commode, c.1750-60, Bernard Van RisenBurgh II



3.

A LOUIS XIV BRASS, EBONY, IVORY, MOTHER-OF-PEARL, AND CLEAR  
TORTOISESHELL MARQUETRY BUREAU MAZARIN

1685-1700

Attributed to Bernard Van RisenBurgh I, (c.1660-1738)

The carcass of pine is veneered overall in *contre-partie*<sup>75</sup> Boulle marquetry with *bérainesque* scrolls, monkeys, flowers, exotic birds, and grotesque figures. The top is rectangular and has a moulded edge. The front has a central concave-fronted drawer and a recessed fall-front; these are flanked to each side by three bow-fronted drawers. The sides have raised panels. The bureau is supported by eight s-scroll legs with two waved and shaped stretchers, on bun feet.

30 ¾ in. (78cm.) high; 47 in. (119.5cm.) wide; 28 in. (71.2cm.) deep

Provenance:

A gift of Mrs J. A. Bonner, Brighton, to the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1901

Currently in the Jones Collection, V&A museum no. 372-1901

Literature:

Himmelheber, G., "Puchweiser, Boulle und die Boulle-Mobels fur Munchen", in *Kurfurst Max Emmanuel, Bayern und Europa um 1700*, (Munich, 1976), vol I, pg 250-63  
Wilks, C., *Western Furniture 1350 to the Present Day*, (London, 1996), pg 74

Bernard Van RisenBurgh I became a master before 1722 and was father to B.V.R.B. II. The complexity of form, surface ornament, and rich colouring dates this particular bureau to the end of the seventeenth century when highly ornate furniture was fashionable and appropriate to the setting of courtly interiors<sup>76</sup>. When compared to another bureau of 1715 in the Jones Collection, (see comparison plate 8) also using marquetry to depict a grotesque design, it is clear that the *bureau mazarin* belongs to the era of Louis XIV. In form, the 1715 bureau illustrates the *régence* period that followed,

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<sup>75</sup> See glossary.

with its move towards a more curvilinear form, seen here in the simpler legs, and its less imposing size.

The use of grotesque decoration illustrates the increasing popularity of this type of ornament at the end of the seventeenth century, particularly through the medium of marquetry. Foliate architectural structures on the drawer fronts can be seen, acting as scaffolds for other decorative motifs, as initially developed by Rosso Fiorentino in the sixteenth century, and introduced into France under Le Brun by the second half of the seventeenth century. The central focus to the design on the top of the bureau, and the grotesque's exoticisms are characteristic of the engraved grotesque designs of Jean Berain.

(see catalogue plate 3)

Photo credit: Wilks, C., *Western Furniture, 1350 to the Present Day*, London, 1996), pg 74

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<sup>76</sup> Wilks, C., ed., *Western Furniture, 1350 to the Present Day*, (London, 1996), pg 74.



**Catalogue Plate 3**

Bureau, c. 1685-1700, attributed to Bernard Van Risenburgh I



4.

A LOUIS XIV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED EBONY, BRASS AND  
TORTOISESHELL MARQUETRY TOILET MIRROR

1713

Attributed to André-Charles Boulle, (1642-1732)

The oak frame is veneered in ebony and *première-partie* Boulle marquetry. The central recessed panel of the mirror back depicts a grotesque design; Bacchus stands on a stylised scalloped shell beneath a suspended floral wreath, flanked by two musicians, and surrounded by an elaborate structure of s and foliate scrolls. This is interspersed with figures, monkeys, and exotic birds, with a border depicting similar c-curves, acanthus, and vine branches. The top of the frame is arched and surmounted by a marquis's coronet and s-scrolls. The s-scrolled sides are mounted with gilt bronze profile heads supported on acanthus leaves. The rectangular base has gilt bronze feet cast as sphinxes. The front border of the mirror and the baluster shaped stay have similar grotesque decoration.

28 ¾ in. (73 cm.) high; 22 in. (56 cm.) wide

Provenance:

Delivered 1713 by the *marchand-mercier* Alexis Delaroue to the Duchesse de Berry at Versailles.

Allotted as a perquisite after the death of the Duchesse de Berry to her lady-in-waiting the Duchesse de Saint-Simon 1721.

By descent to the daughter of the Duchesse de Saint-Simon, Charlotte de Saint-Simon, Princesse de Chimay.

Bequeathed by codicil, by the Princesse de Chimay to her *femmes de chambre*, Mademoiselle Deshayes and Mademoiselle Belache 27 September 1758.

In the collection of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Hertford by 17 November 1868, when the coronet was added by Delaroche.

2 rue Laffitte inventory, 1871, in the *Grande Galerie*.

Hertford House inventories 1890 and 1898 in Lady Wallace's Bedroom.

Currently in the Wallace Collection, museum no. F50.



Exhibited:

Bethnal Green 1872-5

Literature:

Boulle, *Expertise*, pg 37

De Ricci, *Louis XIV*, pg 207

Frégnac, *Styles*, pg 211

Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture*, (London, 1996), vol II, pg 711

Pradère, *Ebénistes*, pg 106, no.265

Weigert, *Berain*, vol II, pg 67-8

The decoration of the recessed panel on the back of the toilet mirror has been shown by Weigert to derive from an engraving by Jean Berain. The engraving shows satyrs adoring the term of Bacchus, rather than musicians as is the case on the mirror, and with terms of satyrs and confronted goats at the bottom of the design, which have been omitted from the mirror<sup>77</sup>. This use of grotesque decoration illustrates the development of the ornament as initiated by Jean Berain from the end of the seventeenth century. Compared to the bureau (see catalogue plate 3) the scroll-work and foliage is becoming finer, flatter, and clearly dominating the composition; there is also a greater sense of confusion between the 2D and 3D elements such as the suspended floral wreath.

(see catalogue plate 4, pictured with stay removed)

Photo credit: Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture*, Vol II, pg 711

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<sup>77</sup> Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture*, volume II, (London, 1996), pg 718.

**Catalogue Plate 4**

Toilet Mirror, 1713, attributed to André Charles Boulle, after design by Jean Berain



5.

## A CIRCULAR ROUEN DISH

Early 18<sup>th</sup> century

The circular *style rayonnant* dish has a central scalloped motif depicting blue and white cherubs on a red diapered background. From this radiate blue pendants towards the border. The border decoration has alternating foliate cartouches and floral s-scroll decoration, also with red diapered backgrounds and blue pendants radiating towards the centre. The edge of the dish is gadrooned.

Provenance:

Currently in the Aigoin Collection, in the Jones Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum, museum no. 396-1870

This faience dish is characteristic of the famous blue and white ware created at Rouen since the directorship of Edme Poterat (1647-96). Such products were invariably painted in the *style rayonnant*, with two distinct motifs that alternate around the border, one reserved in white on a blue ground, the other a blue silhouette on a white ground. The use of Rouen's characteristic brownish red colour is also illustrated here.

The dish shows the adoption and transformation of elements of Jean Berain's grotesque designs into other forms of ornament. For example, the diapered backgrounds can also be found on grotesque designs, and interestingly, is also visible on the apron of the *Bureau Mazarin* (see catalogue plate 3). The main motif of the *berainesque* style here is the lambrequin, the pendant scrolling band work that acts like a fringe ornament to the central motif and the border. Its origin is varied but influences include the engraved ironwork designs of Berain clearly corresponding to the scrollwork of his grotesque designs.

(see catalogue plate 5)

**Catalogue Plate 5**

Faience Dish, early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rouen



6.

A LOUIS XV PAINTED LEATHER TWO PANELLED SCREEN

First half of 18<sup>th</sup> century

After Christophe Huet

Each rectangular panel has a central motif of grotesque figures. The gold painted leather background is decorated with a foliate and scrolling architectural framework containing exotic figures, animals, and birds. The border has painted acanthus leaves, strap-work, and shells.

64 1/8 in. (163cm.) high; 29 1/2 in. (75cm.) wide; 2 in. (5cm.) deep

Provenance:

Currently in the Grand Salon, since 1912, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, museum no. 616

This screen is an example of how the grotesque had evolved by the first half of the eighteenth century. Initiated by Jean Berain, and continued by his followers such as Claude Audran, Claude Gillot, and in this case Christophe Huet, the grotesque has become even more transparent, the space between its decorative elements increasing. The element of exoticism has also increased, figures are dressed up in eastern costumes, and monkeys prevail, now dressed up in costumes themselves such as clowns.

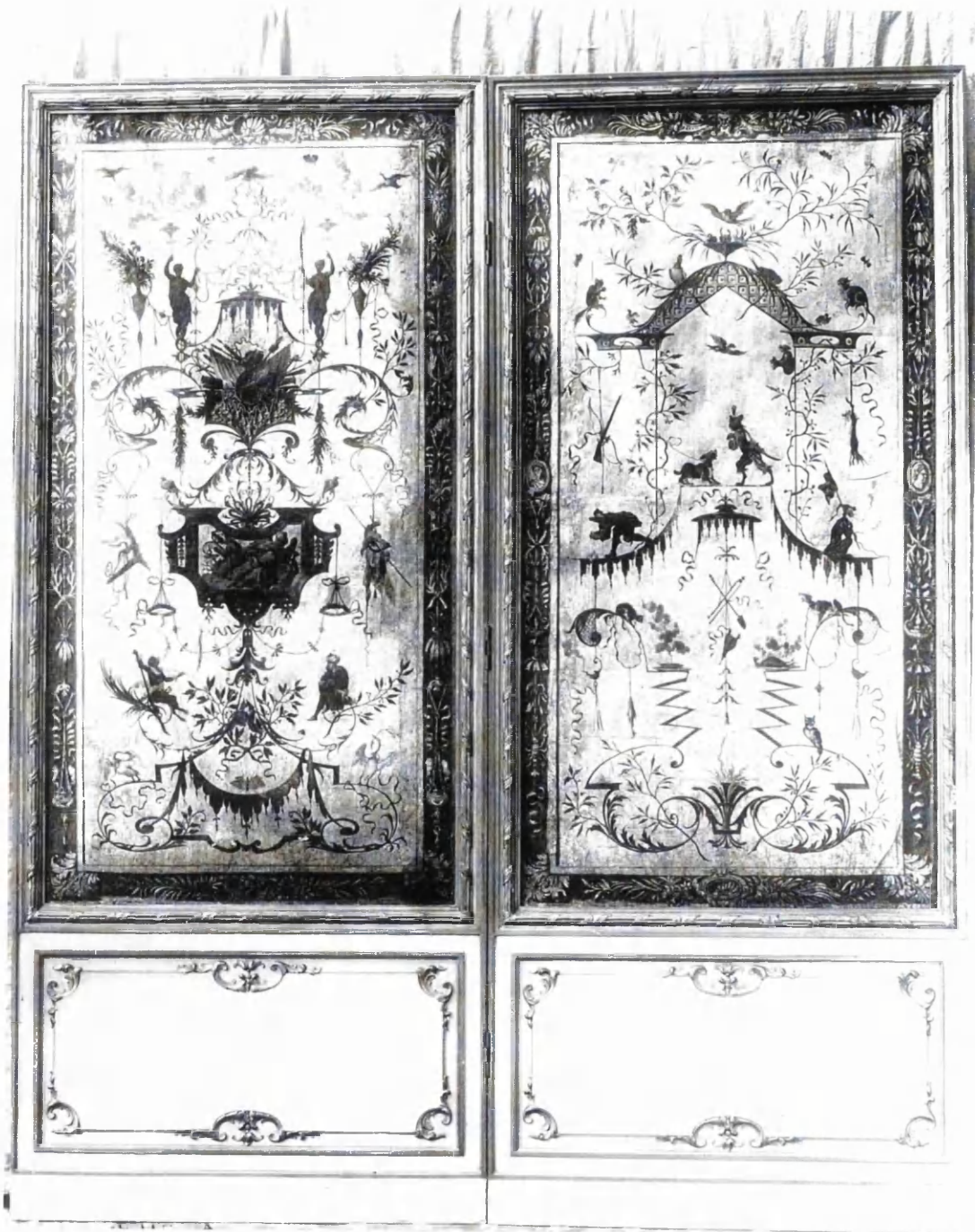
(see catalogue plate 6)

Photo credit: Photothèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris



**Catalogue Plate 6**

One of a pair of two panelled screens, early 18<sup>th</sup> century, after Christophe Huet



7.

JEAN-ANTOINE WATTEAU, (1684-1721)

“L’Enjoleur”

1707-8

oil on wood

31 ½ in. (80 cm.) high; 15 3/8 in. (39 cm.) wide

Provenance:

From set of eight panels commissioned by Louis Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel, for the first floor cabinet of the Hotel Nointel de Poupry, Rue de l’Université, Paris.

Currently in private collection of Jean Cailleux, Paris.

Literature:

Barrielle, J., *Les Styles Français*, (Paris, 1998), pg 134

Posner, D., *Antoine Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 262

Jean-Antoine Watteau pioneered the genre of the *fête galante*, a tradition of depicting lovers in parkland setting that dates back via Giorgione to the medieval Garden of Love<sup>78</sup>. The minutes recording Watteau’s reception piece, “Le Pélérinage à l’île de Cythère”, for the *Académie* in 1712 illustrates the deletion of the words “the painting representing the pilgrimage” to “feste galante”<sup>79</sup>. This was the first time the term had been officially used, showing that his piece did not fit into any recognised category. Once described by the academy, the term defined the essence of Watteau’s painting for the remaining years of his life, providing a label for the genre<sup>80</sup>.

The Nointel panel shows the ornamental grotesque influence of Gillot and Audran, to whom Watteau was still apprenticed at this time; the central motif is framed and bounded by a filigree border and there is a structural dimension to the design from the perspectival rendering of the platform. The set of eight panels were in fact designed

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<sup>78</sup> Chilvers, I., ed., *The Concise Dictionary of Art and Artists*, (Oxford and New York, 1996), pg 565.

<sup>79</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 45.

<sup>80</sup> Roland Michel, M., *Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 171.

to be placed in twos one above the other; this is evident from the fact that the decorative platforms are either viewed from below or above, “L’Enjoleur” was evidently one of the lower panels. Although drawing from Gillot and Audran’s influence, Watteau’s own *fête galante* style is already developing; the ornament is gentler compared to Audran’s and there is also no violation of natural proportion; Watteau’s ornament thus compliments the decorative subject of his figures.

(see catalogue plate 7)

Photo credit: Posner, D., *Antoine Watteau*, (London, 1984), pg 262



**Catalogue Plate 7**

“L’Enjoleur”, panel painting, 1707-8, Antoine Watteau



8.

# A LOUIS XV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED CLOCK

c.1750

The Meissen figure of Harlequin is playing the bagpipes seated under an arbour, which is twisted with gilt bronze flowers on wire stems. Below, the clock drum is suspended from scrolling acanthus foliage with sunrays emerging to the top and right hand side. The four Meissen birds (a parakeet, two goldfinches, and a woodpecker) are supported at different levels by the elaborately scrolling chased and gilt support, with further gilt bronze flowers. The serpentine base imitates a rocky pool, with horizontal s-scrolls, acanthus, plants, and cascades of water.

23 1/8 in. (58.8 cm.) high; 16 1/4 in. (41.3 cm.) wide; 10 1/2 in. (26.7 cm.) deep; diameter of dial, 4 5/8 in. (11.8 cm.)

## Provenance:

Charleston has related a number of the individual Meissen figures on this clock with those sold by Lazare Duvaux between 1748 and 1751.

Currently at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire.

## Literature:

Charleston and Ayers, nos. 26,51,52,53, pg 96-7, 152-7

De Bellaigue, G., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Furniture, Clocks, and Gilt Bronze, Vol I*, (London, 1974), pg 92

The figure of Harlequin and the four birds have been attributed to J.J.Kandler, appointed chief modeller at Meissen in 1733. From this time the work of the modellers assumed greater importance than that of the painters, Kandler obtaining virtual control of the artistic policy of the factory, producing small figures, animals and birds<sup>81</sup>. The numerous paintings by Watteau depicting Harlequin and other characters from the *commedia dell'arte* clearly have their parallel in the decorative arts with such figures

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<sup>81</sup> Fleming, J., and Honour, H., *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts*, (London, 1989), pg 536.

from Meissen; Watteau's paintings promoting the fashion for theatrical costumes and characters as depicted in his *fêtes galantes*.

(see catalogue plate 8)

Photo credit: De Bellaigue, G., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Furniture, Clocks, and Gilt Bronze, Vol I*, (London, 1974), pg 93

**Catalogue Plate 8**

Clock, c.1750, French, with Meissen porcelain figures attributed to J.J. Kandler



9.

A PAIR OF SEVRES FLOWER VASES *A OREILLES*

Painted marks on both vases; interlacing Ls enclosing C for 1755

Incised marks ml and 2 on 9a, and ml and 3 on 9b

1755

Each vase is painted with two white reserves edged with gilded cartouches of palms and flowers, including roses and convulvulus. The reserves depict pairs of cherubs representing the Elements, 9a representing Fire (with a magnifying glass and a torch) and Water (with a horn running with water), 9b representing Earth (with fruit) and Air (with a pair of doves). The *bleu céleste*<sup>82</sup> ground is gilded around the foot with a floral wreath.

12 in. (30.5 cm.) high; 6 5/8 in. (16.9 cm.) wide

Provenance:

Acquired by the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Hertford by 1865

Lady Wallace's Boudoir, Hertford House, 1890

Currently in the Wallace Collection, London, museum number c241-2

Exhibited:

Musée Rétrospectif, Paris, 1865

Bethnal Green, 1872-5

Literature:

MacColl, pg 178 (xii 48-9)

Savill, R., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Sèvres Porcelain*, (London, 1988), pg 139-142

Verlet, pg 201, plate 19

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<sup>82</sup> See glossary.

The porcelain factory of Sèvres is more associated with the neo-classical style and the reign of Louis XVI as its height of fame leading European ceramic fashion really began in the 1760s. However, founded in 1738 in the Chateau de Vincennes, Louis XV became the principal shareholder in 1752 giving it a royal monopoly over other French factories. The crossed Ls of the royal cipher, already used by the factory became the official mark, used with a date letter, “a”, beginning in 1753. The turquoise ground, *bleu céleste*, was used from 1752.

One of many colours used at Sèvres, it formed the background to white reserves with subjects in the style of Boucher. In this case, the attributes of Fire are similar to Boucher’s drawing “L’Astronomie”. The use of a white reserve with gilded edging to form a cartouche within which can be placed a subject reflects the use of print to transfer artists’ figures into an ornamental motif to be applied to the decorative arts. In this case, both sides are of equal importance showing that the vases are meant to be seen in the round. The gilt bronze stands are probably French, and nineteenth century additions.

(see catalogue plates 9a and b)

Photo credit: Savill R., *The Wallace Collection of Sèvres Porcelain*, (London, 1988) pg 140-1



**Catalogue Plate 9a**

A Flower Vase, c.1755, Sèvres, after a design by François Boucher





**Catalogue Plate 9b**

A Flower Vase, c.1755, Sèvres, after a design by François Boucher





10.

A LOUIS XV GILDED WALNUT MARQUISE SETTEE

C.1760-65

Nicolas Heurtaut, (b.1720)

The walnut frame is carved with s-scrolls overall. The arched top-rail is centred by a carved foliate spray, and to either side the corners have carved floral details. Below, the arms have s-scroll supports, and the bowed front seat rail is also centred by a foliate spray. The cabriole legs are headed by further carved floral details. The settee is upholstered with Beauvais tapestry, depicting a couple in a pastoral scene.

Stamped N. Heurtaut

37 3/8 in. (95 cm.) high; 40 1/8 in. (102 cm.) wide; 29 1/8 in. (74 cm.) deep

Provenance:

From a suite of four *fauteuils*<sup>83</sup>, and two marquise settees.

Henry Clay Frick collection, 1918.

Currently in the Frick Collection, New York, museum number 18.5.47

Literature:

Pallot, B.G.B., *The Art of the Chair in Eighteenth Century*, pg 252

Nicolas Heurtaut was a Parisian chair-maker who became *maître* in 1755 and was still active in 1771. His chairs are often covered in Gobelins tapestry, although in this case Beauvais has been used<sup>84</sup>. The main artist employed at Beauvais from the second quarter of the eighteenth century was François Boucher, making designs for tapestries in his sensuous rococo style. It is unknown whether the inspiration for the design of the tapestry covers here came from Boucher, but they clearly reflect similar themes to those of Boucher, that of pastoral aristocracy, and the nostalgic atmosphere of the countryside. In a similar way to the use of the cartouche on the Sèvres vases, the scrolling gilded

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<sup>83</sup> See glossary.

<sup>84</sup> Fleming, J., and Honour, H., *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts*, (London, 1989), pg 393.

form of the chair acts in the same way, framing the tapestry scene in rococo curves and foliage.

(see catalogue plate 10)

Photo credit: Pallot, B.G.B., *The Art of the Chair in Eighteenth Century France*, pg 252

**Catalogue Plate 10**

Marquise Settee, c. 1760-65, Nicolas Heurtaut



11.

A LOUIS XV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED KINGWOOD COMMODE

c.1735

Attributed to Charles Cressent, (1685-1770)

The *Breche d'Aleps*<sup>85</sup> marble top with double bowed front and recessed centre is supported by a *bombé* front oak carcass, veneered overall in kingwood. The four mahogany drawers are quarter veneered and *sans traverse*, inlaid with purplewood and boxwood. The front is mounted in the centre with a female mask in a cartouche, surrounded by shell work and acanthus sprays. The drawers are mounted with c-curves, partly foliate, partly of pierced scalloped edged shell-work ending in flower heads from which winged dragons emerge to make the handles. The corner mounts are oval shells above palm leaves. The sides are similarly mounted. There are gilt bronze rushes framing the legs at either side, which become large volutes overlaid with a small palm leaf. The legs are supported by gilt bronze bun feet.

36 ¾ in. (93.3 cm.) high; 70 5/8 in. (179.3 cm.) wide; 32 in. (81.5 cm.) deep

Provenance:

Almost certainly the chest-of-drawers catalogued in the “Ouvrages du Sieur Cressent” in the posthumous sale of Monsieur de Selle, 19 February 1761. Bought in.

The collection of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Hertford by 1865

2 rue Lafitte inventory, 1871, in the *Grande galerie*.

Hertford House inventories, 1890 and 1898, in the Large Gallery.

Currently in the Wallace Collection, London, museum no. F85.

Exhibited:

Musée Rétrospectif, 1865.

Bethnal Green, 1874-5.

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<sup>85</sup> See glossary.

Literature:

Boutemy, *Louis XV*, pp.132-5.

De Champeaux, *Meuble*, vol II, pp.125, 131.

Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture*, vol II, (London, 1996), pg 847-853.

Pradère, *Ebénistes*, pp.150-1.

This commode has been re-attributed to Charles Cressent, an *ébéniste* during the *régence* and early rococo periods who succeeded Joseph Poitou as *ébéniste* to the Regent. The proportions of the commode as a piece of furniture changed during Cressent's career, many of the developments instigated by him; since the time of Boulle, the legs have become higher, the overall line has become serpentine and *bombé*, and any division between the drawers has been eliminated.

The female mask in the centre of the front is probably influenced by similarly costumed heads in engravings after Watteau. Situated at the extreme end of the *régence* style, this commode is exceptional in its quality of bronze work, its sculptural qualities reflecting Cressent's early career, and the elegance of its proportions, announcing the full style of the rococo; it is sumptuous without being heavy. In comparison with the ornament on the Oppenord commode (see catalogue plate 1) architectural elements have been banished and the inspiration of nature has taken over; the mounts host a profusion of different leaves, shell work, and dragon motifs, all organically combined together.

(see catalogue plate 11)

Photo credit: Hughes, P., *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture*, vol II, (London, 1996), pg 177

**Catalogue Plate 11**

Commode, c. 1735-40, attributed to Charles Cressent



12a and b.

## LOUIS XV OAK PANELLING

c.1745

12a has an asymmetrical cartouche made up of scrollwork, containing a scene from Aesop's fables, of a fox and a sheep. The cartouche is surrounded by similar asymmetrical scrollwork and foliage, with a dragon above. 12b is more symmetrical in design, with a central *rocaille* motif and festoons of flowers, flanked by more abstract *rocaille* work and foliage.

### Provenance:

From a set of panels originally bought in Paris in 1850.

On the back of two panels are nailed cardboard labels printed with the inscription: From S. Pratt's Upholstery and Antique Furniture Warehouse 47 New Bond Street. And in manuscript is added: Lord Henniker, Thornham Hall, Nr. Thwaite, per. Ipswich Steamer.

Purchased by Victoria and Albert Museum, from Louis Koch and Son, 106 Cleveland Street, Fitzroy Square, London, W1, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1964.

Currently in the Jones Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, museum no. w.12-28.1264. 12a museum no. w.12.1964, 12b museum no. w.25.1964.

### Literature:

Victoria and Albert Museum, Furniture Department archive information.

Parts of at least two sets of panelling are included here. After being bought in Paris, it is likely that the panels were assembled at Lord Henniker's with the addition of various new mouldings and extension pieces, and with a number of restorations. The panels were painted once set up in the Jones collection to give them the appearance of unity.

The 8 asymmetrical panels, for example catalogue no. 12a, appear to be from the same series depicting scenes from Aesop's fables, of foxes with different animals. Four of these panels have dragons on the asymmetrical cartouche, the other four do not. The panels, such as catalogue no. 12b, appear to be central panels, from the symmetry of their design, although from a different origin than the eight asymmetrical panels. These panels

show the influence of nature on rococo ornament by the end of the first half of the eighteenth century; not only are the motifs nature inspired but they have become more naturalistically interpreted with their asymmetry, often combined with an abstraction of form

(see catalogue plates 12a and b)



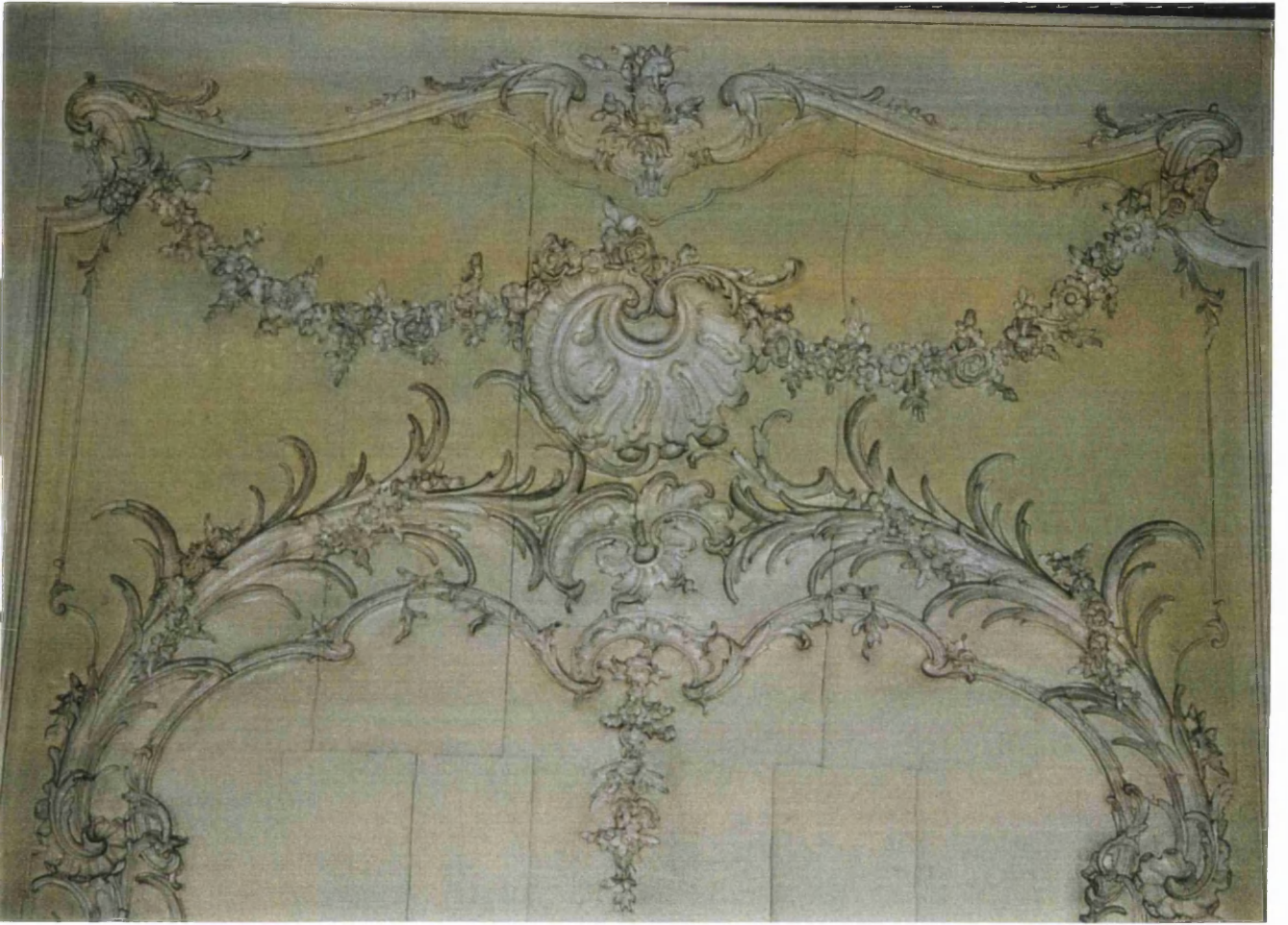
**Catalogue Plate 12a**

Wall panelling, 1725-50, French



**Catalogue Plate 12b**

Wall Panelling, 1725-50, French



13.

#### A FRENCH SILVER COVERED BEAKER

Maker's mark of Louis-Gaspard Thévenot, Paris, 1754-5

The tulip shaped body is decorated with a central cartouche of *rocaille* work, scrolls, a spray of palm and foliage. The cartouche is joined at either side with two sprays of fruit, leaves and flowers hanging from a *rocaille* motif beneath the upper section of the handles. The reverse is decorated with the same. The handles open at the top to become a foliate motif. The lid has banded reading, rising to a two tiered dome, with a separately cast motif of two dolphins resting on a base of rocks from which flow small waterfalls. The junction of the tiers is decorated with waterfalls alternating with shell shaped rocks. The short stem is matted and gadrooned over a circular base also with banded reading.

7 in. (17.6 cm.) wide, including handles

Weight unknown

#### Provenance:

Bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum from Mr. Whitehead, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1867.

Currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum, museum no. s – 1867.

#### Literature:

Dennis, F., *French Domestic Silver*, pg 3.

Lightbown, R.W., *French Silver*, (Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue, 1978), pg 84.

It is unlikely that this covered beaker was intended for anything else but ceremonial use due to its substantial weight, rich decoration, and the fact that it is uncomfortable to hold. The central design is asymmetrical, pioneered by the silver designs of Meisssonier, the forms of decoration reflect the influence of water, the shell, rocks, and vegetation, and the overall feel of the ornament used is one of fluidity. The suggestion that the dolphin motif on the lid indicates the ownership of the Dauphin Louis (d.1765), put forward in Dennis, F., *French Domestic Silver*, pg 3, should be treated with

reserve<sup>86</sup>. As illustrated it is a common eighteenth century motif, connected with the use of ornament inspired by sea creatures and water. In contrast to the ornament, the form of the beaker itself is quite sturdy in structure, and its elements are conventionally assembled in a symmetrical way. This illustrates the fact that the rococo did retain some aspects of symmetry, the bold designs of Meissonnier being asymmetrical in the extreme.

(see catalogue plate 13)

Photo credit: Lightbown, R.W., *French Silver*, (Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue, 1978), pg 84.

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<sup>86</sup> Lightbaum, R.W., *French Silver*, (Victoria and Albert Museum, 1978), pg 84.



**Catalogue Plate 13**

Covered Beaker, 1754-5, Louis-Gaspard Thévenot



14.

## A FLORAL SEVRES WALL SCONCE

c.1760

Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis, (d.1774)

The central element is an elaborate s-scroll, from which grows a foliate support surmounted by a gilded acanthus candleholder. This is flanked to either side by asymmetrical acanthus sprays, supporting similar gilded acanthus candleholders. Below is a smaller acanthus spray pendant. The sconce is white and green overall, and is enriched with gilding.

Measurements unknown

### Provenance:

Acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1895.

Currently in the Jones Collection, V&A, London, museum no. 467-1895.

### Literature:

Thornton, P., *Form and Decoration*, (London, 1998), plate 325

Jean-Claude Duplessis was an Italian goldsmith, sculptor, and designer, who settled in Paris by 1742. His style is more restrained than that of Meissonier, his designs depending on scrolling foliate forms. He joined the Vincennes factory in 1747, moving with it to Sèvres and working there until his death. The ornament used here is rococo in design, seen in the shape of the swirling foliage that makes the sconce seem to grow out of the wall. The acanthus candle supports appear to form a flower shape, rather like a tulip, again illustrating the rococo's desire to re create nature. However, the form is moving towards the transitional between the rococo and neo-classical styles. This can be seen in the severity and symmetry of the central support; earlier sconces of similar design have all three supports twisted and curving out from the wall (see comparative plate 21).

(see catalogue plate 14)

**Catalogue Plate 14**

Wall sconce, c.1760, Sèvres



15.

A LOUIS XV GILT BRONZE MOUNTED AMARANTH AND FRUITWOOD  
MARQUETRY BUREAU DE DAME

c.1760

Attributed to Jean-François Oeben, (c.1721-63)

The oak carcass is veneered overall with amaranth, the floral marquetry of fruitwoods and tinted blue boxwood on a background of sycamore and holly woods. The rectangular double bowed top, is eared with a recessed centre, over a double bowed and recessed mechanical drawer with leather covered writing rest. The slender cabriole legs are headed by gilt bronze mounts of acanthus pendants. The feet are mounted with scrolling gilt bronze sabots.

26 3/8 in. (67 cm.) high; 27 1/2 in. (70 cm.) wide; 13 3/4 in. (35 cm.) deep

Provenance:

Sold by Oeben, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1913 for 75 000 F.

Currently in the Musée Cognacq-Jay, Paris, museum no. J.373.

Exhibited:

Samaritaine de luxe, October 1927.

Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de arte decorativo, 1941-2.

Literature:

Berinstein, V., and Lemonnier, P., *L'estampille – L'Objet d'art*, no. 315, July/August 1997, pg 60-7.

Boutemy, A., *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April 1964, pg 217.

Mauricheau-Beaupré, *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, no. 307 June 1929, pg 142.

Musée Cognacq-Jay, *Le mobilier du musée Cognacq-Jay*, 1930, plates 8 and 9.



Jean-François Oeben is associated with the transitional period, specialising in small mechanical multi-functional pieces of furniture. He became *ébéniste du roi* in 1754, and *maître ébéniste* in 1761. His floral marquetry is elaborate and realistically rendered, turning towards more geometric ornament in his later years. In a similar way to the Sèvres wall sconce, the bureau is becoming transitional in style, its cabriole legs becoming so fine and slender that from some angles they almost appear straight.

Under the influence of lively rococo ornament, floral marquetry became lighter and brighter during the course of the first half of the eighteenth century. As a result of the increased complexity in decoration, where the craze for flowers has meant that virtually every surface of the bureau is covered, the gilt bronze mounts have become more restrained in order not to encroach on the main areas of floral ornament. It is in contrast to the Cressent commode (see catalogue plate 11) where the mounts depict the main ornament and the veneer is merely a background. Oeben's use of eastern flowers also illustrates the increasing rococo craze for the exotic.

(see catalogue plates 15a and b)

Photo credit: Photothèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris

**Catalogue Plate 15a**

Bureau, c. 1760, attributed to Jean-François Oeben



**Catalogue Plate 15b**

Detail of Floral Marquetry of Bureau, c. 1760, attributed to Jean-François Oeben



16.

A GILT BRONZE MOUNTED CHINESE CELADON VASE

Second quarter of the eighteenth century

The pale green celadon glazed vase is of waisted baluster form with a spreading neck; it is oval in section with lobed sides. The gilt bronze mount is made up of open acanthus leaf scrollwork intertwined with reeds and flowers, turning into high curving handles and a projecting spout to make the vase into a ewer.

With mounts, 15 ½ in. (39.4 cm.) high; without mounts, approximately 9 ¾ in. (24.8 cm.) high

Provenance:

“These came from Belgium” (Miss A.)<sup>87</sup>

Currently at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire.

Literature:

Ayers, J., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Meissen and Oriental Porcelain*, (London, 1971), pg 256-7

Objects mounted in gilt bronze reached their height of fashion in time with the height of the rococo style. Consequently, the familiar swirling s and c-scrolls of rococo metalwork can be seen. The implication of the movement of water is not only common to rococo ornament but also appropriate to the use of the sea green coloured celadon porcelain, one of the most popular colours handled by the *marchands-merciers* of Paris in the mid eighteenth century.

Mounting an object in gilt bronze serves various purposes. It is a mark of respect for the rarity of the object, imported from exotic lands; it is therefore also a means of protecting the exotic object from damage. Stylistically, it not only heightens the objects exoticism by juxtaposing it with contemporary western techniques, but at the same time

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<sup>87</sup> Ayers, J., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Meissen and Oriental Porcelain*, (London, 1971), pg 256.

the object becomes modified to meet the stylistic requirements of the western interior, conforming to the current decorative style, in this case, the rococo.

(see catalogue plate 16)

Photo credit: Ayers, J., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Meissen and Oriental Porcelain*, (London, 1971), pg 257



**Catalogue Plate 16**

One of a pair of ewers, c.1725-50, Chinese with French gilt bronze mounts



17.

A LOUIX XV CARVED AND GILDED BEECHWOOD BERGERE

c.1740-50

Attributed to Nicolas-Quinibert Foliot, (1706-76)

The back is flat and rectangular, mounted by a serpentine cresting rail. The arms curve outwards, terminate in scrolls, and are set back from the front legs. The horseshoe shaped seat rests on cabriole legs, each terminating in an out-turned scrolled foot. The beechwood is carved and gilded overall with c-curves, trails of flowers and *rocaille* motifs. The seat and back are upholstered with a cream coloured faille embroidered with flowers, foliage, and on the seat back the scene of a monkey perched under a branch. Marked on the underside of the seat rail with the inventory mark of the Chateau de Chanteloup when owned by the Duc de Penthièvre.

39 1/8 in. (99.4 cm.) high; 31 15/16 in. (81.1 cm.) wide; 31 15/16 in. (81.1 cm.) deep

Provenance:

Part of a set of six *fauteuils* and two *bergères*, that belonged to, and were possibly made for, Louis-Jean-Marie de Bourbon, Duc de Penthièvre (1725-93), the grandson of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

The *bergères* were at one time in the Chateau de Sceaux, which the Duc owned from 1775.

It is probable that the *bergères* were reunited with the *fauteuils* at Chanteloup.

The Duc died on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1793, and his estates passed to his daughter Louis-Marie-Adélaïde, Duchesse d'Orléans, the wife of "Philippe Egalité".

Currently at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire.

Literature:

De Bellaigue, G., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Furniture, Clocks and Gilt Bronze*, vol. II, (London, 1974), pg 596-600

Jarry, M., and Devinoy, P., *Le Siècle Français*, (Fribourg, 1973), pg 116, fig. 101

Nicolas-Quinibert Foliot was a *menuisier*, working mainly during the Louis XVI style period, helping to create the more sober and restrained style of neo-classicism. His work is seldom stamped having been made for the crown and therefore exempt<sup>88</sup>. It is known that he sometimes worked in collaboration with the sculptors Babel and Dupré for the carving of some of his chair frames.

This is therefore a rare example of his work in the rococo style; furthermore, on five of the six *fauteuils* that accompany the two *bergères* can be found traces of his signature, N Q FOLIOT, on the seat frame and inside of the back rail. In 1794, from evidence of the inventory, the set was gilded against a white ground. The existing gilding is therefore considered to be nineteenth century. The use of the monkey as a decorative motif is typical of the *singerie* craze of the mid-eighteenth century, evoking exoticism, humour, and fantasy.

(see catalogue plate 17)

Photo credit: De Bellaigue, G., *The James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Furniture, Clocks and Gilt Bronze*, vol. II, (London, 1974), pg 597

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<sup>88</sup> Fleming, J., and Honour, H., *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts*, (London, 1989), pg 311.



**Catalogue Plate 17**

*Bergère, c. 1740-50, French*



18.

A FRENCH GOLD AND CHAMPLEVE ENAMEL<sup>89</sup> SNUFFBOX

Maker's mark of François-Nicolas Génard, Paris, 1761-3

The box is oval in plan with a vertical wall and slightly convex top and base. The enamel panel on the top depicts a bearded Turk, seated upon cushions at the base of a column holding a long pipe in his right hand. A young woman in oriental costume reclines beside him. Behind the Turk to the right is a black moor in a large turban who leans over a balustrade watching the scene. Four smaller panels depict similar scenes. The panels are edged with curves, the border made up of husks and horseshoe shaped motifs, broken by acanthus sprays, and on the rim of the lid by cockleshell motifs. Lightly chiselled pilasters with foliate scrolls and pendant husks divide the panels, on top of which are baskets spilling swags of flowers.

1 3/8 in. (3.6 cm.) high; 2 3/4 in. (6.8 cm.) wide; 2 1/8 in. (5.4 cm.) deep

148.3 grams

Provenance:

As the snuffbox is not identifiable in the catalogue of the Bethnal Green Exhibition of 1872-5, Sir Richard Wallace may have acquired it after that date.

Currently in the Wallace Collection, London, museum no. G34.

Literature:

Hughes, P., *The Eighteenth Century, France and the East*, (London, 1981), colour plate IV

The use of turquerie scenes as ornament can be seen, like singeries, as a tributary of the theme of exotic ornament so prevalent in the decorative arts of the rococo period. Their depiction on small luxurious objects is also typical, appropriate to the feminine, intimate atmosphere of the rococo interior. The source of the principal scene is unknown,

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<sup>89</sup> See glossary.

but Carle Van Loo or his contemporary J.-A.-J. Aved, were both turquerie specialists and are most likely to be the authors of the scene.

It is interesting to compare the metal work of the snuffbox with other examples in the exhibition; although rococo objects were still being produced at this time, the rise of the neo-classical style is very much present in this work. Note the now symmetrical acanthus sprays, the pilasters, and the pendant husks, all evoking a classical rather than organic origin. The metal work has also become flatter, losing its organic form that it had had under the reign of the rococo.

(see catalogue plates 18a and b)

Photo credit: By kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection



**Catalogue Plate 18a**

Snuff box, 1761-2, François-Nicolas Génard



**Catalogue Plate 18b**

Detail of principal turquerie scene on snuff box, 1761-2, François-Nicolas, Génard



19.

A FRENCH FAN

c.1758-60

Designs after J.B. Pillement, (1728-1808)

The leaf of vellum is painted in watercolours, and the sticks are mother of pearl.

10 7/8 in. (27.5 cm.) long

Provenance:

Acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1978.

Currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum, museum no. T154-1978.

Literature:

Somers Cocks, A., *The Victoria and Albert Museum, The Making of the Collection*, (London, 1980), pg 110-11

The delicate form of an object such as a fan makes it highly appropriate to the depiction of wispy, fantastical scenes after Pillement. Note how each one of the three scenes has been placed inside a decorative cartouche, just how the figures of Watteau were used by engravers such as Lajoue and Huquier. In this case, the structure of the cartouche has become lighter to suit the delicacy of the ornament within.

Pillement's design book, "The Ladies' Amusement" shows similar scenes of flimsy landscapes with tranquil waters and exotic vegetation. (see comparative plates 34a and b.) 34a instructs the reader on how to use such scenes within an ornamental cartouche. It says above "Chinese manner of filling the compartments on their porcelain etc.", illustrating the wide ranging use that such engravings could have, and therefore, also the impact they did have across the broad spectrum of the decorative arts, their use on the French fan being just one example.

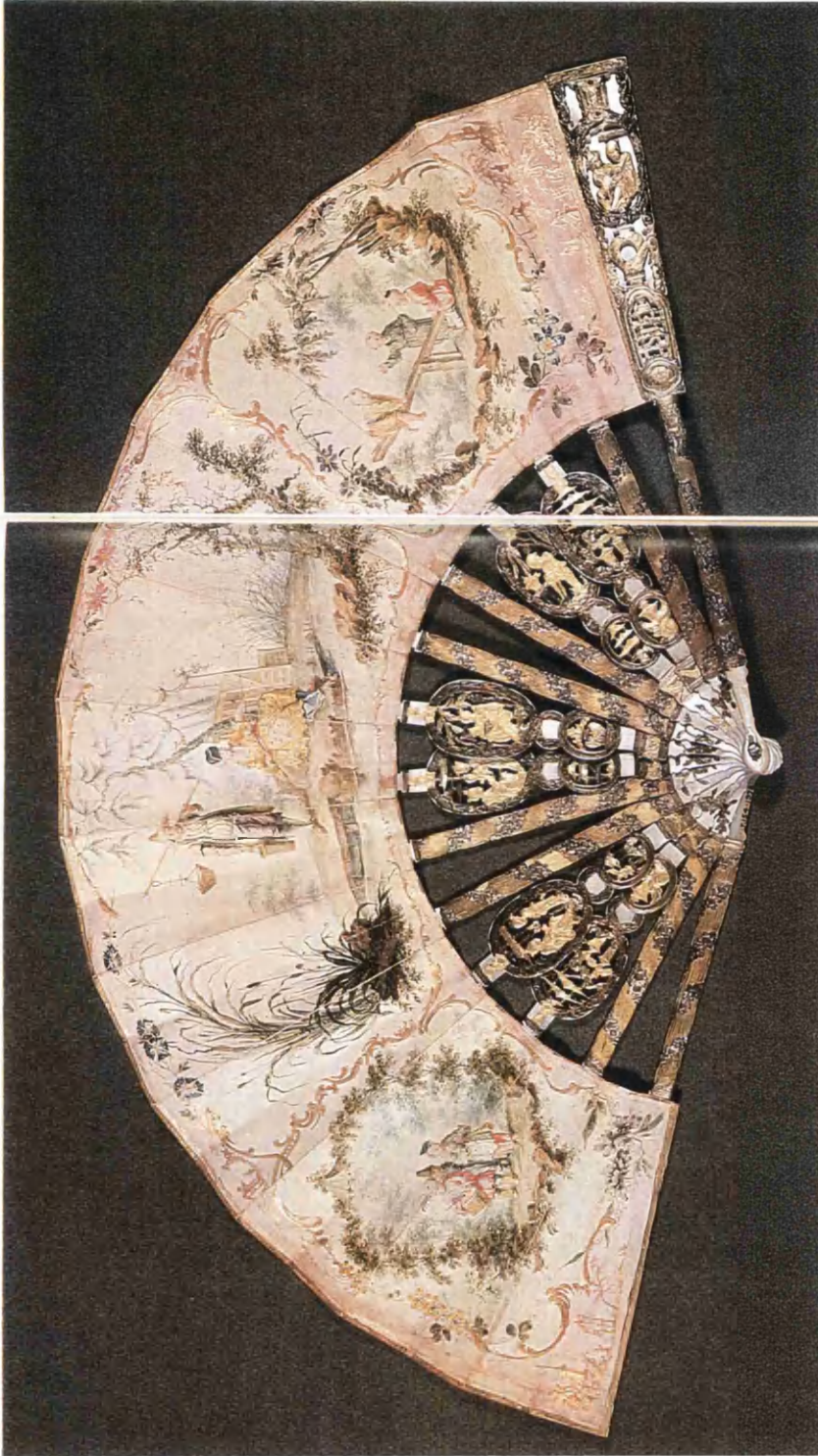
(see catalogue plate 19)

Photo credit: Somers Cocks, A., *The Victoria and Albert Museum, The Making of the Collection*, (London, 1980), pg 110



**Catalogue Plate 19**

Fan, c.1758-60, French

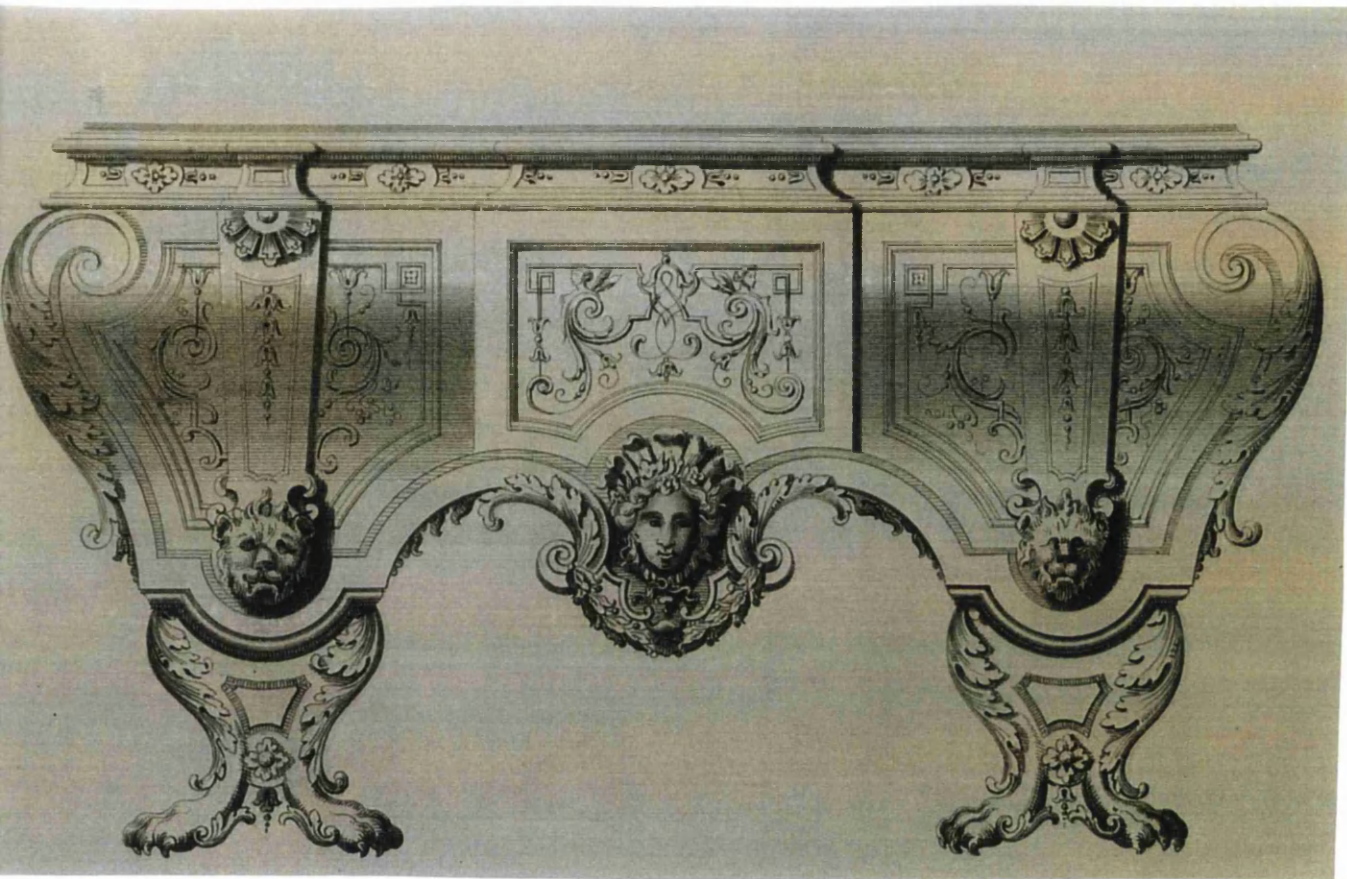


**Comparative Plates**



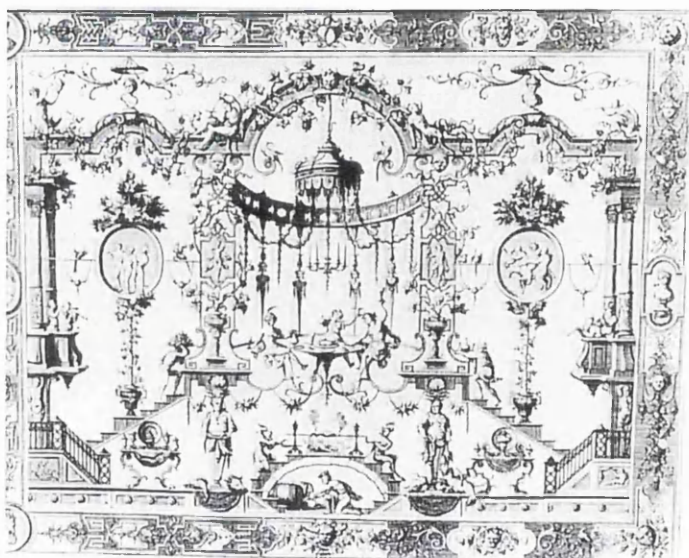
Comparative Plate 1

Engraving, commode design, Jean Berain



## Comparative Plate 2

Engraving, grotesque design, early 1690s, Jean Berain



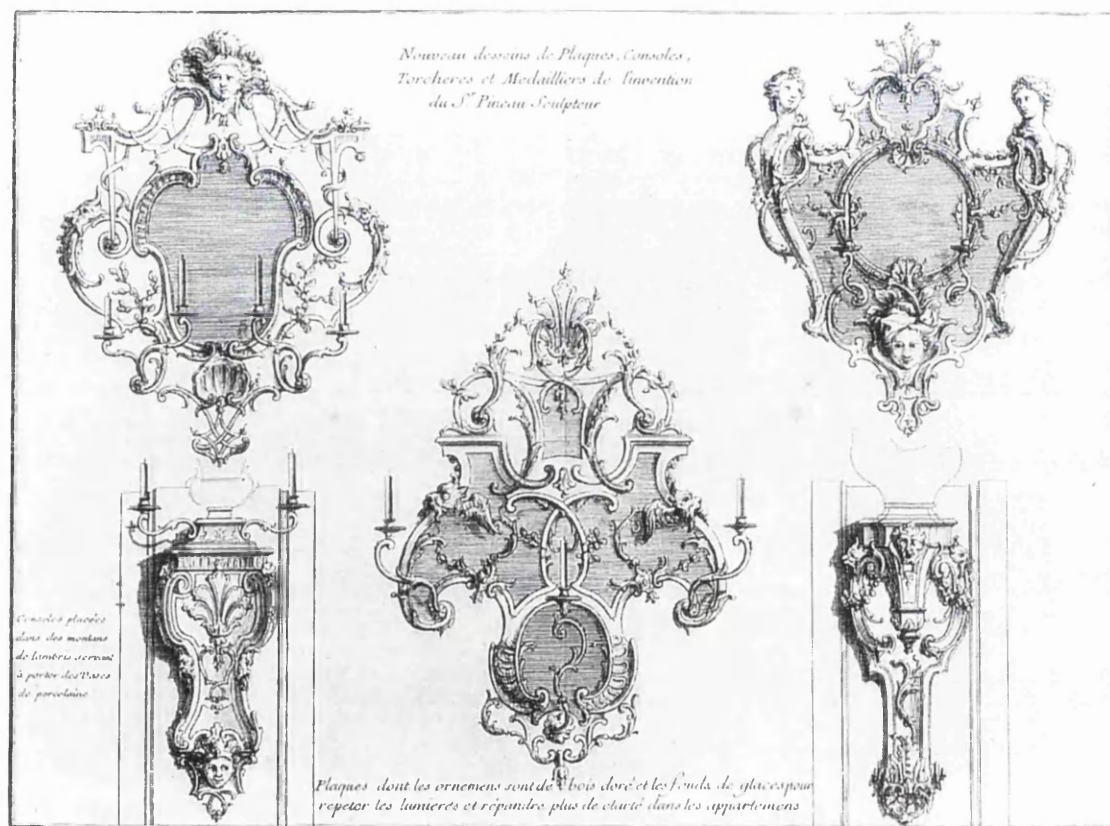
### Comparative Plate 3

Pair of candle-stands, c.1700-10, attributed to André Charles Boulle



## Comparative Plate 4

Engraving, wall light designs, late 1720s, Nicolas Pineau





**Comparative Plate 5**

“Jupiter”, Beauvais tapestry, 1699, after Claude Audran





**Comparative Plate 6**

Arabesque panel, c.1730, attributed to Claude Audran



### Comparative Plate 7

Sketch, grotesque design, 1715-20, Antoine Watteau





**Comparative Plate 8**

Bureau, 1715, French





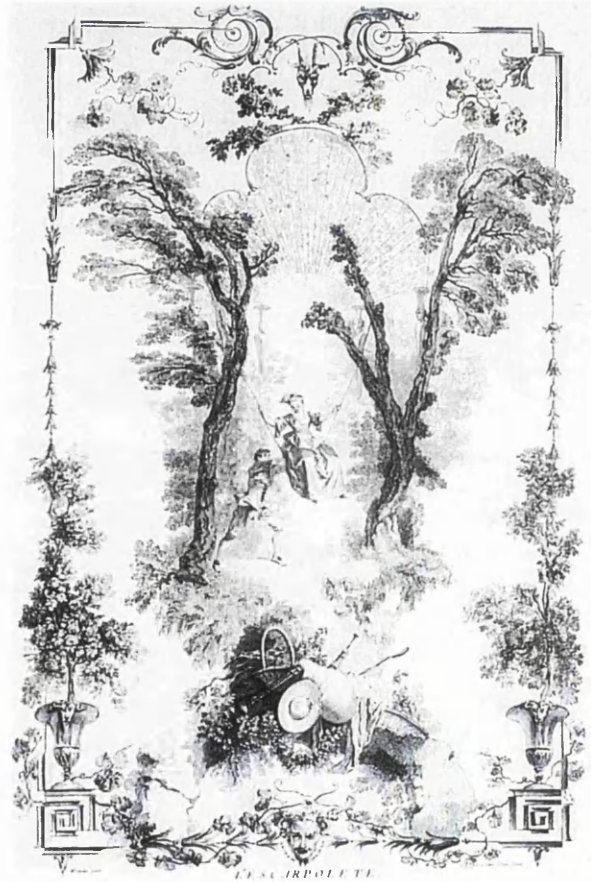
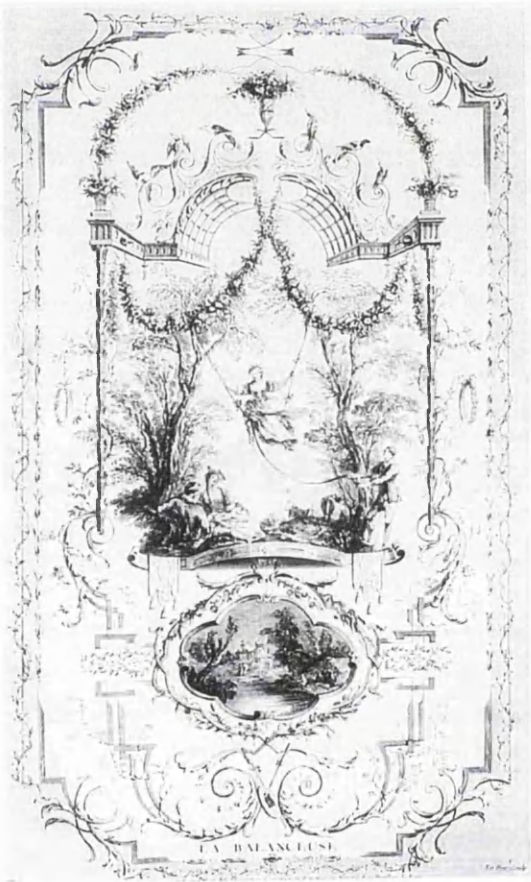
**Comparative Plate 9**

“Gallant Harlequin”, oil on canvas, c. 1725, Antoine Watteau



**Comparative Plate 10**

“La Balanceuse” and “L’Escarpolette”, engravings, after Antoine Watteau





### Comparative Plate 11

Engraving, *rocaille* cartouche designs, c.1735, Jacques de Lajoue



**Comparative Plate 12**

“Psyche”, panel paintings, 1736-9, Charles Joseph Natoire





**Comparative Plate 13**

Wall panelling, c. 1750, Christophe Huet



**Comparative Plate 14**

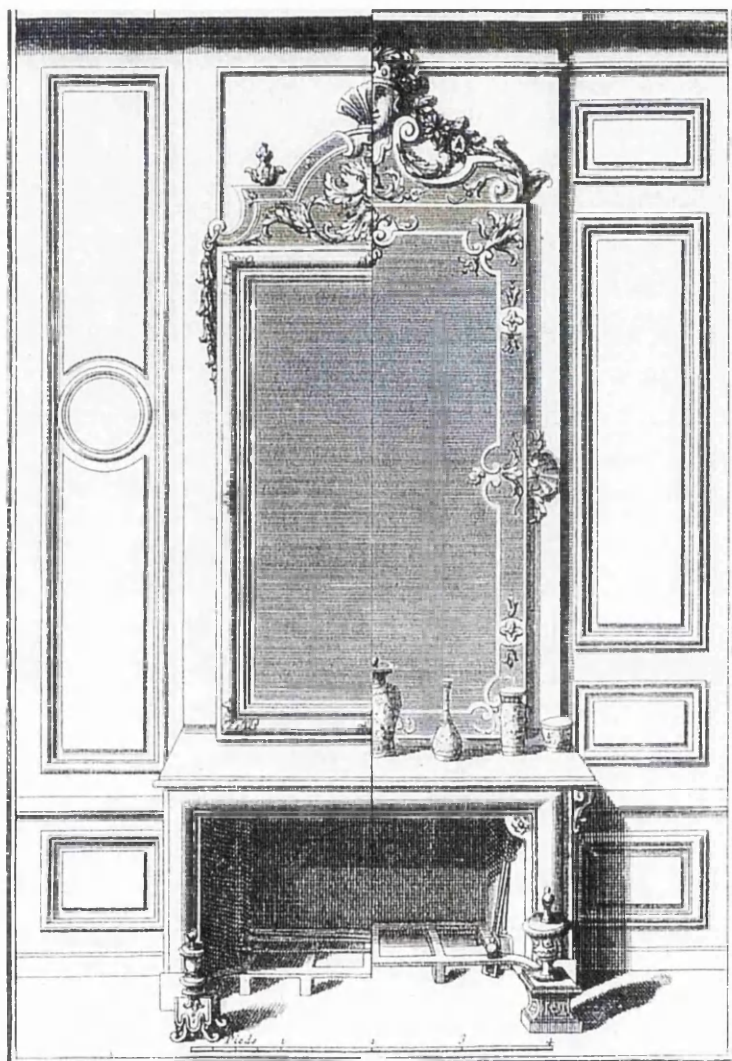
Perfume Burner, mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, French





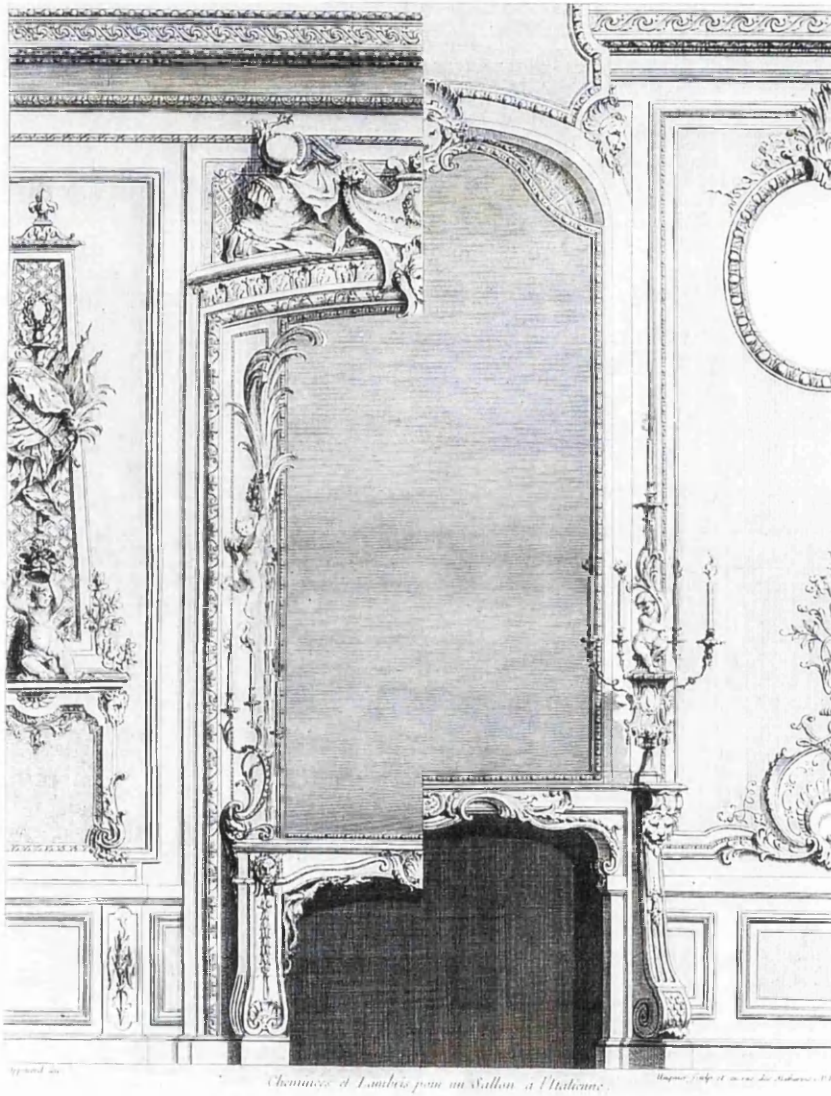
**Comparative Plate 15**

Engraving, chimney-piece designs, 1698, Pierre le Pautre



### Comparative Plate 16

Engraving, wall panelling designs, 1717, Gilles Marie Oppenord

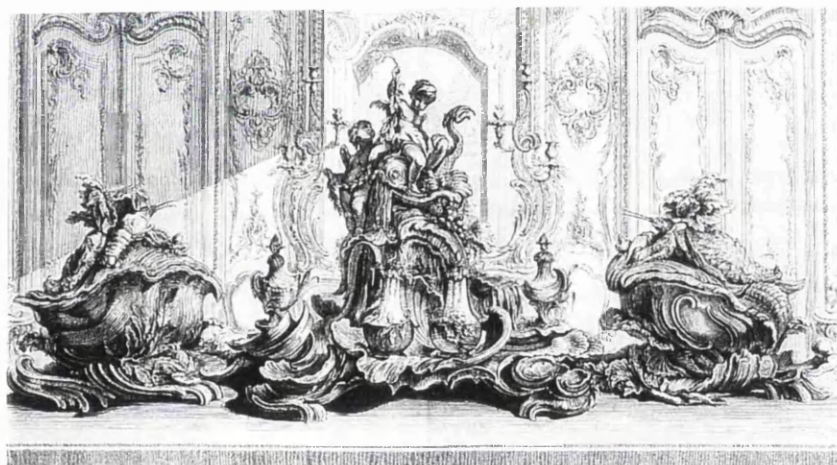


*Cheminée et Lambrequin pour un Salon à l'italienne.*



**Comparative Plate 17**

Engraving, centre piece design, 1735, Juste-Aurele Meissonnier



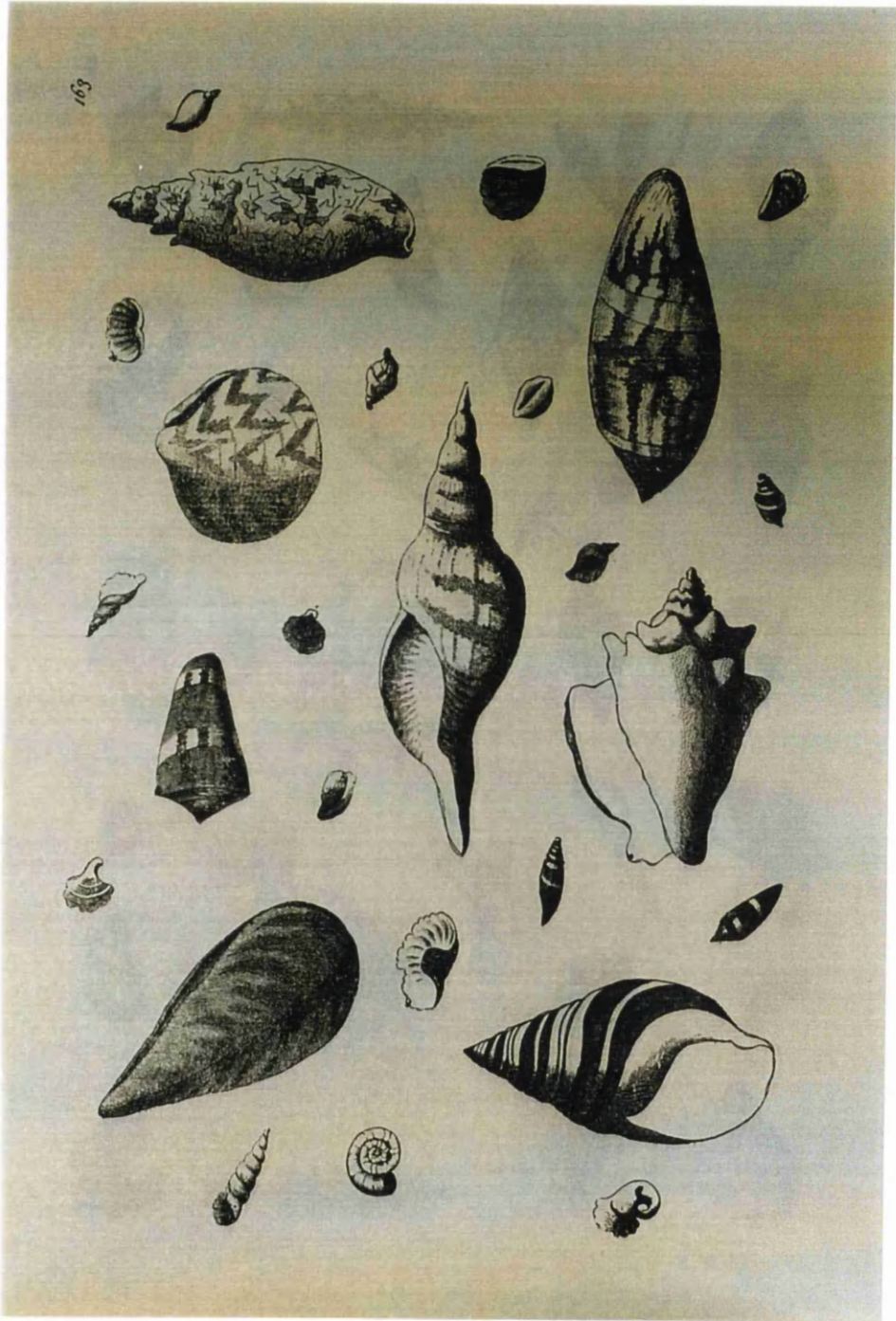
**Comparative Plate 18**

Pair of gilt bronze candlesticks, 1734-5, Juste Aurele Meissonnier



Comparative Plate 19

Engraving, shells, published 1760, Jean Pillement



### Comparative Plate 20

Engraving, centrepiece design, 1735, Jean Mondon





**Comparative Plate 21**

Wall panelling imitating porcelain, 1748, French



**Comparative Plate 22**

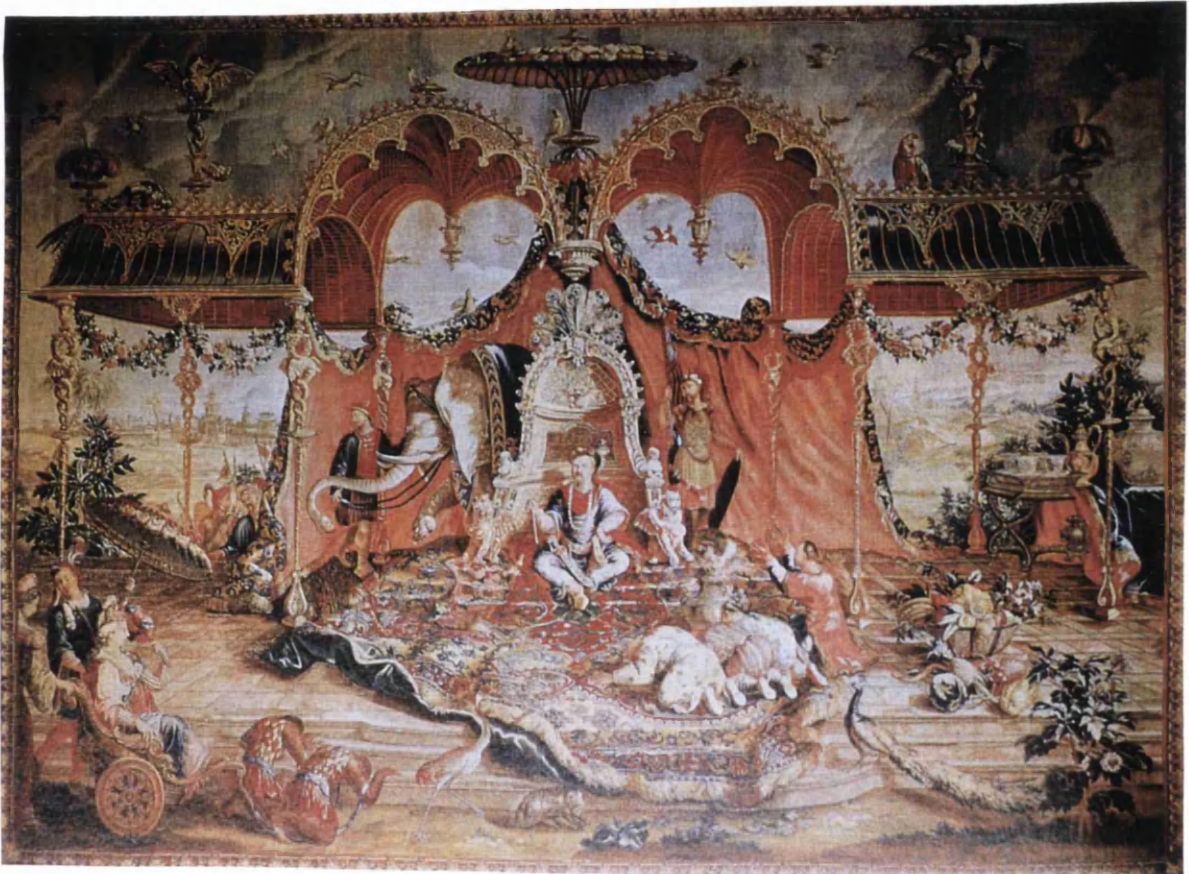
Wall sconce, c.1750, French





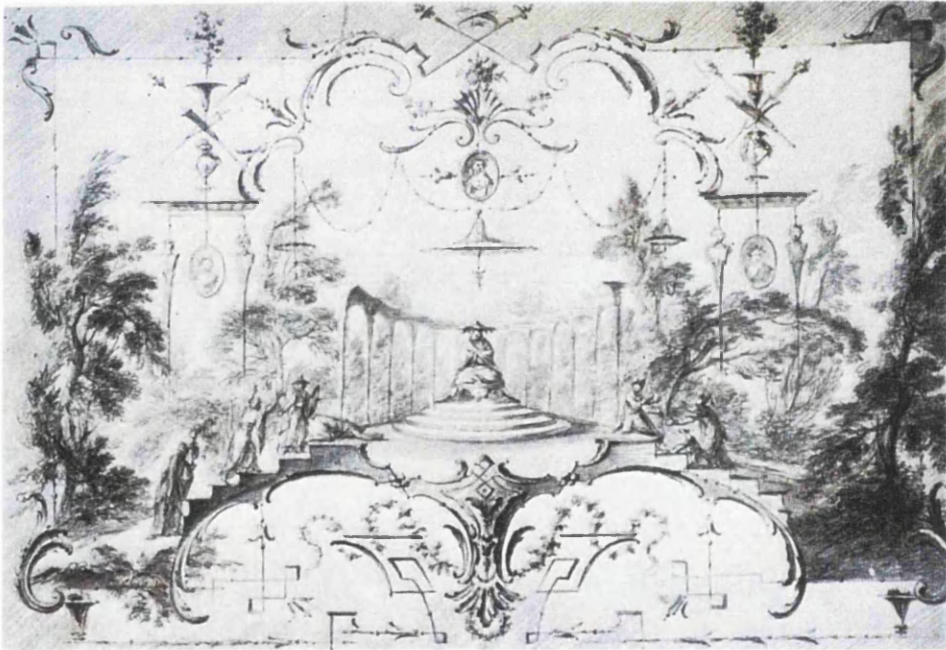
**Comparative Plate 23**

“An Audience with the Emperor of China”, Beauvais tapestry, 1690



**Comparative Plate 24**

“Divinité Chinoise”, drawing, 1729-30, after Antoine Watteau, probably Gabriel  
Huquier





**Comparative Plate 25**

“The Chinese Garden”, oil on canvas, 1742, François Boucher



**Comparative Plate 26**

Blue and white porcelain dish, c. 1400, Ming dynasty



**Comparative Plate 27**  
Tureen, c. 1735, Saint-Cloud





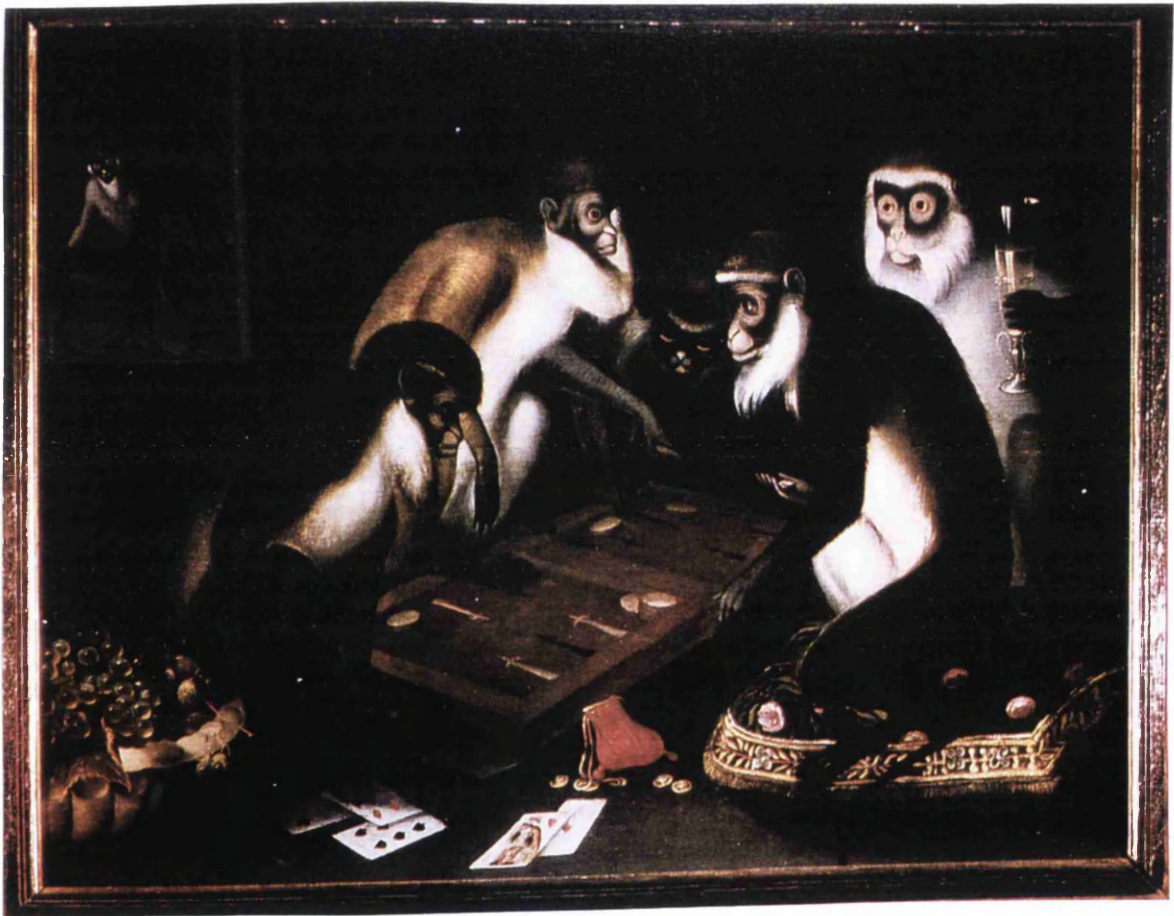
**Comparative Plate 28**

Blue and white commode, 1742, Matthieu Criaerd



Comparative Plate 29

“Monkeys Gambling”, oil on canvas, David Teniers the Younger





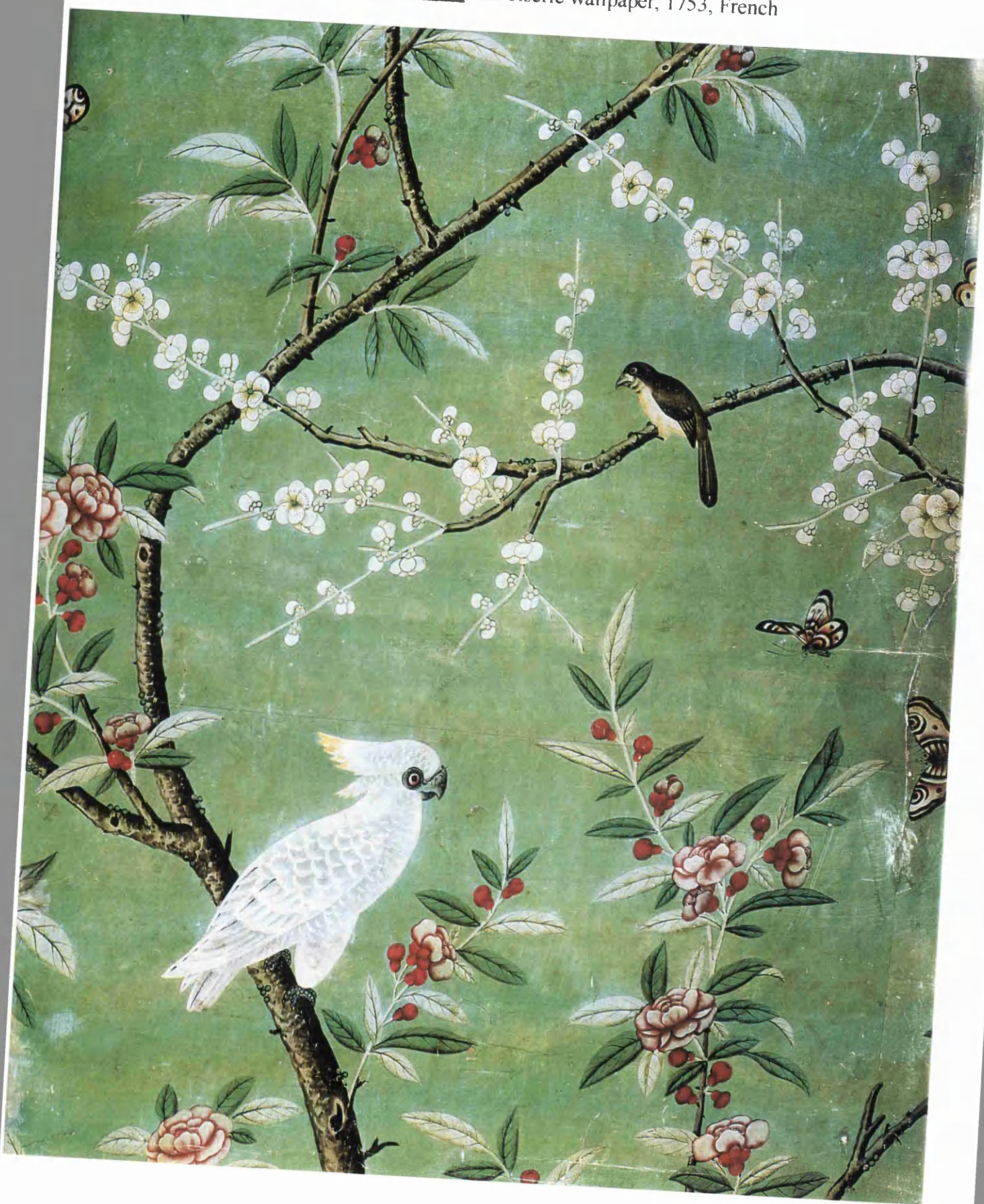
**Comparative Plate 30**

“Petite Singerie” wall panelling, c.1735, Christophe Huet





Comparative plate 31 Chinoiserie wallpaper, 1753, French





Comparative Plate 32

Title page to the "Ladies' Amusement", published 1760, Jean Pillement and Robert Sayer

THE  
LADIES' AMUSEMENT;  
OR, WHOLE  
ART of JAPANING  
MADE EASY.

Illustrated in upwards of Fifteen-Hundred different DESIGNS, on Two Hundred Copper Plates;  
CONSISTING,  
Of Flowers, Shells, Figures, Birds, Insects, Landscapes, Shipping, Beasts,  
Vases, Borders, &c.

All adapted in the best Manner for joining in Groupes, or being placed in single Objects.

DRAWN BY

PILLEMENT and other Masters,  
And excellently ENGRAVED.

To which is added, in LETTER-PRESS,

The most approved Methods of JAPANING; from the Preparation of the Subject to be decorated, to its being finished;  
WITH

DIRECTIONS for the due Choice of COMPOSITION, COLOURS, &c. &c.

The SECOND EDITION,

N. B. *The above Work will be found extremely useful to the PORCELAIN, and other Manufacturers depending on Design.*

LONDON:

Printed for ROBERT SAYER, Map and Printseller, at the Golden-Buck, opposite Fetter-Lane, Fleet-Street.

**Comparative Plate 33a**

Engravings, chinoiserie designs, published 1760, Jean Pillement

177

*Chinese manner of filling the Compartments on their Porcelain &c.*





**Comparative Plate 33b**

Engravings, chinoiserie designs, published 1760, Jean Pillement





### Comparative Plate 34

“A la Pagode”, trade card, 1740, designed by François Boucher



## **Glossary**

*A oreille*- The term, meaning “eared”, and referring to the two scrolling forms that form the neck of a vase in this shape, as if it had two ears.

*Arabesque*- similar to the grotesque in design and function, although does not include the use of human figures. Its origin derives from similar Saracenic and Islamic ornament. Rather confusingly, the term in French refers to the grotesque ornament.

*Auricular*- Dutch seventeenth century silver style characterised by curving fleshy forms similar to the insides of shells, to the lobe of the ear, or to slithering creatures that inhabit grottoes.

*Bérainesque*- ornament and design in the style of Jean Berain.

*Bergère*- an upholstered armchair that differs from others because it has been upholstered between the arms and the seat rail. First made in France c.1725.

*Bergerie*- term coined to describe the mid eighteenth century fashion for pastoral scenes depicting shepherds and shepherdesses. Berger meaning shepherd in French.

*Bleu céleste*- one of the most famous coloured grounds used by the Sèvres porcelain factory, introduced from 1752.

*Boiserie*- a French term used to describe panelling, usually wood, for interior decorative schemes. The term is particularly applied to panelling used during the rococo period. The panelling was often painted white with the detailed carving picked out in gold or with Vernis Martin of yellows, blues, greens, and pinks<sup>90</sup>.

*Bombé*- swelling shape on verticals of furniture characteristic of the rococo.

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<sup>90</sup> Fleming, J., and Honour, H., *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts*, (London, 1989), pg 104.

*Boulle marquetry*- marquetry of brass and tortoiseshell, perfected by André-Charles Boulle in the late seventeenth century. Sheets of the materials are glued together and then the design cut into them. Different sheets are then combined to create different coloured backgrounds and inlays. Often engraved for greater ornamentation. The remaining parts of the piece of furniture not veneered with Boulle marquetry usually veneered with ebony.

*Breche d'Aleps*- a particular type of marble. Most commodes covered on top with marble tablets from Italy, Pyrenees, Flanders, or Brittany, according to desired quality and acceptable cost. Best furniture had double mouldings to tops of marble.

*Bureau Mazarin*- the term links this type of bureau to the statesman Cardinal Mazarin (1602-61), although was in fact not used until the nineteenth century. It refers to the type of desk that became fashionable at the end of the seventeenth century in France. It is made up of a writing table with eight legs and drawers to either side of a knee-hole and is often richly decorated in Boulle marquetry.

*Cartouche*- an ornately framed panel, usually designed to contain an inscription, or figural scene.

*Celadon*- a type of Chinese porcelain or stone ware of greyish brown body with a greener feldspathic glaze containing iron oxide. In Chinese it is called Quinci (ch'in-tz'u). Its name in Europe probably derives from the character Céladon, in Honoré d'Urfé's pastoral "L'Astrée", who wore soft grey green ribbons. There are various types of celadon from within China, made from the twelfth century and later imitations from Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

*Ciseleur*- employed by a *fondeur*, gives surface character and style, naturalistic rough matt surface used during rococo done by *ciseleur* chasing with tiny-ended chisels.

*Chamfered*- surface produced by bevelling off an angle.

*Champleve enamel*- a technique used in Northern Europe since the iron age, the enamel is poured into the engraved grooves on the surface of a metal, and is then polished down to the same level as that metal. It is also called *en taille d'épargne*.

*Chinoiserie*- term used to describe western art, usually decorative, that shows the influence of the east. Often mixed with western styles and techniques, the motifs of the east often misunderstood, and not distinguished from their original origins.

*Commedia dell'arte*- an Italian comedy, including the figures of Arlecchino (Harlequin), Pantalone, Pulcinella, and Scaramuccia. Flourished in Italy from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Applied to the decorative arts in particular during the eighteenth century, being reproduced across Europe by the growing number of porcelain factories.

*Commode*- took on classic configuration during *régence*, carcass defined by uprights and sides panels with varying number of drawers, curvature and height of legs according to type and period. Name derived from French meaning useful, as it was far more practical for storage compared to the Renaissance chest or coffer.

*Contre partie*- a type of Boulle marquetry, the background of the veneer being made from brass.

*Crown C*- taxation system on copper to prevent copper being alloyed with other cheaper metals therefore decreasing quality and durability of gilding. Furthermore, War of Austrian Succession increased financial economic considerations. Introduced between February 1745 and February 1749.

*Distemper gilding*- more prevalent method in eighteenth century furniture, peeled off easily but favoured because of delicate tooling possible and contrast between matt and burnished areas. Absinthe glue applied, then several layers of white gesso, details of decoration brought out by carving or chasing with a tooling iron, then covered with reddish yellow liquid before gold leaf applied, then burnished with agate or matted according to desired effect.

*Ebénistes*- over a third was foreign, principally from the Netherlands, mainly concerned with veneer.

*Faïence*- a term for tin glazed earthenware. Named after the Bianco di Faenza wares that became popular in the sixteenth century in France. The brown-fired earthenware is glazed with a lead and tin glaze to give it a white coat. Referred to as faïence in France, Spain, Germany, and Scandinavia, also referred to as Delft in Holland, English delftware in England, and maiolica in Italy. Greatly used throughout Europe to imitate porcelain before its discovery in the eighteenth century.

*Fauteuil*- the French term for an armchair.

*Fête champêtre*- minor genre of painting developed in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, illustrating desire to reflect rural life and its idyllic pastimes, particularly in the context of the pastoral aristocracy.

*Fête galante*- minor genre of painting developed in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, illustrating the pursuit of courtly gallantry and theatrical scenes in park like settings.

*Fondeur*- pressed model into fine sand in box, molten bronze poured in resulting in a depression, rough cast cleaned, imperfections removed and unintended holes filled in, cleaned.

*Gadrooned*- a technique mainly used in metalwork where convex curves or inverted fluting are applied as an edge or border.

*Gilt bronze mounts*- *Dorure d'or moulu* is the most common method of gilding, known since Roman times, term turned into ormolu in English language. Liquid mercury amalgamates with powdered gold and deposits gold thickly onto bronze surface, heat then burns off mercury and allows gold to seep into the grain of the bronze. Process repeated for richer effect, then burnished with agate. Poisonous fumes are produced during process, and paste that spilled onto the back of mounts is often still visible today.



*Griotte d'Italie*- a particular type of marble.

*Grotesque*- an intricate ornamental structure of scrolling band work, foliage, architectural and organic elements, implausibly combined. There is usually a central focus, and figures are included within the design. Origins in Ancient Rome, discovered in modern Europe during the Renaissance in ruins such as the Golden House of Nero. Name derives from “grottes”, the term used in the Renaissance for the underground ruins in which the ornament had been found.

*Japanning*- imitation lacquer, as *Rhus vernicifera* not available in Europe. Made from gum lac, seed lac, or shell lac, dissolved in spirits of wine, numerous coats then applied and decoration built up with gum arabic and sawdust. Whole surface then burnished.

*JME*- the mark of the Parisian cabinet-maker's guild from 1751 until the Revolution when the guilds were destroyed.

*Kakiemon*- a Chinese palette of colours and style used on porcelain, consisting of orange-red, green, lilac blue, sometimes with yellow, turquoise, and gold. The style is asymmetrical and sparse, enhancing the white porcelain background. Much imitated by European porcelain factories in the eighteenth century.

*Lacquer*- a waterproof substance of oriental origin. The finest version from sap of *Rhus vernicifera* tree, indigenous to Si Chuan in West China but later introduced into Japan and South East Asia. Polymerises on exposure to air, therefore can be described as first plastic known to man. Grey syrupy liquid, strained, excess moisture removed by heating, then applied with or without colouring agent to wood, fabric, leather or other materials, in numerous coats, each drying to a dry crust before applying the next. Can be carved.

*Lambrequin*- a fringe like ornament used on ceramics and furniture, usually consisting of alternating patterns of scrolling foliate pendants. Very popular during the Louis XIV and *régence* periods. The lambrequin ornament is also influenced by the trefoil pattern of

imported porcelain of the Kang Hsi period (1662-1722) that European potteries such as Rouen attempted to imitate<sup>91</sup>.

*Lumachella*- a particular type of marble.

*Marchands-merciers*- major guild in Paris, specialised in dealing in fashionable furniture, exploited different techniques and use of imported exotic materials.

*Menuisiers*- specialise in solid wood carcass, therefore not veneers, usually of Parisian origin in the eighteenth century, located in the parish of Notre-Dame de Bonne-Nouvelle on the Rue Cléry.

*Oil gilding*-more unusual form of gilding in the eighteenth century. Coats of lead white and ground yellow ochre in thick oil allowed to dry, then polished with pumice and horsetail reeds. Gold leaf then laid on and varnished.

*Ornemanistes*- French term for a designer of ornament, specialising in engraved designs.

*Panel construction*- a framework of rails, stiles and muntins held together by mortise and tenon joints. Framework allows panels inserted within it to move freely.

*Pounced*- a matt surface on metalwork, hammered to give a powdered effect.

*Première partie*- a type of Boulle marquetry, the background of the veneer being made from tortoiseshell.

*Rocaille*- form of rococo decoration comprising variety of naturalistic shells, c curves, s scrolls, foliage, palm fronds, twisted volutes, simulation of rocks, mosses, foam, and cartouches. No elements from decorative vocabulary of classical antiquity.

*Sabots*- bronze mounts found on end of legs, like shoes.

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<sup>91</sup> Lane, A., *French Faience*, (London, 1948), pg 21.

*Sans traverse*- method of construction introduced c.1740. Gave more rounded and integrated look as no gilt bronze mounts to frame and distinguish one drawer from another. Also allowed decorative veneer and lacquer panels to appear uninterrupted across a drawer break.

*Serpentine*- characteristic accentuated curve of horizontals of French *ébénisterie*.

*Singerie*- term used to describe the use of monkeys in ornament. Closely associated with chinoiserie during the rococo period.

*Style rayonnant*- the use of blue lambrequin motifs, usually on Rouen faience, painted around the edge of objects and often painted in reverse as a star shape in the centre of plates.

*Turquerie*- a similar term to that of chinoiserie, although here the ornament derives from Turkish inspiration.

*Vernis Martin*- finest imitation of oriental lacquer. Developed in France by the Martin brothers in the 1730s, (Guillaume d.1749 and Etienne-Simon d.1770). 1730 granted patent, using shell lac, made from secretion of lac insect indigenous to Asia but brought into Europe through Venice in the sixteenth century. Such high quality difficult to distinguish from oriental lacquer.

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