REFLECTING THE SUN:
MIRRORS, MASCULINITY, AND MONARCHY UNDER LOUIS XIV

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To my dear sweet Lou-Lou Bae
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The Chateau de Versailles, especially the Hall of Mirrors, functioned as both a metonym for the king’s majesty and a stage upon which the king performed his identity. The Hall of Mirrors served as the primary reception space of the palace after its inauguration in 1684 and represents a salient benchmark in the evolution of the type of room known as the cabinet des glaces. Prior to the monumental installation of mirrors at Versailles, cabinet des glaces were spaces traditionally diminutive in size, privately accessed, and gendered feminine. The government-bureaucracy of Louis XIV’s regime endeavored to maximize and masculinize mirrors; in doing so, the king’s regime redefined the performance of masculinity, the industrial-economy of France, and gave rise to an emerging commodity culture.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Affluence prevailed, meanwhile, among financiers who, on the one hand, covered their irregularities by all kinds of artifices while they uncovered them, on the other, by insolent and brazen luxury, as if they were afraid to leave me ignorant of them.”

—Louis XIV, Mémoires

Louis XIV ascended to the French throne in 1643 at the young age of four years-old.¹ At 72 years, Louis XIV’s reign was one of the longest of any European monarch and was characterized by the centralization of politics and court life under his watchful eye at the Château de Versailles. The history of Louis XIV’s palace has become a myth that runs parallel to the king’s own bio-mythography. Like the superlative length of Louis XIV’s reign, Versailles became (and still is) one of the largest monarchical palaces in Europe. Through its grandeur and its splendor, the palace became an architectural metonym for the king’s own majesty — one that could project his status even in his absence. The power of architecture was not lost on the king or his administrators, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (speaking of the Louvre palace) believed that the structures of the king’s building’s “impressed respect” on visitors and viewers alike.²

The concerted effort to erect edifices for the specific purpose of imposing political authority on a people is certainly not a novel idea in the 17th-century, but the ways in which Louis XIV conceived of this paradigm gives insight into a historical moment in France. In the king’s Mémoires (a document which is discussed throughout this thesis), Louis XIV relies heavily on the idea of the arts and his residences giving him the quality

¹See Wilkinson’s Louis XIV (Routledge, 2007) for a biographical overview of Louis XIV’s life and reign.
²“Toute la structure imprime le respect dans l’esprit des peoples” See Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV.
of éclat. With a range of meanings from a “clap” or a “flash” typically associated with thunder, the concept of éclat is unambiguously associated with an impressive or magnificent sensation and often associated with dazzling light. Light, a precious, ethereal commodity in the 17th-century, played an integral role in the performance of the king’s cultic identity as Apollo and served as a way to visually dazzle his spectators with his own magnificence. As Burke wrote on the idea of magnificence under Louis XIV: “Magnificence was impressive, in a literal sense of leaving an ‘impression’ on the viewers like a stamp on a piece of wax.”

In many ways, the palace is an integral component to the public life of the king. Louis XIV’s public persona, much like Versailles, was an assiduous construct of arts, sciences, literature, and great deeds broadcasted to his public through drama, dance, opera, concert, visual arts, texts, and choreographed court rituals. Many monographs have been dedicated to discussing specific media that reflected the king’s contemporary image: from stone to bronze, from textiles to wood, from paint to wax, but the history of glass under Louis XIV has been under-surveyed.

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3 Joan Dejean’s work on the materiality associated with luxury and spectacle was instrumental in the formulation of my thesis and is referenced at many points throughout my argument.

4 Burke, p. 5.

Previous scholarship on the construction of the king's identity have reflected upon the roles of portraits, statues, medals, prints, and even Louis XIV's residences in the craft of kingship.\(^6\) However, even texts that deal explicitly with the theatrical décor of the Château de Versailles have failed to adequately address the most central medium to the epicenter of Louis XIV's political and cultural nexus: mirrors. First and foremost: are mirrors, in and of themselves, a medium? On architectural plans of interiors, they are represented only through absence — negative space in which the viewer (or planner) must anticipate the insertion of a silvered pane. Even installed, the reflections in a mirror are constantly in flux as the gazers adjust their posture or pass by. While the history of glass and glass blowing in the 17\(^{th}\)-century has been well-documented, even these monographs failed to adequately account for the production of mirrors in the same historical moment. Perhaps because this is the first instance in which mirror making begins to diverge from glass blowing. In this way, the 17\(^{th}\)-century, specifically under Louis XIV, mirrors become a medium proper.

Under Louis XIV, France experienced something of an industrial revolution with the establishment of numerous royal manufactories.\(^7\) The founding and subsidizing of these manufactories was undertaken as a means of producing the luxury goods necessary for the performance of the king's magnificent persona. Chief among them was the Saint-Gobain glass foundry whose furnaces were specifically dedicated to the production of flat panes of glass for mirrors and windows. The conspicuous consumption of luxury goods became a requisite part of the performance of aristocratic

\(^{6}\) Both Peter Burke and Orest Ranum wrote explicitly on the strategies employed by Louis XIV and his arts administration in creating the king's public persona. See, respectively, *Fabricating Louis XIV* and “Islands and the Self in a Ludovician Fete” from *Sun King* (1992).
identity. All the while these new industries enriched (and empowered) a growing middle-
and upper-middle class of artisans and bureaucrats who, in the decades to follow,
began to consume the same luxury items as their aristocratic counterparts. This effect,
in essence, is trickle-down majesty descending the social latter from the highest
echelons of the king and court to the bourgeoisie.8

I wish to explore the ways in which new industries, technologies, and economies,
facilitated a rise in consumer culture in the late 17th- and 18th-centuries. In doing so, I
hope to shed light on the ways in which the economic and aesthetic shifts during the
Ancien Régime facilitated the social shifts through the empowerment of an emerging
class of non-noble elites. New and cheaper luxury goods, produced by ever-expanding
arts economy, allowed for societal subalterns to access and augment their own likeness
through the coopting of the paraphernalia of social elites. Cosmetics, textiles,
furnishings, and above all mirrors, allowed for the actualization of social ambition. How
did social ambition and the destabilization of class threaten the Ancien Régime? And
more importantly, what is this paradox of social class that is could be so salient as to
define dynasties yet so easily purchased?

As much as this paper seeks to uncover the early history of commodity culture
under Louis XIV and the aftermath of his reign, the mirror invites deeper questions of
identity and gender. Both the iconography and the physical object itself had been
explicitly gendered feminine in the artistic and philosophical discourses of the European

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8 For a socio-economic analysis of the formulation of aristocratic identity in Early Modern France, see
Jonathan Dewald’s Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture (1993). While written for a
more popular audience, Joan de Jean’s The Age of Comfort (2009) is a handy (and compelling)
examination of the household objects that would come to define modern standards of living.
intelligentsia. Sarah Cohen in writing on the discipline and artifice of movement under the Ancien Régime has shed light on the ways in which Louis XIV coopted feminine strategies of self-presentation. Through his new industries, Louis XIV maximizes and masculinizes mirrors as a monument to monarchical grandeur. The mirror as a symbol of vanitas, prudence, or female beauty now belongs to the realm of masculine self-fashioning under a king who often found utility in the “strategies of seduction” borrowed from the female sex. The 17th-century mirror is poised at this crossroads between class and gender, such that is reflects shifting attitudes and practices concerning both. This thesis traces the evolution of mirror making in France and the effects this new luxury item has on the consumers and spaces they reflect.

Chapter 2 begins by exploring the political function of aesthetics under the reign of Louis XIV. This relationship between aesthetics and politics is integral to understanding the cultural power of art in the 17th- & 18th-centuries. Louis XIV’s artistic regime fundamentally reshapes the arts infrastructure of France and establishes the institutions, historical precedents, and cultural standards that persist long after the sun finally sets on the Grand Siècle. International relationships are forged and shattered as France negotiates economic and military skirmishes with its European neighbors. Under the administration of Jean-Baptist Colbert, the Office of Surintendant des Bâtiments du roi emerges as a powerful force for shaping state and kingly identities through patronage. What cannot be produced domestically in France is obtained through international negotiation, like wool from the British Isles, or early modern corporate

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*10 Cohen, p. 43.*
espionage in the case of mirror making from the island of Murano. The future of these early industrial investments in France’s manufacturing sector would be the catalyst that precipitates the formation of a mercantile middle class in the early and middle of the 18th-century.

Mirrors, light, luster, and the magnification of ceremonial space are essential components of Louis XIV’s kingly performance. The activation of space as both a stage and physical metaphor for social prestige is facilitated by the architecture and interiors at the Château de Versailles. As the primary residence of the king, court, and French government, Versailles becomes the nexus of political and cultural authority from the 1680s onward. At the heart of the palace is the Galerie des Glaces, completed in 1684. The reception hall features a monumental installation of mirrored panels (for which it is named) whose reflective qualities are exploited by the addition of symmetrical windows, cut crystal light fixtures, and other lustrous surfaces meant to amplify the perception light and space. The decorative program of the vault of the Galerie is conscientiously scripted series of triumphal depictions of Louis XIV’s military campaigns that blend allegory with historical narratives sanctioned by the state. Versailles, in particular the Galerie des Glaces, advances an aesthetic idiom that is envied, copied, distorted, and replicated throughout the following centuries in France and abroad.

The palace represents a crucial manifestation of how Louis XIV understood his own relationship to kingship through the social currency of la gloire which, when rendered visual, becomes what art historian Katie Scott dubs “the Heroic Mode.”

Painting in the heroic mode combined with the discourses of heroism and history to

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form an aesthetic product that was prized above all others within the royal arts administration. This proximity to the machinations of royal authority directly implicates heroic history painting, the artists who produce it, and the patrons of the aesthetic mode in the political discourse of the reign Louis XIV. The conflation of politics and aesthetics under Louis XIV galvanizes an inextricable bond between the realms of visual and material culture in the Ancien Régime with that of emerging Enlightenment discourse.

Chapter 3 focuses on the rise of the goût moderne – a style later known as “Rococo”\textsuperscript{12} – a new aesthetic mode deeply engaged in “the work of leisure” rather than statecraft.\textsuperscript{13} The industrial history of mirror making in France gave way to stylistic shifts in interior design and furnishings. In the latter years of Louis XIV, consumers of luxury goods inspired major shifts in the theory and consumption of design. Turning away from the “historic mode” utilized by Louis XIV to reinforce his kingly identity, non-royal patrons consumed and displayed art in the home that reflected cultural interests rather than matters of state. The triumph, bombast, and scale of 17\textsuperscript{th}-century aesthetics are lightened, minimized, and adapted into a system of strategies for constructing a more flattering identity. Over-mantel mirrors began to drive interior design, and smaller toilette and hand mirrors become household necessities. The proliferation of mirrors in the first

\textsuperscript{12} An accepted etymology of the name “Rococo” is that it is a portmanteau of the Portuguese “Barroco/Barroca” – which, itself, would lend its name to the precedent Baroque style – and the French word “Rocailles.” The Portuguese term was employed in the 17\textsuperscript{th}- and 18\textsuperscript{th}-century as a technical term in the pearl-fishing industry to describe irregularly shaped pearls. “Rocaille’s” was similarly a technical term in the 17\textsuperscript{th} & 18\textsuperscript{th}-centuries describing the decorative masonry technique of inserting rocks, pebbles, and shells into mortar – a style typically associated with landscaping and grottos. The term “Rococo” was first popularized in the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century as a humorous critique of the styles of both Louis XIV and Louis XV as “tastelessly florid or ornate” or, more explicitly “old-fashioned, antiquated.” See Poole, FitzGerald’s Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: Popularity and Neglect (London, 2013) pg. xxii.

half of the 18th-century is a product of industrial refinement, producing higher quality mirrors more cheaply, along with new methods of retail that explicitly engaged female customers in the collection and consumption of luxury goods.

Chapter 4 focuses not necessarily on mirrors and mirror makers, but the patrons who consumed them and they spaces they were installed in following Louis XIV’s death in 1715. Facilitated by an influx of wealth patrons fleeing Versailles for the city, the arts economy of Paris begins to respond to the desires of bourgeois and foreign consumers. During the Régence of Philippe II, Duke d’Orléans, which lasted between 1715-1723, and the early years of King Louis XV’s reign, 1723-1745, shifting cultural attitudes allowed the goddess Venus, with the supple embrace of femininity, and the idealized female form to triumph over Apollo and Mars - loosening the grip masculinity and the visual preeminence of the male body.
Mirrors, light, luster, and the magnification of ceremonial space were essential components of Louis XIV's kingly performance. The activation of space as both a stage and a physical metaphor for the king's social prestige is facilitated by the architecture and interiors at the Château de Versailles. As the primary residence of the king, court, and French government, Versailles becomes the nexus of French political and cultural authority from the 1680s onward. At the heart of the palace is the Galerie des Glaces, or Hall of Mirrors, completed in 1684. The reception hall features a monumental installation of mirrored panels (for which it is named) whose reflective qualities are exploited by the addition of symmetrical windows, cut crystal light fixtures, and other lustrous surfaces meant to amplify the perception light and space. The decorative program of the vault of the Galerie is a conscientiously-scripted series of triumphal depictions of Louis XIV’s military campaigns that blend allegory with select historical narratives sanctioned by the state. Versailles, in particular the Galerie des Glaces, advances an aesthetic idiom that is envied, copied, distorted, and replicated by social elites throughout the following centuries in France and abroad.

The palace represents a crucial manifestation of how Louis XIV understood his own relationship to kingship through the social currency of la gloire which, when rendered as visual, becomes what art historian Katie Scott dubs “the Heroic Mode.”

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1 While the original structure of the palace had been built in the 1620s by Louis XIV’s father and royal predecessor, Versailles had only been satisfactorily expanded by the 1680s. An overview of the history of the palace is best given in Tony Spawforth’s Versailles: a Biography of a Palace (St. Martin’s Press, 2008).

Painting in the heroic mode combined with the discourses of heroism and history to form an aesthetic product that was prized above all others within the royal arts administration. This proximity to the machinations of royal authority directly implicates heroic history painting, the artists who produce it, and the patrons of the aesthetic mode in the political discourse of the reign Louis XIV. The conflation of politics and aesthetics under Louis XIV galvanizes an inextricable bond between the realms of visual and material culture in the *Ancien Régime* with that of emerging Enlightenment discourse.³

By the end of Louis XIV’s reign, the mirror became an integral fixture in the 18th-century French interior and depictions of mirrors in paintings become common place in both genre scenes and history paintings. The reign of Louis XIV, the longest of any European monarch, was an extremely formative period in the cultural memory and economy of Early Modern France. Louis XIV’s particular performance of statecraft and stagecraft – a performance aided by an increasingly expanding network of government agencies and offices – worked to establish ideals of French-ness, gender norms, and aristocratic *savoir faire* that would shape visual and political culture both in France and in European courts across the continent.

**The 17th-century Mirror**

Engaging with the history of mirrors and mirror production under the *Ancien Régime* first poses a uniquely material challenge: the fragility of the objects themselves have condemned some of the most spectacular mirrors pre-1684 to only textual descriptions. The few still-extant examples available to scholars today, while a beautiful

³ Both Burke’s *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* and Berger’s *A Royal Passion* advance this connection between political power and material/visual culture under Louis XIV.
vitrine corpus, is remarkably limited when weighed against the wealth textual evidence that records remarkably vast holdings of glass mirrors in French royal collections of the 16th- and 17th-centuries.\textsuperscript{4} The damaging vagaries of passing centuries have largely reduced pre 18th-century glass to a curious lacuna, only communicated to us in inventories and anecdotes. Secondly, Early Modern French and contemporary discourses have failed to adequately conceive of a system of standardized meanings. \textit{Glace, Verre, Miroir}, the three terms appear interchangeable but have a multiplicity of nuances and colloquial meanings. Even more confusingly, all three terms appear in entries dedicated to mirror making methods in the \textit{Encyclopédie}. Even the Enlightenment’s repository of arts and science knowledge felt the need to hedge its linguistic bets! This creates a further impediment to the processes and products that are scrutinized in this paper. For the purposes of clarity, this paper largely focuses on the process of mirror making pioneered at the Saint-Gobain glass foundry; a technique that was imported to France from Venice and used to produce sheets of silvered glass installed into interiors. As such, this paper is concerned more so with the industrial history and spacial implications of mirrors rather than the mirror as a stand-alone object.\textsuperscript{5} Mirrors under Louis XIV under go a radical transformation from tiny, precious objects, connoted with feminine vanity, to large, architectural elements associated with the majesty and splendor of the monarch.

\textsuperscript{4} These documents are held in the BnF in Paris and have been mined extensively by Serge Roche and Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, the both of whom have been instrumental in writing the history of Early Modern Mirrors.

\textsuperscript{5} An unfortunate omission made out of a necessity to limit the scope of my inquiry.
Inventories of the domestic inventories of middle class Parisians reveal that the glass mirror occupied a consistent household presence after the year 1650. This is a particularly remarkable market saturation given that glass mirrors were purely an import economy until the 1680s. Early experiments in glass mirror production in France had produced abysmal results: one mirror recorded in a 15th-century inventory of the Duke of Burgundy’s collection at the Château de Hesdin described the pitiful plate as “a mirror with several visible stains” and as the mid-20th-century scholar Serge Roche recounts, the ducal mirror triggered a feeling of unease as “one sees someone else there rather than oneself.” Setting aside the crisis of identity triggered by the shoddy looking glass, the inability of French artisans to produce a satisfactory pane of glass drove French glassblowers to largely abandon the practice of glass mirror making. Even glass window panes were a remarkable addition to a structure: when accompanying Louis XIV on his siege of Dôle, Anne-Marie-Louise D’Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, complained that the windows of the country house she was occupying were all made of oiled paper, with only a single window made of glass. This single window, Montpensier remarks, was of such low quality that “the middle of the glass was [made from] a lamp bottom!” This repurposing of the glass lamp bottom was

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7 Melchior-Bonnet, p. 48.


9 Ibid, p. 17.

undoubtedly necessitated by the preciosity of glass and facilitated by the process of glassblowing itself. Glassblowing, a process largely associated with Italian foundries, easily allowed for the creation of spherical objects, like bottles and vessels, as the blown air expanded the molten glass in all directions equally; however this process was largely incapable of producing flat or squared panes. As such, windows panes were typically produced through repurposing glass vessels by melting (typically broken) vessels over a high heat into a frame mold. Regional glass foundries in the provinces would open and shutter quickly over the course of the 16th- and 17th-centuries, with only the less popular and lower quality metal mirror being the sole domestic option available for purchase.11

While very few examples of silvered glass mirrors from the 16th- and 17th-centuries have survived the ravages of time, the comparatively less brittle metal mirror weathered the wear and tear of centuries with greater success. An example of a small gilded bronze (Figure 2-1. Metal Mirror, recto and verso) measuring approximately 3 ½ inches square, is preserved in the collections of Musée de la Renaissance at the Château d'Ecouen. The back of the mirror is decorated with allegories of Mars and Minerva flanking a caduceus, while Diana and Venus scatter flower petals and give votive offerings. Two flying cherubs balance Diana and Venus in the opposite corners of the mirror’s back. The allegorical narrative of divine coupling and the nullification of violence through love lends an intimate air to a precious, handheld object. A fleuriated clasp in the center top edge of the mirror would have allowed for the mirror to have been attached to a strap for hanging, or even to the garments of the owner directly. This

11 See Serge Roche, Mirrors (Rizzoli, 1985), p.22.
type of mirror, while remarkable for it’s highly decorative casing, would have been acquired rather inexpensively in provincial markets and would not have satisfied the grand ambitions of a courtier seeking to use the mirror as a decorative element in the interior.

While metal mirrors were an accessible option for middle and lower-class household, social elite consumers were actively driving demand for silvered glass mirrors from the Venetian foundries on the Island of Murano. The glassblowers of Venice had been confined to the island of Murano following a fire in 1293 and, over the course of the intervening centuries, developed a network of glass blowing ateliers producing luxury vessels, fixtures, and mirrors. Murano’s primary product was not mirrors but rather drinking vessels and the production of blown vessels deeply informed their idiosyncratic methods of production. The cultural implications of the mirror in late 16th- and early 17th-century Italy associated the object with feminine beauty as well as the sinister power of women to control the men who admire them. Cesare Ripa’s 1593 illustrated compendium of iconography cites the mirror as an attribute of feminine beauty. The moralizing text that accompanied Ripa’s iconography suggests that feminine beauty, far from being precious, was in fact a poisonous plague capable of destroying the male lovers seduced by it. The mirror is only one attribute in the hands of an allegorical woman, her hair bedecked with garlands of flowers, who rides a sinister serpent with a poisonous barb in her hand. Ripa’s Iconologia was reprinted throughout the course of the 17th- and 18th-centuries in multiple languages and spread widely


13 A comparative analysis of Murano and French glass blowing techniques is discussed at length later in this paper.
across the European continent. The impact of his iconography is, however, debatable. While the works of late Renaissance painters like Girogione, Titian, and Bellini affirm a feminine connotation of the mirror, to establish a universal truth about the gendering of the object would be disingenuous. The same inventories that reveal the mirror to be a common household object by the 1650s also record that a male actor owned a remarkably large collect of six mirrors, ranging in size from small hand mirrors to tabletop mirrors capable of leaning against the wall. The actor seems compelled more by the need to understand gesture and likeness rather than feminine vanity or beauty. Nevertheless, Ripa’s implications of feminine beauty, dissimulation, and vanity seem to hint at an occupation with disciplining bodily form present in the mirror owner. The actor, in order to perfect his craft, used the mirror as a method of practice for his pose and gesture — perhaps even his stage make up. Rather than functioning as an icon of truth, the function of the mirror in the hands of the actor is to reveal the success of the actor’s masquerade. Mapping Ripa’s misogynist moralizing onto this craft of masquerade, one sees a preoccupation not with beauty or vanity, but with a form of social artifice connoted with women.

Perhaps because of the silvered glass mirror’s inherent preciosity, Venetian mirrors of silvered glass only increased in popularity amongst courtly ladies over the course of 17th-century. In fact, the largest collections and installations of glass mirrors, before Louis XIV, were exclusively in the hands of royal women: Catherine and Marie de Médici, then later Queen Anne of Austria and the Duchess de La Vallière, pioneered a nascent form of mirrored decoration dating to the 16th- and the early 17th-centuries mirror known as the *cabinet de miroirs*. These early cabinets, of which only fragments
survive, set the decorative precedent for (relatively) large scale installations of mirrored interiors. Considerations of scale were bounded more by logistics of transporting the precious cargo rather than footing the bill. Catherine de Médici’s collection, in particular, totaled 119 panes of Venetian mirrored glass set into the paneling of a small chamber dedicated solely to a portrait of her husband, King Henri II, also rendered on glass.¹⁴ Marie de Médici’s *cabinet* consisted of only one particularly elaborate mirror given as a diplomatic gift from the Venetian Republic in honor of the birth of Louis XIII. While the functions of the two Médici’s queens’ separate *cabinets* was left unspecialized, Queen Anne of Austria’s *cabinet de miroirs* installed in the royal apartments in the Louvre palace were specifically dedicated to matters of grooming.¹⁵ This early prototype of a mirrored paneling of mirrors with the performance of the *toilette* sets the historical precedence that would later become defining features of 18ᵗʰ-century interiors, hygiene habits, and feminine rituals of self-fashioning.

The taste for high-quality Venetian mirrors of silvered glass, rather than the domestically-produced French metal mirrors, generated an astronomical trade deficit with the Venetian Republic whose inflated prices were pulling large sums of currency out of the French economy. The artisans at the glassblowing foundry on the island of Murano held a virtual monopoly with negligible competition in terms of quality or volume of production and could therefore dictate the price when dealing with French buyers. One document reveals that the Venetian dealer had set the value of a framed silver

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¹⁴ Fioratti, Helen Costantino. “Mirrors During the Renaissance” *Reflections of Splendor : Exhibition Catalog.*

mirror at almost three times as much as a painting by Raphael that was similarly on offer.\textsuperscript{16} This gallery system in which both mirrors and paintings could be appraised and sold, side-by-side, prefigures 18\textsuperscript{th}-century developments discussed at length in Chapter 3. This extremely costly drain on the French economy was not only economically unsustainable but an affront to the capabilities of the arts administration of Louis XIV – rapacious courtly consumption, predatory pricing, and an increasing frustration with the limitations of French foundries necessitated monarchical intervention.

**The Arts Bureaucracy under Louis XIV**

One of the most enduring cultural shifts instigated by the regime of Louis XIV was the foundation and expansion of the arts bureaucracy of France. Chartered in 1648, the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* would become France’s royally-enfranchised arts center of arts administration, pedagogy, discourse, and display both during and after the reign of Louis XIV. Nominally chartered by the king himself – Louis XIV was a boy of 10 years-old – the *Académie*’s status as an agent of kingly statecraft and royal propaganda inherently imbued the arts with a political character. The *Encyclopédie*’s entry on the *Académie* records that the circumstances in which the institution was founded were result of "squabbles that arose between the Master Painters and Sculptors of Paris, and Painters protected by the King."\textsuperscript{17} While a key motive for the foundation of the *Académie* was to weaken the traditional guild system


that had controlled artistic training and commissions, the *Encyclopédie* is not neutral observer of history. Rather, as product of Enlightenment philosophy, its cataloguing of knowledge presented historical fact tinged with the personal politics of its editors – chief among them Denis Diderot. The “squabbling” recorded by the *Encyclopédie* is an obvious swipe taken at royal authority whose patronage and authority would become essential to the functions of the art world in under Louis XIV.

While the original 1648 charter of the *Académie* did not include a provision for the public display of art, the provision was later stipulated in a series of reorganizations led by Louis XIV’s financial minister and *Surintendant des Bâtiments du roi* Jean-Baptiste Colbert and the artist, and later *Premier peintre du Roi*, Charles LeBrun between 1662-1663. The Salon exhibition of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* was Paris’s premier art exhibition. The Salon accepted works of sculpture, as well as works on paper, but the privilege afforded to painting reflected the *Académie*’s intellectual agenda in exploring the aesthetics of nature, color, and Antiquity. In the official discourse within the *Académie*, the artist and academician Anotine Coypel proclaimed that “it is necessary to join the solid and sublime beauty of Antiquity with the inquiry, variety, and naivety of the soul of Nature.”18 Coypel’s theory of art as a marriage of aesthetic influences assumes a middle ground in an ongoing scholastic debate within the *Académie* that pit color (*coloris*) and draftsmanship (*designo*) in opposition for aesthetic primacy. The development of the *Académie* and its subsequent role in

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shaping public discourse as an agent of kingly authority served as a model for the royal manufactories established in the same decades.

Carrying with it the distinction of a royal charter, the Académie had greatly diminished the artistic and economic influence of the guild system, concentrating the majorities of both arts education and artistic patronage in the hands of the state institution. Following in the precedent of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, the Manufacture Royale des Meubles de la Couronne was charted by minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1662 with the artist Charles le Brun as its director. The manufactory would complement the Académie’s production of painting and sculpture with decorative arts destined for largely the same interiors. The commercial outputs of the Manufacture, produced with artistic talent supplied by the Académie, were essential to Louis XIV’s performance of kingly majesty – a performance that was aided by the spectacular works of visual and material culture produced for the explicit purpose of glorifying the king. In turn, Louis XIV’s patronage of the arts – and interest in industrial sciences – furthered the economic development of the French luxury trade (Figure 2-2. Visit to the Gobelins Tapestry). In response to the need for a domestic glass mirror foundry, Louis XIV issued a charter for the foundation of the Manufacture des Glaces de Miroirs in Paris in 1688 - one of 25 royal manufactories founded that year – and took the name of Saint-Goban after the village it was situated in. Despite the royal charter and the backing of Colbert, it would be almost 20 years until mirror production would begin in France.

Understanding the dire cost of importing mirrors from Venice, both Louis XIV and Colbert aspired, or conspired, to establish a domestic glass making foundry as early as
1665 with the granting of a royal patent to Nicolas Dunoyer for the foundation of a glass foundry.\(^{19}\) While Louis XIV and his minister had the authority to grant a patent, it was not in the king’s power to bestow the trade secrets of Murano unto Dunoyer; rather a scheme, largely attributed to Colbert, was hatched to lure artisans away from the Venetians foundries to labor in France. The results of this Early Modern corporate espionage were mixed: Colbert’s plan unfolded with difficulty and proved to be lethal to many artisans who sought to decamp. Nineteenth-century French historian Elphège Frémy, a specialist on diplomatic relations with Venice, compiled over sixty dispatches of diplomatic documents which detail the sensation details of Colbert’s espionage.\(^{20}\) Despite the foundry’s founding in 1665, production had yet to begin and mirror imports from Venice increased between 1665-70.\(^{21}\) Over 100,000 ecus were spent on Venetian mirrors per annum, almost three times as much as was spent on Venetian lace, with the king himself accounting for the majority of this spending.\(^{22}\) Colbert initially attempted to lure the Murano workers away from their native foundries with a tempting job offer but found little success; Venice, understanding the value of glass production, had bequeathed the glassblowers several benefits that included tax exemptions, rights of citizenship, and the right to marry the daughters of minor nobles.\(^{23}\) Conversely, the Venetian government imposed strict penalties on any artisans who would defect to

\(^{19}\) Melchior-Bonnet, p. 33.

\(^{20}\) Frémy, “Archivo di Stato – Inquisitori in Francia,” “Dispacci dagli ambasciatori in Francia,” and “Lettore agli ambasciatori in Francia.”

\(^{21}\) Melchior-Bonnet, p. 36.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
foreign nations: under a military tribunal these artisans would be tried as “traitors to the fatherland” and their punishments often extended onto their families. As such, the workers Colbert did lure away had to escape Venice in disguise, as literal fugitives. Three workers, La Motta, Pietro Rigo, and Zuane Dandolo, reached Paris by the summer of 1665 and designed the oven space in Saint-Gobain. Emboldened by his success, Colbert attempts to persuade several more glassblowers to decamp to Paris over the course of 1665 to little avail; many reject his offer outright or send subordinates in their stead, and those who arrive prove to be unruly immigrants in the capital. A fight that broke out in a Venetian diaspora community left several of the new workers dead in the streets of Paris.\textsuperscript{24} The absence of the glassblowers did not go unnoticed by Venetian authorities and the commotion in Paris led the Venetian ambassador to launch his own campaign of counter-espionage. In an attempt to impose domestic tranquility on the venetian artisans, Colbert offers to finance the relocation of the wives and children of the artisans. The venetian ambassador, having intercepted this correspondence, falsified a response from the wives in which they insisted on remaining loyal to their patrimony and chastising their husbands for defecting to France. The ambassador’s false letter was read aloud to the workers at the French foundry and their skeptical responses were communicated back to the ambassador: his plan had been foiled by his own eloquence as several of the workers doubted that their wives could demonstrate such “superior knowledge and intelligence.”\textsuperscript{25} By winter of 1666, both Saint-Gobain’s finances and France’s relationship with Venice had deteriorated greatly. By the early

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 40.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 42.
months of 1667, the original trio of workers, who had been largely responsible for establishing the ovens and training French colleagues, had grown tired of both Colbert’s increasing demands and supervision and decided to seek safe passage back to Venice. While the Venetian authorities did not prosecute them for treason, their compatriots at the Murano factory were not so forgiving. Finding their fellow venetians too hostile, the trio of workers again petitioned Colbert to return to work in Paris in 1670. Colbert, upon hearing the request, answered: “They gave us so much trouble when they worked in the factory and were so full of ill-will that I don’t believe it advantageous to call on them a second time.”

By 1670, the venetians had imparted enough knowledge to French workers that the factory could begin producing relatively diminutive sheets of mirrored glass akin to the ones produced by the foundry at Murano. It would take nearly three decades of experimenting before the French developed a divergent technique from the venetians that would facilitate the production of sheets in the six- or seven-foot range.

Colbert’s plan to import glass blowing trade secrets from Italy — and the mixed results of this plan — is both exactly contemporaneous and remarkably similar in outcome to the artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s time in Paris. Arriving in the French capital in 1665, Bernini was invited by the royal arts bureaucracy to produce designs for the new additions to the Louvre palace as well as sculptural portraits of the king. These highly auspicious commissions show the high esteem in which Bernini was held by the French arts administration; however, his designs and purportedly haughty nature would not live up to his reputation in the eyes of the king. All together Bernini produced four designs for the east façade of the Louvre, the first of which (Figure 2-3. Bernini Design

for the Louvre) features a central rotunda encompassed by semi-circular hemicycles akin to those of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Louis XIV was recorded to have canceled all of Bernini’s commissions and sent the artists away without pay after several of his works proved to be far too Italian in style.\textsuperscript{27} The project would be ultimately passed off to native Frenchman Claude Perrault only to be abandoned when construction at Versailles began in earnest. Both Bernini’s visit and the formation of Saint-Gobain are evocative of Louis XIV’s increasing independence from Italian cultural influences. This independence from the cultural hegemony of southern styles and the establishment of new modes of idiosyncratically French design is the most salient aesthetic evolution under Louis XIV and one that would continue to unfold in the eighteenth-century. Through courtly emulation, French design became prized above all others; first in France and then more broadly across Europe.

In November of 1684, Louis XIV would debut the completed \textit{Galerie des Glaces} at the Château de Versailles (Figure 2-4. Interior Hall of Mirrors). The longitudinal gallery measuring approximately 240 feet long by 34.5 feet in width, would replace a previously open-air viewing terrace that separated the symmetrical apartments of the King and the Queen that was constructed during the addition of architect Louis le Vau’s “envelope” expansion of the château in 1669-1672 (Figures 2-5 and 2-6. Comparison of the Exterior of the Façades). The length of the \textit{Galerie} at Versailles surpassed the dimensions of the prototype \textit{Gallerie d'Apollon} designed at executed by the artist Charles leBrun for the Louvre palace in 1661-1663. Charles le Brun was similarly

engaged to execute the decorative scheme at Versailles and decorated the vault of the ceiling with a series of painted panels depicting scenes of Louis XIV’s military victories in the Franco-Dutch war. The central panel, *Le Roy gouverne par lui-même* (Figure 2-7), is a testament to the glory of Louis XIV’s personal reign, which he assumed in 1661. The panel spans the entire arc of ceiling and the composition is multi-directional as to accommodate for the curvature of the panel with respect to the position of the viewer.

Louis XIV’s rejection of Apollonic or celestial iconography in the *Galerie des Glaces* is evocative of a conscientious effort to promote the contemporary histories from his reign. A romanized figure of Louis XIV draped in the ermine cloak of kingship reclines against a golden throne. Louis XIV is supported by Venus and takes heed from Minerva: the meaning of the elaborate allegory meant to marry the forces of Love, Beauty, Wisdom, and Warfare in the idealized body of the Absolute Monarch. While Thomas Kavanagh believes that the scale of the painting facilitates both “a careful reading of the image through an elaborate cultural knowledge” as well as the simultaneous phenomenological sensation of “an unmediated and direct moment spectatorship”28 with such an ambitious piece, the role of the visual arts in the interior is subordinate to the titular installation of mirrors.

In order to preserve the views of the gardens afforded by the no-longer extant terrace, the *Galerie des Glaces* was designed with 17 bays of monumentally tall windows that opened onto stone balustrades in an effort to maximize not only the viewing angles, but the influx of light and air into the space. Installed as pendants on the

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opposite wall, 357 rectangular panes of mirrored glass were fitted into carved copper casings in order to mount them to the wall of the Galerie. The disposition of mullions in the mirror casing loosely mimicked the mullions holding the transparent panes of glass into the window frames across the hall. This conscious mimicry accomplishes two feats: first, it solved the logistical problems (cost, transportation, and technological limitations) of producing a single contiguous sheet of glass large enough to serve as a pendant to the windows. Secondly, the morphological continuity of the mullions in both the windows and the mirrors created the illusion of exterior views of the garden on both sides of the hall, as well as effectively doubling the perceived space of the hall itself. The illusion of a much larger ceremonial space, as well as the reflection of light and landscape played an important role in Louis XIV’s performance of sacral kingship. Light was a key aspect of the King’s majesty, as it was enacted through his Apollonian identity, is the necessity of light – an extremely precious commodity in a pre-electrical world. The Mémoires of Louis XIV reveal that his majesty is particularly invested in using light and material splendor to “dazzle” or “stun” spectators. In the hands of Louis XIV, light becomes something of a weapon: a phenomenological force meant to underscore the divinity and nobility of the king of France. In this vein, the habitually dark interiors of the châteaux Louis XIV inherited proved to be insufficient stages upon which to perform kingly majesty. Working in concert with artists, artisans, and architects from the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and the Manufacture Royale des Meubles de la


Couronne, Louis XIV would spend the decades of his reign perfecting both the stage upon which he performed, as well as the props that aided him, at the Château de Versailles.

(Figures 2-8 and 2-9 Comparison of the Ambassadors from Persia and the Doge of Genoa paying Reparations) Both of these paintings, commissioned to commemorate the visitation of foreign ambassadors to the court of Louis XIV, document the spectacle of statecraft in the Hall of Mirrors. In both images, Louis XIV is enthroned on a canopied dais on the extreme south end of the Hall of Mirrors, the king's back is to the Salon of Peace, while the courtiers are huddled in masses to either side of a central aisle. The visiting ambassadors, in the case of these images emissaries from the Republic of Genoa and the Kingdom of Persia, would enter the palace through an exterior portal in the cour royal – a space within the golden grille but not yet in the cour marbre - on the north-east façade of the chateau. The visitors would be led up the aptly named ambassador's staircase, which is no longer extant, ascend to the piano noble and (Figure 2-10. longitudinal photo of the Enfilade of Versailles) make their way through the enfilade of public state rooms. The visiting ambassadors would enter the Hall of Mirrors through the Salon of War, a square salon which serves as a west-south transition in the procession route and provides views of the gardens on two-sides. The decorative program of the room is a thinly-veiled threat meant to intone the military might of France; the stone tondo designed by Antoine Cosyveux (Figure 2-11. Tondo of Equestrian Louis XIV) above the fireplace on the east wall is an equestrian portrait of Louis XIV, heralded by angels of victory, and supported by enslaved prisoners of war in high relief. This threat was probably not lost on the Doge of Genoa, who was visiting the
chateau on this occasion to pay reparations to Louis XIV after the French navy had successful bombarded and captured the city. Not just the monumental mirrors and gallant portraiture, but the illusionistic effects of space and light, in the ceremonial procession route are aesthetic tools used by the state, meant to aggrandize the king’s masculinity, military prowess, and sacral sovereignty in the eyes of foreign visitors and courtiers alike.

The Château de Versailles is the monument most closely associated, not only with Louis XIV, but with the culture, legacy, and governance of the Ancien Regime. At Versailles, Louis XIV would establish the routines and rituals that would come to define a new era in kingship and court culture. Peter Burke, in the Fabrication of Louis XIV, believed that “ritual in particular was viewed as a kind of drama, which had to be staged in order to encourage obedience.” The ritualization of kingly conduct, the strict adherence to routine and order, and the continual performance of majesty created a court culture that simultaneously codified and subverted traditional class hierarchies. Louis XIV’s life was largely lived in the public eye as the center and source of political spectacle. At the king’s insistence, courtiers were required to maintain residence in the king’s presence. Louis XIV’s court culture undercut the traditional seigneurial authority of aristocrats in their ancestral homes and lands, compelled them to perform (at least nominally) household tasks previous reserved for servants, and reinforced hierarchies amongst aristocrats, pitting courtiers in competitions for the king’s favor. A courtier’s position in the power economy of court could be measured by the disposition of bodies in space: proximity to the king was became the official measure of aristocratic privilege.

In this manner, the physical spaces and rooms of the king’s residence were imbued with both allegorical and political meaning.

The *Mémoires de Louis XIV pour l’instruction du Dauphin*, a loosely autobiographical history of Louis XIV’s reign, was a document that Louis XIV commissioned, dictated, and perhaps even wrote himself as a means of transmitting kingly knowledge to his eldest son and presumptive heir. While the text was explicitly intended to serve as a manual for kingly conduct, the text reveals a precious glimpse of the interior world of the king’s anxieties and obligations. Series of documents spanning 1661 to the last moments of the king’s life in 1715 were written for the series of successors that Louis XIV would outlive. Under Louis XIV, nearly all governmental functions were dedicated to promoting *la gloire*, a complex yet enduring social currency that was integral to Louis XIV’s understanding of his own kingly identity, his connection to Christendom, and his dynastic relationship to with the history of France since Charlemagne. *La gloire*, a term that is reductively translated to “glory,” was accrued through military might, cultural literacy, social propriety, and the overt yet tasteful display of material wealth.\(^{32}\)

The apocryphal last words of Louis XIV, spoken as desperate advice to his young heir from his death bed, lamented that the king had privileged both war and costly extravagance too greatly over the course of his reign. Whether or not Louis XIV delivered this message to the rising Louis XV is largely irrelevant, as the plea fell on deaf ears: France under Louis XV would continue to wage war – to mixed results - and set international standards of beauty and luxury.

Chapter 2 Images

Figure 2-1. Small Metal Mirror, 16th-century. Musée Renaissance, Château d'Écouen.

Figure 2-2. Louis XIV Visiting the Gobelins Factory, 1673. Tapestry cartoon by Charles Le Brun. Château de Versailles.
Figure 2-3. Gianlorenzo Bernini, Design for the East façade of the Louvre Palace, 1665. Courtauld Institute of Art.
Figure 2-4. Interior Photograph of the *Galerie des Glaces* (Hall of Mirrors). Château de Versailles.

![Figure 2-4](image)

Figure 2-5. French School, Exterior of Le Vau’s Envelope, c. 1675. Château de Versailles.

![Figure 2-5](image)

Figure 2-6. Pierre Aveline l'Ancien, View of the Chateau de Versailles from the Gardens, 1687, Château de Versailles.

![Figure 2-6](image)
Figure 2-7. Charles Le Brun, The King Governs by Himself, 1680-84. Château de Versailles.

Figure 2-8. Claude Guy Hallé, Reparations paid to Louis XIV by the Doge of Genoa in the Hall of Mirrors, 1710. Château de Versailles.
Figure 2-9. Attributed to Antoine Coypel, *Reception of the Turkish Ambassadors in the Hall of Mirrors*, after 1715. Château de Versailles.

Figure 2-10. Louis le Vau and Jules Hardouin-Mansart, Longitudinal View of the *Enfilade* (*Grand Appartement du roi*) at Versailles, after 1678. Château de Versailles.
Figure 2-11. Antoine Cosyveux, *Equestrian Portrait of Louis XIV*, after 1689. Salon de Guerre, Château de Versailles.
CHAPTER 3
CRAFT, COMMODITY, AND IDENTITY

The histories of craft, labor, and capitalism become concomitant with the history of art in the Ancien Régime. Even the act of recording history undergoes a philosophical revolution, a product and endeavor of the Enlightenment, that adopted as a chief priority, the cataloguing of industrial knowledge in the Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. The forces of industry, art, economy, and new philosophy would intersect with royal authority, aristocratic identities, and the ambitions of subaltern masters to transcend traditional class boundaries. As state commissions for history painting wane, the artists of the Académie leverage the social privilege of a royal charter in order to dominate emerging markets for luxury arts and craft. Luxury goods like silk textiles, tapestries, carpets, upholstered furniture, precious metal-work, exquisitely complex woodworking, clockwork mechanisms, and inevitably porcelain, are produced in record quantity by the royally charted manufactories of the city and are exported to foreign consumers of French design. As markets of goods, chiefly luxury goods, expanded to address the growing population bourgeois consumers, bourgeois consumers themselves could exercise increasing economic agency in the fashioning of their own identities. By coopting for themselves the visual and material culture previously reserved only for the aristocracy, the new financial elite of Paris was able to resist the pull of Versailles in what Michael Levey characterized as
a centuries-long “tug of war between the palace and the city” in deciding the center of artistic gravity in the *Ancien Régime*.¹

The mirror, the portrait, and the fashioning of the body become indispensable props in the performance of social class and the formation of more flattering identities. This trend began as a kingly endeavor under Louis XIV and increasingly becomes more accessible to those of lower classes as the 17th-century turns over to the 18th-century. The mirror, the most crucial agent in all of the aforementioned three, becomes an integral fixture in the 18th-century French interior and depictions of mirrors in paintings become common place in both genre scenes and history paintings. The reign of Louis XIV, the longest of any European monarch, was an extremely formative period in the cultural memory and economy of Early Modern France. Louis XIV’s particular performance of statecraft and stagecraft – a performance aided by an increasingly expanding network of government agencies and offices – worked to establish ideals of French-ness, gender norms, and aristocratic savoir faire that would shape visual and political culture both in France and in European courts across the continent.

Fiske Kimball’s seminal 1943 text *The Creation of the Rococo* directly associates the emergence of the new and distinct style from the precedent aesthetics of the *grand siècle* with the integration and expansion of the wall-mounted mirror into the French interiors. This trend, beginning with courtly decoration at Versailles under le Brun and le Vau, would continue in earnest under the next generation of artists and architects Jules Hardouin Mansart and Robert de Cotte. A suite of engravings by J. Dieu de Saint-Jean from around 1690 crystalize interior scenes of the purported life of aristocrats at

Versailles. Three pertinent scenes taken from the suite, itself entitled *French Costume under Louis XIV,*\(^2\) show fashionable women in various states of getting dressed. Most notably, this series of three engravings subtly tracks the evolution of mirrors – both as utile objects and as interior installation – at the end of the 17th-century. The first image, *Dame en habit de ville* (Figure 3-1), depicts a young woman, shoulders laid bare by the straight neckline of the titular gown and hair fashionably pulled up into ringlets, facing away from the picture plane. As an aesthetic trope, this pose allows for the inspection of the ornate lace and rouched fabric train that would define the form of the gown. However this fashion plate also provides insight into the social behavior of a fashionable woman about town – her attention is dedicated to inspecting her own image in a tiny hand mirror – delicate enough to be held by equally delicate fingers, small enough to fit into the deeply buried pockets of her restrictive garment. The woman’s hand mirror is in keeping with the small rectangular metal mirror discussed in Chapter 2. As an accoutrement, the mirror serves not only as a useful way of managing and maintaining one’s own composure while out on the town but also as a declaration of cultivated taste in the consumption of such a precious object. The mirror becomes an icon of a social class whose values and preoccupations necessitate immediate and constant access to their own likeness, a likeness that is reflexively informed and formed by the mirror itself.

A second image drawn from the suite of engravings is a print titled *Femme de Qualité en Deshabillé* (Figure 3-2). A woman of purported quality\(^3\) is depicted, again with her back to the picture plane, this time in a state of undress rather than complete

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\(^2\) Preserved and recently displayed by Princeton University’s Marquand Rare Book Library

\(^3\) A social signification meant to imply that she is of middling-upper social status at court.
composure. The wall-mounted mirror into which she pours, her attention is far larger than the mobile hand mirror of the young woman on the town. This allows for the mirror to reveal to the viewer the facial likeness of the woman of quality. As a pictorial device, this revelation of likeness blurs the boundaries of genre between fashion plate, portraiture, and genre scene. A drawing by Charles le Brun for a prospective mirror frame destined for the Cabinet du roi at Versailles shows that this style of mirror had been popularly in use in the domestic interiors at the palace in the decades prior. Both the mirror in the engraving and le Brun’s design for the royal mirror exist together as a type of mirror that exists somewhere between the hand mirrors kept on the body and the larger panes of glass that would come to define the public spaces of a household. In this sense, the mid-range mirror, similar to the type presented to Marie de Médici in the 17th-century would combine with the need to access ones’ own image during the process of dressing and become the progenitor of the table top toilette mirror. The association with the toilette table – the workspace upon which the cosmetic accoutrements of the nécessaire would be placed – is prefigured in the engraving: not only in the woman’s state of undress imply the active labor of self-fashioning, but in the mirror’s association with the desk-like commode directly in front of it. In time, this mirror would descend from the wall space, onto the table top, and the ritual of la toilette would be shaped and aided by the design of purpose-built furnishings. By the early 18th-century, miroirs à la toilette as well as the tables, the nécessaire, and the titular lace table cloth, would be sold in shops to speculative consumers – rather than ordered on commission by royal patrons. In time, the scale of the mirrored-plane shrunk, its edges became curved and convoluted, and some had even regressed to polished metal.
These aesthetic and material shifts signify a changing set of usages and ambitions for the mid-range mirror in the material culture of France in the 18th-century.

A final pertinent engraving from the suite of engravings from 1690 shows another woman of quality leaving her bed, assisted by her black page boy and spied upon by a male voyeur. *Femme de Qualité Leaving her Bed* (Figure 3-3) is significant because it shows the other half of the bifurcated trajectory of the wall mounted mirror: as the mid-range mirror eventual evolved in to the table top *miroir à la toilette*, the influence of the triumphal mirror insured that panes of glass would remain in the decorative vernacular. The monumental mirrors in the *Galerie des Glaces*, themselves site-specific, commissioned-based installations, set the standard for what would become the decorative mirror in the 18th-century. The majesty and grandeur of the splendid surfaces not only magnified light and space but proclaimed the elite status of the consumer. This strategy first employed by royal patrons begins to seep into the aristocratic performances of lesser nobles in what was most likely an emulation of royal precedence. In the engraving, the woman of quality is pictured in front of an elaborate hearth, above which many aspects of material wealth are displayed: a garniture of porcelain vessels, a round painting of cupids forging arrows of love, sculptural cupids which support the painted allegory, and a relatively narrow strip of silvered-glass hung as eye-level above the mantel of the fireplace. This early manifestation of the decorative mirror is still functioning much as the *toilette* mirror does: it’s location, not only an auspicious piece of interior real estate, also allows for the manipulation and maintenance of one’s own image. In tandem with the material splendor of the mirrored room, is the thematic shift in depictions of courtly life and identities. This is not a scene
of martial triumph nor moral rectitude but a seemingly licentious narrative in which carnal passions and courtly romance are implied by the presence of allegorical eros. This mustering of allegory and artistry for the purposes of passion rather than more archaic ideas of majesty is evocative of a greater cultural shift germinating in the latter years of Louis XIV that would come into full force during the Régence of Louis XV.

The mirror had taken interior decoration by storm and had quickly been adapted into the most en vogue interiors both in France and in a larger European context. The design-driven need to maximize the area of the mirrored glass on the wall influenced the design of fire place mantels, wood paneling, and wall hangings. The injection of mirrors into interiors systemically impacts the design and decorative arts of the 18th-century. In addition to stealing valuable wall space from paintings, the mirror is responsible for re-ordering the design principles of interior spaces and, to some critics, the principles of art and gender.

**The Triumph of the Over-mantel Mirror**

The turn of the eighteenth-century is a pivotal moment in the history of interior design in France. Following the death of Charles le Brun in 1690 and Jules Hardouin Mansart in 1708, both the arts administration and the aesthetics of architectural spaces experience a generational turn over. A pivotal figure that emerges in this transition is the architect Robert de Cotte. Trained under Mansart, de Cotte was both his second-in-command at the Batiments du roi as well as his son-in-law. This close connection to the royally patronized architect undoubtedly influenced Louis XIV to appoint de Cotte director of the royal manufactory at Gobelins after Charles le Brun’s death. Eighteen years later, de Cotte would succeed Mansart as Surintendant des Bâtiments as well as Premier architecte du Roi and director of the Académie royale d’architecture. De Cotte’s
consolidation of power within the architectural administration of Louis XIV’s regime left him well positioned to have a sweeping impact on the direction of interior design in the kingdom.

In Robert Neuman’s monograph on de Cotte, Neuman emphasizes not only the artist’s relationship to the commercial concerns of the royal manufactory, but the pivotal role mirrors played in establishing his international acclaim as a designer and architect. In 1699, then director of the Goeblins, de Cotte hung a mirror of a single sheet of glass measuring 84 x 42 inches above the fireplace at the Chateau de Marly. As a royal satellite of Versailles, Marly similarly served to reflect the king’s grandeur through architecture. De Cotte’s interiors not only reflected royally-patronized trends, they popularized royally-produced goods. Given de Cotte’s association with the royal manufactory, he understood the political significance of displaying French innovation and manufacturing. While no architectural drawings rendered in de Cotte’s hand survive but Le Pautre’s engravings preserve some of the architect’s designs. An engraving depicting a fireplace design dated to before 1700 (Figure 3-4. Le Pautre Fireplace) by Le Pautre shows a large overmantel mirror (trumeaux de glace) installed above a relatively diminutive mantel. Compared to the engravings of courtly life from 1690, Le Pautre’s design represents a radical departure from existing interior styles: the mantel piece is lowered and made less elaborate in order to free up precious space above the hearth. This new space is devoted solely to a monumental pane of glass, installed in one or two pieces only, fitted into delicate boiserie meant to hide the joinery work holding all the elements in place. Here the mirror has become a half-step between an

4 Kimball, p. 143.
architectural element arising naturally from the structure of the interior and something hung on the wall akin to a painting. The mirror is still framed, with a grotesque mask at its apex in the convention of picture frames, but has been seamlessly integrated into the architectonics of the interior structures. This seamless integration of artistic elements into a cohesive whole, in addition to its stylistic departure from precedent works led Fiske Kimball to declare de Cotte and le Pautre the progenitors of the emergent Rococo style. Similar designs by Claude Audran popularize the “chiminee a la royale / a la francaise” – a design which features large mirrors hung above relatively low hearths. Despite popularizing the designs as a style for the chimney, the mirror is clearly the object of obsession. While the Rococo is an interminably difficult subject to define – as the definition of rococo-ness has evolved beyond matters of style – it is an extremely salient point to understand that modern definitions of the Rococo largely based upon the insertion and primacy of mirrors in the interior.

Industrial Methods: French versus Italian Mirrors

The production and installation of large sheets of glass, rather than many small sheets fitted together like those at Versailles, is evocative of a stylistic shift made possibly through industrial break throughs at Saint-Gobain. The Murano glass blowing technique imported to France through the venetian artisans was heavily influenced by Murano’s preoccupation with producing bulbs of glass meant to be shaped into drinking vessels. The curvature in the glass form that the method produced had to be actively combatted when producing a sheet of glass meant for silvering. The Murano technique

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5 “Rococo” is an anachronistic and inherently derogatory term applied to the arts of the early and mid 18th-century in France and Europe more broadly. The style was known contemporaneously as “le gout moderne”
involved the blowing of a sphere of molten glass (whose diameter would determine either the height or width of the final sheet), rolling the sphere into an oblong ovoid shape, cutting both ends to create an open cylinder, and then slicing the length of the cylinder open so that still-molten cylinder unfolded and relaxed into a single sheet. This technique had been employed by the Murano foundry since the sixteenth-century was still in use in 1739 when Charles de Brosses, comte de Tournay, inspected the process in order to later record the technique in the *Encyclopédie*. In a letter addressed to a Monsieur de Blancey, dated August 29th 1739, de Brosses wrote that once the glass had relaxed flat on a copper table that “it only has to be heated again in another oven, polished, and silvered in the ordinary way.” The “ordinary way” to which de Brosses refers is actually the French technique developed for applying the silvering oxide layer to what becomes the back of the mirrored sheet. The silver appearance is caused by successive applications of a mercury oxide mixture to the glass sheet with the clarity of the mirror being determined by the thickness of the oxide layer. In addition to developing its own in-house recipe for mercury oxide, the Saint-Gobain foundry quickly abandoned the Murano practice of glassblowing. The Murano technique was ill-suited to producing large sheets of glass and was most likely the factor that necessitated that monumental installations be composed of several smaller sheets. Later experiments at the Murano foundry at the turn of the eighteenth-century in Italy reveal that the Venetians were attempting to produce larger contiguous sheets of glass by pressing together several sheets of glass once they had relaxed open on the copper plate. This technique can be seen in the Murano mirrors still in place at the Reggia Caserta today.

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in which distinct horizontal bands of striated imperfections mar the vitrine surface. These imperfections arise when the small sheets are molded together as the glass has cooled to a point that the seams never truly disappear. In order to fashion larger and larger contiguous sheets of glass for interiors, the French developed a technique that abandoned blowing the glass altogether in favor of pouring the molten glass into a metal frame the same dimensions as the desired finished product. This technique is recorded in detail in a 1771 article in the Encyclopédie entitled “Miroitier metteur au teint – Miroitier.” In addition to a series of prints depicting (Figure 3-5. Encyclopédie mirror casting print) the physical process of the technique, the Encyclopédie introduces its own lexicon for addressing both the mirrors and mirror makers, applying the term “casting” for the process of producing the former and the term “miroitier” for describing the latter.

The Rise of Consumer Culture in Paris

The scholarship of art historian Mimi Hellman illuminates the Early Modern complexities of generating artificial light and the industries that flourished by providing patrons with material means to clear away the darkness. Candles and fireplaces were essential devices that provided both necessary light and crucial heat in order to render dark and cold interiors habitable. Louis XIV’s conscientious connection between light and majesty, a connection made visually manifest in the solar iconography of Apollo, had a resounding effect on the material culture of associated with both candles and fireplaces: increasingly intricate manifestations of candelabra, chandeliers, girandoles, and torchères were coupled with refinements in candle making producing higher quality

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candle sticks. Fireplaces became more numerous in domestic architecture and their integration into the decorative scheme of the room become increasingly elaborate. Mantels, and the precious space above them, would become a contested space in which mirrors and paintings would grapple for pride of place. Sparked by the kingly need for light, the twin forces of reconceiving traditional lighting apparati and technological innovation on behalf of artisans and artists produced an emergent theory of design that would shape architecture, material culture, and interior decoration in France. By the turn of the 18th-century, as the taste for mirrors both at Versailles and in Paris had increased voraciously. Technological innovations allowed for the production of larger and cheaper planes of mirrored glass and enterprising merchants were quick to purvey this newly accessible luxury item to an emergent class of bourgeois consumers. In exploring the aftermath of Louis XIV’s death, art historian Katie Scott posits that the aesthetics of Régence Paris reflect the political and cultural shifts are an eclipse of “the heroic mode.”

As the physical presence of mirrors evolved and expanded, so too did the iconography of the mirror in painting. Once an icon associated with vanitas or magic, the mirror was largely stripped of its morally-edifying or mythological characteristics as it became common place. The mirror, once an object that could only be possessed by the extremely wealthy, was now a household item. What purpose did mirrors serve in 18th-

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8 Scott, p. 33.

9 Melchior-Bonnet, p. 45.
century France? How and why did they captivate the both the patron and the artist? How do different mirrors operate in different ways and how do these different mirrors reflect their owners? In what ways is the image of a mirror different that a physical mirror? And what are the illusionistic implications of reflected space? This thesis examines the role of the mirror in the 18th-century in both painting and interior design. The mirror becomes an analogue for contemporary crises of identity, agency, and subjectivity as it reflects larger political, economic, and philosophical discourses in the long 18th-century in France.

This early 18th-century re-contextualization of the mirror occurs concomitantly with the economic shifts that facilitate a rise in artistic patronage by bourgeois consumers. Antoine Watteau’s *L’Enseigne de Gersaint* (Figure 3-6) functioned in its contemporary context as a literal shop sign (albeit only briefly) for the *marchand-mercier*, or art dealer, Edme François Gersaint whose gallery catered to upscale clientele on the Pont de Notre Dame. Watteau’s painting has removed the stone façade of Gersaint’s gallery revealing the luminous golden treasure within. The walls of the gallery are crowded with paintings of various sizes, many of them smaller works depicting nudes, monkeys, or other decorous subjects in bright color palettes. Smaller works of bathing beauties and *comedia dell’arte* characters hang on the right-hand wall, while larger, dourer, works of masculine portraiture and mythology hang on the left. Two large mirrors hang on opposite walls, facing each other: the one on the left is a simple arch and is relatively unadorned with only a few volutes, while the opposite mirror is a framed in a flamboyant array of spiny curves and counter curves meant to evoke foliage. An ornate clock in the style of Boulle ebony work sits on what appears to
be a marble-topped console or commode in front of the rounded mirror on the left, while a table top mirror and accompanying toilette set is up for sale on the store counter to the right. The merchandise crowds together in a competition for space in the gallery and the attention of potential customers. The crowded interior becomes a coded narrative of taste in the early 18th-century a careful reading of the styles of the objects and paintings sorted to the left and to the right reveals Watteau’s stylistic agenda. On the street, a trio of workmen load what appears to be a portrait of Louis XIV into a crate – a symbolic casket for both the deceased king and the passé styles of the previous regime. Inside the shop, a group of fashionably attired Parisians admire new paintings in the modern style – themselves and their sumptuous dress as much an advertisement for the store as the art objects on sale. L’Enseigne is both an image of a wake held in memorandum of the styles of King Louis XIV, what later voices would hail as le grand siècle, as well as a christening of a new modern style, later acknowledged as the Rococo.

Watteau’s painting is an important touchstone in understanding the evolution of art dealership in Paris and the ways in which the enterprising city-dwellers could gain access to the trappings of luxury traditionally reserved for the court.10 Beyond investigations into the class of these new patrons, L’Enseigne rather radically depicts women as consumers and connoisseurs of art. The woman in the pink dress to the left of the frame casually watches the labor of the workmen discarding with the retardataire portrait; her casual glance given mid-step betrays an easy familiarity in circulating and operating in a gallery space: this is a woman who shops. A second woman, dressed in a dark gown, is turned away from the picture plane and is absorbed in inspecting a

10 Dejean, p. 82.
round painting presented to both her and a male patron. Here the woman is depicted engaged not only in commerce, but a form of art criticism. This woman is participating in an intellectual pastime previously considered the exclusive domain of the masculine mind. The image of a woman not simply spectating, but inspecting art with a close and careful gaze is a subversively challenge to traditionally held limitations of the female sex, limitations that would be reinforced by contemporary science, law, and philosophy.

To the left of the female critic is woman seated in front of the counter with her panniers spread wide to highlight the iridescent quality of her silk skirt. She is languidly appraising a new toilette set presented to her by the female clerk. Here, women are both halves of the transaction: the seated woman, again with a look of casual ease, appears to be unimpressed by the clerk’s sales pitch. Does she really need a new toilette set? How expensive is it? Is this toilette set of better quality than the one she sat in front of earlier today before heading out? Is she being cheated? Or perhaps her mind has drifted and now she is appraising the dress of the clerk, measuring it against her own; a competition she and her silk gown easily win when stacked against the utilitarian yellow cotton gown worn by the woman who must earn her own living. The woman’s languid pose is at odds with the consumerist calculus she is performing internally. Watteau’s radical paradigms of gendered critique and consumption in L’Enseigne hint at a perhaps more profound shift in in the lives of French women in the 18th-century.
Chapter 3 Images

Figure 3-1. Dame en habit de ville From J. Dieu de Saint-Jean, French Costume under Louis XIV, ca. 1690. Marquand Rare Book Library, Princeton University.

Figure 3-2. Femme de Qualité en Deshabillé From J. Dieu de Saint-Jean, French Costume under Louis XIV, ca. 1690. Marquand Rare Book Library, Princeton University.
Figure 3-3. *Femme de Qualité en Deshabillé en sortant du lit* From J. Dieu de Saint-Jean, French Costume under Louis XIV, ca. 1690. Marquand Rare Book Library, Princeton University.

Figure 3-4. *Alternative designs for a chimney-pieces*, Design Attributed to Robert de Cotte, Engraved by Pierre lePautre, c. 1698. Waddesdon Manor.
Figure 3-5. Illustration depicting the mirror casting beds taken from Diiderot's Éncyclopedie. BnF, France.

Figure 3-6. Antoine Watteau, L'Enseigne de Gersaint (Gersaint’s Shop Sign), 1720-21. Charlottenberg Palace.
CHAPTER 4
NEW CLIENTELE, NEW SPACES

The reign of Louis XIV, the longest of any European monarch, was an extremely formative period in the cultural memory and economy of Early Modern France. Louis XIV’s particular performance of statecraft and stagecraft – a performance aided by an increasingly expanding network of government agencies and offices – worked to establish ideals of French-ness, gender norms, and aristocratic savoir faire that would shape visual and political culture both in France and in European courts across the continent. The very industries and bureaucracies created by Louis XIV to ensure the operation of his kingdom and the aggrandizement of his image would, in the wake of his death, continue to operate for a new clientele. With manufactories like Saint-Gobain for mirrors, Le Gobliens for tapestries and upholsteries, and the relative village of artisans clustered in proximity to the Louvre, Paris had become a center of luxury goods production. While the crown collected a hefty tax on all industries, the titles and patents it awarded to entrepreneurs, tax farmers, and colonial governors — part of Colbert’s initial scheme to manage the kingdom — allowed for wealth to disperse more broadly through levels of society. After almost thirty years of performing the majesty of le roi soleil in the shining splendor of the galerie des glaces at Versailles, Louis XIV would die on September 1st, 1715. His reign lasted 72 years, long enough for generations to of French citizens to pass without knowing any other sovereign: what lasting effects would Louis XIV’s arts administration have on the France and his citizens? And how would his own aesthetic legacy be interpreted and used?
The *Mémoires de Louis XIV: Le métier de roi serve* as an important, but not wholly complete, cipher for understanding the Louis XIV’s personal identity as a monarch. Just as Louis XIV’s inheritance of the throne at the age of five years-old would be marked with a crisis of civil uprising, the end of his reign would be similarly bookended with another crisis of succession.¹ Rather than civil war, a deadly measles outbreak claimed the lives of Louis XIV’s son, grandson, and great-grandson over the course of 1711-12. An anonymous painting from the French School (Figure 4-1. Line of succession from Louis XIV to Louis XV, Wallace collection) produced sometime after the death of Louis XIV reproduces preexisting portraits of the late king, *Grand Dauphin*, *Petit Dauphin*, and the young Duke d’Anjou with his governess, in a mythologized temple-scape. The political tumult that would erupt in the early years of the *Régence* necessitated the production of a visual icon of the Bourbon dynasty. This conscientious scripting of the official line of succession was undoubtedly undertaken to help combat the political intrigues of the legitimized sons of Louis XIV who’s own relationship to the line of succession was legally and politically ambiguous. Absent of Apollonic identity, *la gloire*, or even the ability to wear pants just yet, the young king relied heavily on the arts infrastructure established under Louis XIV to preserve and promote the majesty of his reign.

In examining the impact of more sophisticated techniques of mirror-making, which could produce ever larger sheets of silvered glass, after the reign of Louis XIV it becomes necessary to examine the new caste of consumers and the spaces in which these mirrors would be mounted. As the previous chapter explored, the interconnected

¹ Wilkinson, p. 231.
nature of mirror making with the complex network of artisans, artists, and architects necessitates a closer look at professional practice of the latter. This chapter focuses on the creation of the spaces that would come to be dominated by monumental installations of mirrors — all of which grapple with the legacy of Versailles. The public palaces and private hôtels of Regency Paris reflect a transformative and liminal moment in the Ancien Régime who, by definition, is meant to be eternally unchanging. Structures like the Palais-Royal and the Hôtel Soubise are evocative of how the oldest of families balanced new styles with shifting preoccupations in their return to Paris while the hotels of bourgeois arrivistes coopted the visual strategies established under Louis XIV.

**Régence Paris**

While in his minority, Louis XV’s government was headed by Louis XIV’s nephew Philippe II, Duc d’Orléans. Philippe lived from 1674 to 1723 and ruled as regent for the latter eight years of his life.² As the son of Louis XIV’s brother Monsieur Philippe, Philippe II enjoyed the privileges of a prince of the blood which was one of the highest levels of aristocratic status at court. However, as the Orléans family was a cadet branch of the Bourbon dynasty, Philippe’s position in proximity to the throne was thrown into question with each successive birth of a male – legitimate or otherwise – within the Bourbon bloodline proper. Philippe’s paradoxical social status, temporary and liminal authority as a regent, and his libertine lifestyle have turned his legacy into an emblem of the emerging Rococo.

Soon after the death of Louis XIV and his proclamation as regent, Philippe moves his government to his family’s Parisian residence, the Palais-Royal (Figure 4-2).

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Turgot Map detail), located immediately adjacent to the Louvre. While the palace’s central location to the mechanisms of government and city life were utile in running the French state, Philippe undoubtedly felt a need to escape the shadow of the sun king at Versailles. Much of the court followed suit and abandoned the old palace and re-inhabited or constructed new town houses in Paris. These changing architectural trends reveal a transition, one undertaken slowly, in the conception of public and private spaces in the home. Absent of state duties what was the role of *enfilade*? The *chambre de parade*? While these explicitly public features of domestic architecture did not disappear overnight, Regency architecture clearly begins to privilege comfort, privacy, and intimacy in its design.

The *Palais-Royal*’s central-location and large gardens had always lent it the air of a public space. Much scholastic ink has been spilt discussing how the public accessibility — and the limits of police jurisdiction — facilitated the rise of networks of commerce, exchanges of information, and far seedier business in the proximity of the palace. (Figure 4-3 Floor plan of the *Palais-Royal*) Drawing the public inside, the Orléans’ collection of over 500 paintings was available for public viewing until its sale by the future king Louis-Philippe in 1788.3

The early years of his regency were marked with the continuing succession crisis prolonged by the legitimized bastard heirs of Louis XIV: Louis Auguste, Duc de Maine, and his younger brother Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon, Comte de Toulouse. This struggle for political power between bastards, little brothers, and temporary place holders in the aftermath of Louis XIV’s death, much like Philippe himself, has become

3 Dufresne, p. 74.
emblematic of the shifting social makeup of France in the first quarter of the 18th-century. The collection of paintings however, was dwarfed by the gallery of fourteen monumental panels depicting scenes from Virgil’s *Aeneid* that decorated the *grand galerie*. Dubbed *La galerie d’Énée* after Virgil’s protagonist, the scenes were painted by Antoine Coypel, then first painter to the king, between 1701-1718 for a space that been previously constructed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart between 1698-1700. The choice of Aeneas is particularly salient in that the Trojan hero is often associated with the heroic — and sensual — accomplishments of princes while figures like Apollo and Hercules were traditionally reserved for representations of the king of France. While the arduous trials and heroic triumphs of Aeneas’s voyage are not reflective of Philippe’s own privileged upbringing, the choice of iconography could hint at the regent’s greater political ambitions. Just as Aeneas founded Rome, the apogee of civility and culture in the ancient world, Philippe would reign over Paris, the emerging cultural capital of Europe.

(Figure 4-4. Longitudinal reconstruction of the gallery) Philippe’s princely reserve in choosing Aeneas as his mythological identity is put to the test when weighed against the kingly ambition of commissioning and over-seeing the completion a *grand galerie* seemingly in the same vein as the *galerie des glaces* at Versailles. Built by Hardouin-Mansart and decorated by the first painter to the king, the gallery, even administratively, is auspiciously similar to the gallery at Versailles given that both men were integrally involved at the latter site. Antoine Coypel was accepted to the *Académie* with his ceiling

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4 Scott, p. 38.

5 Schneider, “The Gallery of Columns,” Musee Fabre Article
painting *Louis XIV in Glory after the Piece of Nijmegen in 1678* and his preparatory works for the ceiling in the gallery of Aeneas reveal an extremely similar set of visual rhetorical strategies for aggrandizing his new client. Coypel’s *Venus imploring Jupiter* (Figure 4-5). The ceiling panel of the gallery depicts Aeneas’s mother, Venus, beseeching Jupiter to favor Aeneas with good fortune before a celestial court attending Jupiter. The perspective of the panel, in that it is meant to be seen from below, allows for multiple viewing angles in the complex disposition of entangled bodies.\(^6\) The mesmerizingly dense composition employs painted architectural elements to heighten the illusion of a gap in the ceiling structure, over which the gods and goddess of antiquity circulate. This *trompe l’œuil* style of monumental painting is well-represented at Versailles in order to seduce the spectator into believing there was more space, more bodies, and grander narratives present in the public rooms of the palace. Antoine Coypel’s career as a painter stands as a testament to the triumph of *coloris*, Rubens, and Venice over the previously prized line, Poussin, and Rome. Coypel’s dynamic canvases, visual artifice, saturated hues, and bravura brushwork institutionalized the previously subjugated inclination towards color in history painting.\(^7\) The triumph of color and the appointment of Philippe as regent become parallel trends in the social fabric of the early eighteenth-century in France as both represent elite attainment not through conception but by savvy social mobility. While *la galerie d’Énée* privileges painting over mirrors, one monumental mirror is recorded to have been installed above a fireplace mantel at the terminal end of the gallery (Figure 4-4) thus reflecting the entire length and splendor of

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) See Kavannaugh’s discussion of the competing art theories of the early Royal Academy.
the gallery back onto itself. Again, the visual illusions of light and space are employed to aggrandize and affirm the social preeminence of the space’s owner; but are the strategies of monarchical majesty so easily transported?

**All Kinds of Artifice**

Despite the uneasy regime of Regent Philippe II and the drained coffers of the French state, Paris experiences a boom in construction and luxury arts. While this boom is due in part to the relocation of the seat of the regency government to the *Palais-Royal* and the return of the courtiers of Versailles to the French capital, the burgeoning upper-middle and middle classes of the capital used their newly-earned fortunes to construct both new homes for their families and new identities for emergent dynasties. In the final pages of his *Mémoires*, the old Louis XIV bemoans that necessary expenditures for the royal household were “shamefully postponed… or were supported solely through credit to be made up for later.”

8 The old king’s decades of war-making had left the French state deeply indebted to creditors which drained the royal coffers into the pockets of the non-royal financial class who could now afford to fashion themselves as social elites. Perhaps Louis XIV’s taste for war had drained the country of more than just financial resources: in what Mimi Hellman calls “a will to culture,” artist production in the early eighteenth-century turns away from triumphal depictions of military might (which privilege male bodies) toward voluptuous depictions of gallant leisure (which privilege female bodies).

9 As discussed in the previous chapter, Louis XIV’s hegemonic

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9 Hellman, p. 2.
imposition of classicizing art theory, favoring *designo* and Italianate influences, began to loosen; its death grip supplanted by new money and new preoccupations.

The epigram which prefaces this chapter reveals a royal awareness in both the shifting tastes of his kingdom and the landscape of wealth in France. Louis XIV’s disgust for the “insolent and brazen luxury” of the financiers who were now able to commission art from members of the *Académie*, construct and decorate lavish homes, purchase products from the royal manufactories, and emulate the style of royal design previously reserved for the king and his court. The king appears unaware of the irony of his words given that the financial class largely appears to be emulating the model of aesthetics and social performance he established over the course of his reign. Rather, the old man is incensed that his arts administration has found better patrons in the very people who profited off the engine of French government. This tension between the trappings of wealth and the privilege of status dominates artistic and social discourse in the eighteenth-century: how does one construct a more flattering identity? Where does identity reside? In ones’ appearance or somewhere deeper? And does artifice ever cover up the “irregularities” of social subalterns in the eyes of those more privileged?

The nuances of class hierarchy during the Regency become of the essence in reading a patron’s taste from their commissions. As I have elaborated prior, even the regent was a man of assailable status. Beneath was a multi-tiered community of aristocrats and courtiers whose status was dependent on a myriad of factors from the age of their dynasty, the splendor of their homes, and their military valor. Their wealth however, when measured monetarily, reveals that only a small percentage of aristocrats

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10 Quotation taken from Louis XIV’s memoirs, the exact quotation appears as the epigram to this thesis.
had incomes that would qualify them to be considered “rich.” Guy Chaussinand-
Nogaret’s data on cash wealth of families in the eighteenth-century reveals that only
approximately 14% of aristocrats, some 200 families or 0.75% of the total population of
France, were considered “fantastically wealthy” with an income of 50,000 livres per
annum. This rank of society constituted the city-dwelling, previously Versailles-dwelling,
population of ancient families whose fortunes were mostly derived from the passive
incomes afforded to them by their peerages.\(^{11}\) The next wealthiest group, at 26.2% of all
aristocrats, were provincial nobles whose incomes between 10,000 and 50,000 livres
per annum afforded them a comfortable live in the provinces. These two groups
together constitute roughly only 40% of all aristocrats in France by the eighteenth-
century. Of the remaining 60% of aristocrats, some 16,000 noble families, a significant
population — some 19% — earned so little from their titles that were objectively poor.\(^{12}\)
These statistics reveal that the typical association between an aristocrat and cash
wealth is only an illusion rather the value of a title was rooted in something more
abstract, and perhaps powerful, than income.

With aristocrats comprising such a slim, albeit diverse, portion of society, where
do the emerging classes of financiers, merchants, and parlementaires fit? Chaussinand-
Nogaret’s data reveals that financiers were largely the only members of the bourgeoisie
that could earn a living above 50,000 livres per annum, placing them in competition with
the oldest, and best managed, families in France. The biographies of figures like Pierre
and Antoine Crozat, the Pâris-Duverny brothers, or Charles François Paul Le Normant

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\(^{11}\) See William Beik, *A Social and Cultural History of Early Modern France*, p. 73.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 74.
de Tournehem have become stitched into the history of the eighteenth-century as emblematic of the incongruities that emerged when income far surpassed one’s title. But a careful reading of these lives of these monetarily successful men reveals that their personal social rank was never truly stymied by the perceptively impermeable ceiling between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. While the biographies of both the Crozat and Pâris-Duverny sets of brothers facilitate the romantic narrative of plucky and driven upstarts from nowhere making it big in the city through gumption and grit, this story does not account for the ways in which their gender, their opportunistic displacement of social inequality, and government structures enacted under Louis XIV allowed for their success.

**Crozat & Co.**

Both Crozat brothers upon making their fortunes would become major patrons of the arts in Paris. Pierre, ironically known as «Crozat le pauvre» to distinguish him and his relatively diminutive fortune from the larger one of his brother, assembled an internationally renowned collection of art works — including paintings from contemporary outsiders like Antoine Watteau (Figure 4-6 *Le Parc du château de Montmorency*), of which he owned three, and old masters like Rembrandt) who was particularly prized by Louis XIV, of which he owned eight.\(^{13}\)\(^{14}\) During his lifetime, Pierre kept his collection split between his large country estate at Montmercy and, after 1704, his *hôtel particulier* at No. 91/93 Rue de Richelieu. The Château de Montmercy (Figure

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\(^{13}\) Simon Schwama makes the argument in *Rembrandt’s Eye* that the artist’s posthumous fame begins with Louis XIV’s avid collecting and appreciation for Rembrandt.

\(^{14}\) Huber, Michel and Carl Heinrich Rost. *Manuel des curieux et des amateurs de l’art, contenant une notice abrégée des principaux graveurs et un catalogue raisonné de leurs meilleurs ouvrages, depuis le commencement de la gravure jusqu’à nos jours*, Orell, Fusli et Cie, 1804. Pp. 24-27. This 1804 pamphlet details the major collecting trends in Crozat’s collection when it was sold to Catherine II of Russia in 1772.
P. J. Mariette Elevation of the Château) was an important testament to the arts prior to Crozat, having been designed by Charles le Brun between 1670-73 as his personal « petit château ». The architecturally-remarkable edifice was unique for having an open-air, multi-story peristyle that connected the two halves of the house under a classicizing portico and colonnade. The idiosyncratic chateau was acquired by Crozat in 1702 and its immediately recognizable in the background of Watteau’s *Le Parc du château de Montmorency*, painted in 1715, but would not remain in that form after 1719. Crozat would greatly enlarge the château, as well as constructing several satellite structures on the grounds in the park. (Figure 4-8. 1730 floor plan of Montmercy) Engravings of Montmercy after these series of additions show that Crozat had the peristyle enclosed by adding a multi-story oval salon on garden façade and trapezoidal protrusion in order to enlarge the entry vestibule opposite. Le Brun’s peristyle – while an interesting experiment in classicizing aesthetics – was undoubtedly as impractical a space as it was uncomfortable in inclement weather. The new oval salon and vestibule feature addition windows, multi-story in height in the salon, in order to maximize light in the interior. Crozat’s privileging of comfort and contemporary style over preserving the monument to prior aesthetics deflates Crozat’s self-built image as a connoisseur: would not a true connoisseur preserve an architectural gem by le Brun at all costs? How did Crozat need these spaces to function and what did that function provide for him? Pierre Crozat used both the Château de Montmorency and his *hôtel particulier* in the heart of Paris (Figure 4-9. Turgot Map detail of Crozat’s double-wide *hôtel*) to host both society figures and artists — even cohabitating with the artist Charles de la Fosse and his family while the artist produced works for him. By enticing artists with a liberal collecting
strategy and a deep purse, Pierre Crozat was able actively direct the currents of the art world while simultaneously self-fashioning an identity of a cultured and artistically keen \textit{amateur}. Pierre found in the art world a nexus of business opportunities and avenues for self-promotion that ultimately allowed for his to inject himself into the center aesthetic discourse from the margins of society. Ultimately his collection of objects and art works would become so illustrious as to attract a buyer in Catherine II of Russia who would use Crozat’s art to found what would become the Hermitage museum. This sale, albeit after Crozat’s death, demonstrates the success of Crozat’s self-fashioning: from a poor boy from the provinces, he became a cultural tastemaker capable of inspiring covetous envy in the hearts and eyes of royal elites.

Pierre Crozat’s achievements as they are, very few scholars have critically examined Crozat’s relationship to the art itself. His disparate interests in painting schools suggest not the keen eye of a shrewd connoisseur but the brash bidding of a bourgeois looking to make a name for himself. Ultimately Crozat’s relationship to or taste in art is irrelevant — even the aesthetics of the works themselves are largely irrelevant — what is salient is the way in which Crozat utilized collecting, curating, and consuming as a means of identity production.\footnote{Ziskin, p. 95.} Crozat’s ability to transcend social class, absent nobiliary title, is due wholly to his ability to buy commodities. Business acumen aside, Pierre Crozat’s lasting legacy was his ability to negotiate his way into a position of cultural authority by performing the role of connoisseur. Akin to Louis XIV and Versailles, the splendor of Crozat’s salon at Montmercy was a stage upon which his social performance played out — and his art was his most potent prop. Unlike his
brother Antoine, Pierre would never acquire a noble title, nor establish a lasting dynasty as his estate was split between his brother’s children.

Antoine Crozat, a near contemporary of Regent Philippe II, (Figure 4-10. Belle Portrait with l’Ordre du Saint-Esprit) served as the first governor of the Louisiana colony from 1712 to 1717 and profited greatly from the slave trade. Crozat was able to amass unprecedented wealth for someone of non-noble rank and was heralded by the Duc de Saint-Simon as “the richest man in Paris” as well as “a parvenu of the worst order.”16 would receive the title of Marquis de Châtel, a title which he transmitted to his eldest son, after lending large sums of money to the crown. Alexis Simon Belle’s Portrait of Antoine Crozat (c. 1725) depicts the financier swathed in the flame-emblazoned robes of the Grand Trésorier de l’ordre du Saint-Esprit, an honor which he was nominated for in 1715. The heavy brocaded mantle of the robes, in conjunction with the flamboyantly plumed hat, white engageants, and bouffant wig do not make for a demure portrait. Rather, Crozat appears to be borrowing the pictorial canons of grand style portrait established under Louis XIV. Unfortunately, Crozat has arrived on Belle’s canvas two decades two late and horrifically over-dressed. This gaudy privileging of honorific trappings over fashionable self-presentation in the depiction of himself undoubtedly played into Saint-Simon’s assessment of Crozat as someone unversed in the savoir faire of aristocratic comportment. Neither Crozat’s title nor wealth was not enough to save him from the sneers of those who thought themselves his social superior. Despite high society’s relative disdain for parvenu like Crozat, his wealth would ensure an auspicious match for his children particularly for his daughter Marie-Anne. While his son

Louis could securely inherit his father’s newly acquired title, in addition to whatever inheritance was set aside, Marie-Anne’s social mobility was, like almost all women in Early Modern Europe, dependent on attracting a good husband. It is in this first generational shift from *parvenu* to noble by marriage or birth that the progeny of financiers like Crozat could hope to live far better lives than their parents. In fact the nobility of France was far more permeable than its mythos would allow for — most likely because so many noble families were on the brink of destitution and their titles could attractive a particularly lucrative match in the bourgeoisie.

In 1707, Marie-Anne Crozat married Louis Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne, Comte d’Évreux, a largely destitute son from a family who could trace its nobility back to the thirteenth-century. In 1715, Louis Henri would petition the Regent for the position of *la capitainerie des chasses de Monceaux* only for the Regent to ridicule his relative poverty. The Regent is recorded to have replied to Louis Henri’s petition with the cutting remark: “I will grant it to you when I can present it to you in a *hôtel* of your own.”

Spurred, or perhaps spurned, by the Regent’s mockery, Louis Henri sold his lesser peerage of the *comté de Tancarville* to the banker John Law in order to purchase approximately a dozen hectares of land between the Faubourg St. Honoré and the Grand Cours (later Champs-Élysées), a parade route established by Jean-Baptiste Colbert that served as a direct axis to the Tuileries Palace. The land was relatively rural, having previously been home to vegetable gardens and tree nurseries, but Louis Henri’s land speculation would ultimately pay off as the city center grew outwards. In order to

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finance the construction and decoration of the hotel, Louis Henri used Crozat’s dowry which was reported to have been the outrageous sum of 2,000,000 million livres.\(^{18}\) The marriage of new money with old peerage, wedded together with ambitions of upward mobility, would produce the *Hôtel d'Évreux* (Figure 4-11. Turgot Map detail).

Constructed and decorated over the four years between 1718 and 1722, the *Hôtel d'Évreux* was a particularly well-appointed *hôtel particulier* on the right bank of the Seine. While still relatively rural, the right bank of the Seine was home to mostly financiers and aristocrats, many of whom were buying up farm land around the city center upon which to build more luxurious and spacious homes. The *hôtel particulier* is a particular style of urban residence typically defined by a tall curtain wall that faces the street front, a large carriage gate which allows traffic to pass into a court of honor, and, similar to Versailles, guests would enter a vestibule and immediately ascend to the public rooms of the *corps de logis* on the first floor, ultimately admiring the views of walled garden. The size of the garden was a particular status symbol in the congested capital city as flat land was at a premium. Due to Louis Henri’s savvy land acquisition, the *Hôtel d'Évreux* was known not only for its luxurious interiors, but its remarkably large formal garden which extended longitudinally from the house. The edifice was designed by architect Claude Mollet whose work was praised by contemporary architect Jacques-François Blondel as “the beautiful pleasure house in Paris.”\(^{19}\) Upon completion of the structure, the Regent came in person to deliver the patent Louis Henri had requested years prior. The Regent’s goodwill gesture is evocative of architecture’s power to, quite

\(^{18}\) Ibid. p. 13.

\(^{19}\) Rampazzo et Lessieur, *L'Élysée*, p. 6.
literally, further your status in society. Louis Henri actualized social success in a way that Antoine Crozat could not: one could ennoble themselves through a conscientious, albeit extravagant, deployment of wealth. What did Louis Henri do that neither of the Crozat brother could? And what social mechanisms vested architecture with the power to edify those who owned it?

**Mirrors Turned Inward**

Keeping on the fashionable right bank of the Seine but heading due west from the *Hôtel d'Évreux*, leaving the new money developments, travelling past the Tuileries, the Louvre and the Palais-Royal; past *Hôtel de Ville* and the medieval heart of Paris; and past the Île Saint-Louis; almost to the Bastille prison on the other side of the city center, turn abruptly left on to the Rue Royale and pass under the Henri IV’s apartments in the old red brick & yellow stone edifice of the Place Royale (now Place des Vosges). The lush park currently in the center of the square enclosure would have been a simple lawn with cobble stone pavement underneath the of the eighteenth-century visitor. The Place Royale was constructed in the early years of the seventeenth-century, from 1605 to 1612, and represents one of the earliest urban planning initiatives to modernize the ancient capital city. Similar planned housing complexes and public spaces would spread throughout the city in the coming century: similar sites like the Place Dauphine on the eastern tip of the Île de la Cité or the Place Vendôme just north of the Tuileries gardens allowed monarchs to shape the city in their own image. These enclosed public squares – in the case of Place des Vosges, a perfect square of 140 x 140 meters – afforded an ideal mix of public mingling on the common ground street-side, but facilitated the construction of personalized, private homes whose irregular shapes were hidden behind uniform façades. Though Places de Vosges was quickly aging out of fashion and
habitability in the eighteenth-century – a testament to the glory of a monarch long since past - the old money neighborhood that grew up around it kept real estate prices high in the Marais.

Lining the petites ruelles of the medieval neighborhood surrounding the Places des Vosges are the imposing curtain walls of the mansions of the ancient aristocracy who had constructed their hôtels particuliers over a century prior. Mansions like the Hôtel Carnavalet, the Hôtel d’Orgeval, and the Hôtel de Soubise had histories nearly as long as the families who occupied them. With the death of Louis XIV and the relocation of many aristocratic families back to the city, it was time to refresh and modernize. While sites like the Hôtel d’Évreux and the Place Vendôme had the luxury of building on (relatively) undeveloped land, renovating or adding onto the densely packed mansions like the Hôtel de Soubise posed significantly more challenges. Before the Soubises or their architects could even begin work on the mansion in 1705, the new owners had to spend the previous four years litigating (against their neighbors and close relatives) for an adjoining parcel of land to be appended onto their lot. Remarkably the claimants in this land tussle between close cousins were not the Princes of Soubise-Rohan and Guise but rather the respective princesses. After Anne de Rohan-Chabot, Princesse de Soubise, successfully claimed ownership of the lot, she and her husband engaged the services of then 29-year-old architect Pierre Alexis-Delamir to renovate the mansion completely. Such an auspicious project was undoubtedly a significant step in the early career of the young architect, whose work on the new façade of the mansion was completed four years later in 1709 (Figure 4-12. Front Façade). Delamir’s façade of the

Hôtel de Soubise, much like the uniform facades of the urban developments, hid a hodgepodge of irregularly shaped and unsymmetrical additions to the house that had grown unchecked over the centuries. Entering through the carriage gate from the street, the court of honor is a hemicycle of doubled columns with composite capitals – an unconventional stylistic choice on behalf of Delamir – that lead to the classicizing portico-style façade of the corps de logis. Statues representing the four seasons are appended to the exterior of the façade and supported by sets of doubled columns akin to those in the peristyle. Delamir’s inversion of the traditional order of column capitals as well as his insistence that the statues be full-length and life-size are evocative of an emerging preoccupation with exterior ornament, though it would only have been visible from within the curtain wall.

By the 1730s, a new generation of Soubises were set to inherit the house and the interiors were in need of modernization. The services of architect Germain Boffrand were enlisted to lay out a new course for the traditional enfilade; the architect added an oval salon at the junction between the public and private rooms of the mansion. (Figure 4-13. Salon de la Princesse) These oval salons (one on each floor, remarkably the princess’s on the piano nobile above the prince’s) serve as the termination of the Hôtel’s enfilade route and facilitate foot traffic to the smaller, more intimate rooms of the residential north wing. The salon’s oval shape was exceptionally popular at the time of the room’s construction – see Pierre Crozat’s contemporaneous addition to Montmercy – and cast into ambiguity the previous rigid social protocols of navigating a public space. The oval shape forced guests towards the center of the room, abolished
rectilinearly-based schema of social hierarchy, and, perhaps most transgressive of all, promoted a comingling of peoples from diverse classes and genders.

The *Salon de la Princesse* is undoubtedly Boffrand’s most splendiferous achievement at the *Hôtel de Soubise*. Eight sides, four windows, three mirrors, and one public door: the oval salon is immediately a mesmerizing room to enter. The monumental mirrors, held in place with *boiserie* carvings of celestial figures by Jacques Verbeckt, reflect not only the light from the windows, and the guests in the space, but also each other. This endless cycle of reflections, known as *mise-en-abîme* (literally “placed in the abyss”), is the apotheosis of mirrored illusions: the space of the salon, ones guests, and one’s glory are mirrored infinitely, receding indefinitely into a far-off abyss. This illusion of light, space, and majesty is the culmination of half a century of mirrored design in France. Taken from the monarchical hands of the king at Versailles and ported into the domestic, urban interior of a princess, the *Salon de la Princesse* is a statement of gender as much as it is an assertion of class. The over-door paintings by Nattoir depict scenes from the narrative of Cupid and Psyche, in Psyche takes matters of love into her own hands, unmasking cupid with a lamp whose light bring enlightenment. The room itself becomes a metonym for the social preeminence of the princesses who’s uniquely elite intersection of ancient aristocracy and plentiful income allowed successive generations of Soubise women the agency to litigate on behalf of themselves, assume control of the most auspicious locations in the home, and have the security of self to daringly cast aside architecturally-prescribed hierarchies. The mirrors in the *Salon de la Princesse* reject and transcend implications of feminine vanity; rather
they reaffirm the princess’s own identity which does not require aggrandizement – merely reflection.

The Régence marks a turning point in the aesthetic patronage of both royal and non-royal clients. Louis XIV’s social currency of la gloire seemingly died with the old king. The celebration of history and heroism were no longer the prime considerations of artistic commissions given by the state. Far from only signifying contemporary art theory, the traditional binary of line versus color established in the discourses of the Académie comes to represent a partisan line upon which social differences in gender, class, wealth, lineage, and political ambitions are mapped. This “eclipse of the heroic mode”21 by a rising taste for expressions of erudite and cosmopolitan designs is evocative of greater social trends taking place in the wake of Louis XIV’s death. This shift in consumer taste under the regency signifies a binary switch in aesthetic terms from designo to coloris, as well as geographically from Versailles to Paris, architecturally from palace to hôtel. Scholars like Katie Scott, Mimi Hellman, and Rochelle Iskin have mapped onto these physical shifts in form and location the shifts from royal to non-royal patronage and from masculine ethos to a feminine one.

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21 A reference to Scott’s chapter title of the same name in her book Rococo Interior which has been immensely formative in the conception of my own work.
Chapter 4 Images

Figure 4-1. French School, Madame de Ventadour with Louis XIV and his Heirs, c. 1715-20. Wallace Collection.

Figure 4-2. Detail of the Palais-Royal from Turgot’s Plan de Paris, c. 1739. University of Kyoto.
Figure 4-3. Floor Plan of the Second Floor of the Palais-Royal from Blondel’s Architecture Française, Tome 3, Book 5, Chapter 9. 1751. BnF, Paris.

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Figure 4-7. J. P. Mariette, Illustration of the elevation of the Château de Montmorency, before 1730.
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Figure 4-9. Detail of the Hôtel Crozat on the Rue de Richelieu from Turgot's Plan de Paris, c. 1739. University of Kyoto.
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Figure 4-11. Detail of the Hôtel d'Évreux from Turgot’s Plan de Paris, c. 1739. University of Kyoto.
Figure 4-12. Façade of the Hôtel de Soubise, designed by Alexis Delamir, c. 1700-1710.

Figure 4-13. Salon de la Princesse designed by Germain Boffrand, c. 1735-40.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The limitations of this paper, such that they are, prevented me from doing proper justice to the middle and latter-half of the eighteenth-century. The expansion and proliferation of mirrors drew great ire from social critics like La Font de Saint-Yenne who lamented the (perceptively) beleaguered state of French art and French masculinity. I have, though, labored to connect the performance and projection of one’s identity (in this case kingly, elite, or masculine) to the objects one consumes and the places one stores them. The history of Louis XIV is woefully incomplete without the history of Versailles as both the king and palace share a singular identity: one that is both superlative and unsustainable. Much like a stage drama, the king’s performance at Versailles would cease in 1789 with the outbreak of the revolution. How did the aesthetics of monarchical glory fail so spectacularly? How did the architecture of state bureaucracies crumble in the wake of shifting cultural foundations of 18th-century France? And how did the strictly-controlled aesthetic regime of the monarchy become unmoored from the statecraft and stagecraft of sacral kingship?

In probing the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV for precursors of the Age of Revolution, 20th-century scholarship has traditionally focused on the abandonment of the ceremonial rituals of courtly etiquette after the death of Louis XIV. While Louis XV’s rejection of key aspects of both the Apollonic and Sacral identities of the monarch provoked ire from traditionalists – it does not account for the ways in advents in industry, artistry, and philosophy facilitated the transfer of social power from aristocrats blessed with ideological wealth to an *haute bourgeoisie* with cash in hand. The
cessation of ceremonial upkeep in crafting the king’s image and identity is only one aspect of a greater cultural revolution that would precede the violence of 1789. The century between the 1680s and 1780s saw economic boom in the production and sale of luxury goods in Paris, an economy that would establish the city as an international capital of arts and culture. The proliferation of retail outlets purveying the trappings and fashions of cultural elites enfranchised middling social actors, domestic and foreign, with deep pockets and letters of credit to exercise a high degree of agency in fashioning their own image. This cultural and aesthetic revolution of mediating one’s own relationship to image and identity preceded the political revolution of the end of the century was spurred by economic revolutions in what can be identified as the early history of Capitalism.

This thesis is not intended to examine the French Revolution of 1789 in exacting detail but as an epilogue I wish to include a historical account of what mirrors had become to symbolize by the end of the eighteenth-century. Among the many Mémoires that record – to varying degrees of historical truth – the unfolding of revolutionary chaos and fervor, those of Madame de Chastenay preserve a particularly poignant understanding of identity, class, and self-fashioning in a time of crisis. Chastenay, an 18 year-old young woman from a minor noble family, recounts the night that revolutionaries came to her house to arrest her. Having been roused from her bed, and in a moment of panic, Chastenay took only two essential items with her to prison: “I took for myself, without even thinking, a small mirror in a cardboard frame and a pair of new slippers.”

The intuitive necessity of fashionable footwear and the ability to see oneself in order to

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maintain some standard of grooming may appear as the juvenile, privileged vanity of a young woman whose adolescence shields her from the gravity of the situation. Rather, I posit that Chastenay demonstrates in her intuitive grasp of her precious mirror how deeply aware she was of the interrelatedness of image, identity, and self-fashioning in the Ancien Régime. Small, fragile, precious, and prized – even Chastenay’s tiny hand mirror, protected only by cardboard, was a necessary prop in her performance of an aristocratic identity in a moment of crisis.

I contend that this association of mirrors with aristocratic identity begins under Louis XIV at the Château de Versailles more than a century prior. The palace became an architectural metonym for the grandeur and glory of the king himself and inspired successive waves of emulation by courtiers, haute bourgeoisie, foreign princess, and even the king’s own descendants. The mirror is a material metaphor for the ambitions and achievements of France in the Ancien Régime. The mirrored surface is produced through closely-guarded trade secrets, descended from alchemy and imported to France through sheer monarchical will. It produces an instantaneous portrait of its owner, one more accurate and perhaps less flattering than one produced by an artist. How does a mirror mediate one’s relationship to selfhood? To identity? To likeness? How does the exact likeness present in the mirror’s reflection inspire the crafting of flattering illusions? And how does the mirror work in concert with other aspects of visual and material culture? The mirror, traditionally connoted with truth or veritas, becomes, in the Ancien Régime, the essential paraphernalia of illusion. In an era when class boundaries were swiftly eroding, mirrors, textiles and cosmetics empowered those on the fringes of society to find footing in more prestigious circles – not only through the
adornment of the self but the enrichment of a mercantile middle class. Luxury in the 18th-century had never been cheaper nor more necessary to the enactment of social worth. Cultivated taste and a fluency in fashion and cultural affairs emerged as indispensable ciphers for decoding the signs and signifiers of society. The mirror, in particular, emerges as one of the most potent and omnipresent icons of the cultural shifts of the Ancien Régime: a target for social critics who would see in its reflection both the desecration of truth and traditionally-held aesthetic virtues and map this trend onto the ambitions of social climbers who used self-fashioning to their advantage.
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alec Moore is a scholar of European art from 1600 to 1900 with an emphasis on the decorative arts and interiors of eighteenth-century France. He received his Master of Arts degree in art history in the summer of 2018. Prior to enrolling at the University of Florida, Alec obtained his Bachelor of Arts in art history with a minor in French language and literature form the University of California, Los Angeles in 2015.