



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES PRESENTS

THRONES IN MAJESTY

AN EXHIBITION FROM 1 MARCH TO 19 JUNE 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESS RELEASE	3
INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-JACQUES AILLAGON	4
INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES CHARLES-GAFFIOT	6

PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION	8
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EXHIBITION SCENOGRAPHY	33
INTERVIEW WITH MARC JEANCLOS	34
MARC JEANCLOS, FROM OBJECTS TO SCENOGRAPHY	35

AROUND THE EXHIBITION	36
PUBLICATIONS	37
MINI-SITE OF THE EXHIBITION	39
BOOKLET-GAME BY PARIS MÔMES	40
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	41

VISUALS AVAILABLE FOR THE PRESS	42
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PARTNERS	48
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CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

PRESS RELEASE

THRONES IN MAJESTY

From 1 March to 19 June 2011 - Grand Apartments of the Palace of Versailles

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THRONES FROM DIFFERENT PERIODS AND VARIED CIVILISATIONS ARE PRESENTED IN THE GRAND APARTMENTS OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES. FORTY EMBLEMATIC THRONES ENABLE THE VISITOR TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE SEATED REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL AUTHORITY. WHETHER SOBER OR MAJESTIC, REASONABLE OR EXTRAVAGANT, THRONES ALWAYS CONVEY THE SAME SYMBOL OF LEGITIMATELY ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY. THIS EXHIBITION SETS UP AN ORIGINAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THESE EXCEPTIONAL OBJECTS, OFTEN MASTERPIECES, IN THE SUMPTUOUS SETTING OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES, A PLACE PAR EXCELLENCE OF THE EXERCISE AND REPRESENTATION OF SOVEREIGNTY.

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THE EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY associates two universal and timeless notions: authority and power. **Authority** establishes its possessor on bases regarded as more stable than those offered by **power**. The latter is ephemeral and acquired with difficulty by its holder, and comes from the victory of a hero over his enemies. Thus, in symbolic terms, the representatives of authority are depicted preferably in a seated position, while the powerful are shown standing up or in movement. Two types of attributes express the specificity of each of these two notions: the throne for authority, and the crown, the sceptre or the commander's baton (later to form the regalia) for power.

SO THIS PRESENTATION IN THE GRAND APARTMENTS ILLUSTRATES THIS CHARACTERISTIC of symbolic thought, associating authority with the seat of the person exercising it and staging this authority. This is the case, for example, for **spiritual** authority – that of Jupiter, Christ or Buddha – or delegated **spiritual** authority – that of Saint Peter, the Pope, bishops and abbots. In Europe, as well as in Asia, Africa and pre-Columbian America, **temporal** authority is also seated. So most palaces possess a "throne room".

This exhibition is organised by the Public Establishment of the Château, Museum and National Estate of Versailles, thanks to the sponsorship of M. Kamel Alzarka.

"**THRONES IN MAJESTY**" HAS BENEFITED FROM EXCEPTIONAL LOANS, such as those agreed by the Vatican, the Forbidden City of Peking and royal residences of Europe (Madrid, Warsaw, etc.). In an appropriate scenography, emblematic thrones – such as those of king Dagobert, Napoleon, the restored king Louis XVIII, or the *sedes gestatoria* of Pope Pius VII – are exhibited alongside Taino, African, Chinese and Thai ones. Some of these thrones are accompanied by accessories that characterised their usage, such as flabella, stools and footstools.

INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-JACQUES AILLAGON

WHY PUT ON AN EXHIBITION ENTITLED "THRONES IN MAJESTY" IN THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES?

The point of departure of this project was the proposal made to the Palace of Versailles by the publishing house Les Editions du Cerf to co-publish the essay by Jacques Charles-Gaffiot called *Thrones in majesty*. I immediately accepted this proposal. *Thrones in majesty* is a subject of obvious relevance to the Palace of Versailles which was the focal point of the exaltation of the royal power and authority. Then I suggested that it would be interesting if the publication of this study was accompanied by an exhibition in the Palace of a certain number of thrones in order to make the subject of the essay accessible to the widest possible audience.

WHY CHOOSE TO PRESENT THIS EXHIBITION IN THE GRAND APARTMENTS?

I thought it was important that these "seats of authority" be presented in the heart of the royal residence, in the circuit of the Grand Apartments, which were the key setting for the representation of royal authority for over a century. The Apollo Salon was used as the "throne room", but for exceptional events such as the reception of important ambassadors, the throne was installed spectacularly in the Hall of Mirrors.

WHY ARE THRONES FROM OTHER CIVILISATIONS INCLUDED?

The very complete essay by Jacques Charles-Gaffiot explores the question of the universality of the seated representation of authority. To be faithful to his approach, it was important to assemble in the exhibition, alongside European thrones from the monarchic period of Versailles in the 17th and 18th centuries, thrones of other civilisations, notably Asian, African and pre-Colombian ones.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE LAYOUT OF THE EXHIBITS?

The layout of the exhibition is intended to establish a systematic link, each time that it is possible, between the characteristics of the works and those of the room of the Grand Apartments in which they are presented. For example, in the War Salon, the thrones chosen symbolise the crushing of enemies as depicted in the imposing bas-relief by Coysevox, *Louis XIV Victorious and Crowned by Glory*. In the Peace Salon, works representing the tranquillity of authority are on display: a Gallo-Roman marble, a Buddha from Gandhara and a gothic Virgin. In addition, these three works feature the same application of the Hellenistic representation of the pleated garment. In the Coronation Room (of Napoleon), the Emperor's two thrones are naturally on display, facing the imposing painting by David.

WHAT ARE THE FLAGSHIP WORKS OF THE EXHIBITION?

The exhibition brings together rare and precious objects and numerous exceptional loans were obtained for it. The coming of king Dagobert's throne to the Palace of Versailles is a genuine event: it has never before left the reserve collection of the BNF where it is kept. It is one of the rare surviving pieces from the royal Treasury of the Basilica of Saint-Denis. Its exhibition at the same time as the throne of Burg Bederkesa, from a Germanic kingdom of the 6th century, is particularly significant. Another outstanding series of exhibits is formed by the items from the collections of the Vatican: *the Sedia gestatoria of Pius VII, the throne of Innocent X, the mobile Seat of Paul V Borghese, and the "Portantina" of Leo XIII.*

The African objects from the collections of the Musée du Quai Branly (the Barbier-Mueller collection) are also of exceptional quality. I must draw attention to the works from the collections of the Palace of Versailles itself, in particular the large seat made for king Louis-Philippe and which features in the full-length portrait of the king by Winterhalter, and the mobile seat made for Pius VII at the coronation ceremony of Napoleon and which drew its inspiration from the curule chair that forms the base of the famous throne of Dagobert.

WHAT DOES THIS EXHIBITION TEACH US?

Thrones in majesty shows to what extent humanity has constantly and universally had recourse to recurring symbols such as the seated representation of authority. These symbols resist the passage of time. Even the Republic has its thrones, as can be seen in the last room of the exhibition. I believe there is a genuine cultural and even political interest in inviting the visitors of the Château to reflect on this central question of the symbolic staging of authority. The more citizens understand the driving forces of political life, the more they will exercise their political responsibilities fully and lucidly. So the exhibition *Thrones in majesty* has an obvious historical interest. It also has a real civic interest.

Jean-Jacques Aillagon

Former minister,

Public Establishment of the Palace,

Museum and National Estate of Versailles

INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES CHARLES-GAFFIOT, CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION

ARE THERE SOCIETIES IN WHICH THE SEATED POSITION OF SOVEREIGNS IS NOT A SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY?
The throne is a universal symbol. The Aztecs, who had had no contact with Europe, used thrones just as their Spanish conquerors did! In India, the statues of the awakened Buddha seated under his *pipal* tree echo the statues of the medieval French Saint Louis administering justice under his oak tree.

WHICH CHARACTERISTICS ARE SHARED BY THRONES OF ALL PERIODS AND CIVILISATIONS?

A seat becomes a throne when it is “staged” by the use of three principal elements: the platform, the canopy and the footstool. **The platform** isolates and raises it above the crowd, making the holder of authority more visible. It is also a sign of proximity with the celestial powers.

The canopy is a symbolic representation of the heavenly vault, the place of divine authority. The upper part of the canopy is also referred to as the ‘heaven’. Lastly, **the footstool** is the substitute of the defeated enemy on which the weight and legitimacy of authority triumphing over Evil is exercised with serenity, not by its power, or the violence or personal strength of its holder, but in virtue of a pact of assistance concluded with a higher entity.

WHAT KIND OF “ACCESSORIES” COMPLEMENT THESE CHARACTERISTICS?

I distinguish at least two. Firstly, the **fan** (Latin, *flabellum*) which loses its practical function near the throne and becomes immobile. I see in it the heritage of the ataraxia sought by the Greek philosophers, a state of profound inner peace that nothing can disturb. In the presence of the king at Versailles, the women no longer fanned themselves. In ancient Egypt, the goddess of justice, Maat, was depicted with headgear surmounted by an immobile ostrich feather that no wind could shake. The same applied to the fans placed in the throne room of the Chinese emperors or, up until 1964, around the pontifical throne in Rome. This immobility, this inflexibility, symbolises the impartiality, serenity and justice that are characteristic of authority. The second accessory element of authority that I distinguish is **the cushion** (in Latin, *pulvinus*). In ancient Rome and the Byzantine and Ottoman empire, the thrones of divine figures and sovereigns had large cushions that sometimes puffed out beyond the seat. Enriching with precious materials the throne or seat of the representative of authority is a practice observed in ancient India, five centuries before our era. This habit was expressed in France during the monarchy by the respect paid to the royal bed, symbol of dynastic continuity, the foundation of royal authority. From the 14th century on, this symbol of the cushion was used again in the *lit de justice* (bed of justice) held in the Grand-Chambre of the Parlement of Paris. During these solemn sessions, when contested royal decisions were registered, the king sat on four velvet pillows placed on a throne. Until the 13th century, churches from Constantinople to Saint Mary Major contained representations of Christ in majesty or the Virgin seated on a throne with an overflowing and richly decorated cushion of shimmering colours.

7

WHAT ARE THE MODERN FORMS OF THE THRONE?

There are innumerable references: in universities, courts, parliamentary assemblies and, in France, in economic life, as the head office of a company is called its “siège social” or “corporate seat”.

In English, the head of the company is its “chairman”, so a company is in principle a place of authority. But the architecture of these buildings, which take the form of increasingly high tower blocks, as in China, India and the United States, and particularly in Dubai, show that the veil of the authority essentially hides the concept of economic power, increasingly more aggressive and bent on conquest. Multinationals seek by all means to carve out an empire at the expense of their rival firms. The urban landscape testifies to the competition between them, by building tower blocks ever higher than those of their rivals. I see in this a good example of the abandonment of the old values and the increasing rise of violent individualism. A large part of our current social and political difficulties may be understood in the light of this confusion between authority and power.

Authority, let us not forget, enables us to dominate passions and plays a moderating role. It subjugates abusive force and ensures respect for the law. Today in France since May 68, the word “authority” is regarded as overlapping with “authoritarianism”. This is a misinterpretation. But it is true that the West seems hostile to the representation of authority.

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS EROSION OF AUTHORITY?

In modern history, I trace this phenomenon back to the anarchist movements of the 19th century and the various revolutionary episodes that took place notably in France in this period. It was then that the phobia of the throne was expressed with the greatest virulence. In 1830, the throne of Charles X, after being used as a mortuary bed for the corpse of a young student, was destroyed. In 1848, the throne of Louis-Philippe was burned publicly on the Place de the Bastille. French rulers, since the presidencies of general De Gaulle and Georges Pompidou (and in certain aspects François Mitterrand), seem to disregard the seated position. The Head of State is seated in his official car, but is hidden behind tinted windows. In France today, as in the United States and in a large number of countries, the President of the Republic makes his addresses from behind a Plexiglas stand.

I see in this an inversion of the traditional respective positions of rulers and subjects that goes back to the Protestant Reformation. In the 16th century, the celebrants of the Protestant faith stood before the seated faithful, in contrast to the customs of the Catholic and Eastern churches where the bishop was seated in his throne chair facing the standing congregation. This attitude is also a return to the model followed by Athenian democracy: the orator stood before the *boule* assembly, facing the conscripted members, in danger of being interrupted at any moment if he failed to be sufficiently eloquent. He had to be able to hold on to his audience to the end, at the risk of appearing to be a demagogue. Even in some contemporary monarchies, the seat of authority is prohibited. Thus, as constitutional monarchs, Spanish kings refrain from sitting on their throne during official ceremonies. Another influence that I would like to point out is the Enlightenment movement.

The new ideas seem to have had the effect of making the kings of the century of Louis XV entertain some doubts about the origin of their mission. While they had themselves painted seated in majesty until the end of the 17th century, during the following century they were more often depicted in a standing position with a martial and dominating posture which relegated the royal throne to the background as a superfluous encumbrance. This aspect is clearly visible in the full-length portraits of Louis XV and Louis XVI, and many other monarchs of this period.

Jacques Charles-Gaffiot

Curator of the exhibition

PART I

PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION

HERCULES SALON

THRONES IN MAJESTY SEATED AUTHORITY, STANDING POWER

FROM EARLIEST ANTIQUITY, the Greeks distinguished the two fundamental concepts intrinsic to the exercise of sovereignty: power and authority. To the vertical position of **power**, symbolising the might of the hero triumphing over his adversaries and the inexorable instability of the powerful, corresponds the seated position of authority. The latter grants its holder an uncontested, revered and legitimate pre-eminence. Hence the seat or the throne are the specific symbols of authority.

CONTRARY TO RECEIVED IDEAS, the majesty of the royal seat does not derive from the richness of its materials or the beauty of its ornaments. The symbol of authority is essentially manifested by the presence around the seat of three elements expressing the dignity that it seeks to convey: **the platform**, which raises and distinguishes the holder of authority, **the canopy**, symbolising the presence of a higher order, and **the footstool**, image of the support granted to authority in carrying out its mission.

THESE TWO CONCEPTS so perfectly distinct are observed not only in the civilisations of the Western world. From time immemorial they have applied on all the continents, and have given rise to similar symbolic imagery whose scope still conditions today the behaviour of peoples to the representatives of contemporary institutions.



Seat of a dignitary with its footstool

THIS SEAT WAS DISCOVERED IN 1994 in a large tomb of the Fallward necropolis in Wremen (Lower Saxony). The upper side of the foot-rest is decorated with geometric patterns like those of the seat. The rear side of the footstool features a hunting scene: a dog attacking a stag. The longitudinal edge bears a runic inscription that can be deciphered as *ksamella lguskapi*, literally meaning “stool” and “stag’s wound”.

1. *Seat of a dignitary with its footstool.*
Second quarter of the 5th century AD.
Seat carved from an alder trunk.
H. of the seat: 65 cm; W. of the
footstool: 36 cm.
Germany, Burg Bederkesa.
© Museum Burg Bederkesa,
Landkreis Cuxhaven, Germany
(H. Lang).

Throne of king Ghezo (1818 – 1858) for the ato ceremony



2. *Throne of king Ghezo (1818 – 1858) for the ato ceremony.*

Kingdom of Dahomey (present Benin).
Style: Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Portuguese.
Between 1818 and 1847. Wood, metal.
H. 199 cm; W. 120 cm; Depth 84.5 cm.
Paris, Musée du Quai Branly.
© Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries.

ESTABLISHED IN ABOMEY SINCE 1600, the dynasty of the kings of Danhomè (present Benin, former Dahomey) commissioned most of their *regalia* from the court artists. Their novelty and creativity had to impress both the king and his subjects. Higher than the audience thrones, this *nukpewuzinkpo* seat “of the manifest and incontestable power” was used for the annual public *ato* ceremony. The king, looking down on the crowd, distributed part of his riches to his subjects.

THIS THRONE RECALLS THE SHAPE OF THE SEATS OF ASHANTI (present Ghana), the allied kingdom of Danhomè. Owing to the technique, the use of bolts and palm leaf motifs, the art historian Joseph Adandé attributes it to an Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Portuguese workshop. This cultural mix arose from contact with Europeans since the 18th century or from the return of freed Afro-Brazilian slaves. The kingdom’s prisoners of war were sold to Europeans at this time to be shipped to Brazil or Haiti.

SEIZED BY THE FRENCH GENERAL DODDS after the colonisation of the kingdom in 1894, the throne was given to the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum in Paris in 1895. It was reproduced in the book by John Duncan in 1847 which stated that it was carved for king Ghezo (1818-1858).

Abbot’s throne



3. *Abbot’s throne.*
Goudji (1941-) 2000.
Silver, lapis-lazuli, ebony, wrought iron.
H. 200 cm; W. 100 cm.
Champagne-sur-Rhône, Abbaye Saint-Pierre, Regular Canons of Saint Victor.
© Marc Wittmer.

ORIGINALLY PLACED AT THE BACK OF THE CHOIR IN CHURCHES, this type of seat was ordinarily reserved for the bishop. The throne and its footstool are placed against the wall of the ambulatory of the church of Saint-Pierre de Champagne-sur-Rhône, a fine example of Romanesque art, and complete the liturgical furnishings commissioned in 2000 from the artist Goudji. They are made from Pontijou stone, wrought iron, silver, ebony and lapis-lazuli. Two small silver lions decorate the first step of the platform, while the arms of the Abbot Maurice Bitz are placed on the top of the backrest under a silver bishop’s hat decorated with two plaited cords each with six tassels.

A FRENCH ARTIST OF GEORGIAN ORIGIN, Goudji is one of the most celebrated sculptural jewellery makers of our period. Since 1986 he has renewed the sacred arts by combining contemporary art and the oldest liturgical traditions. In 1994 he was commissioned to change all the liturgical furniture of the cathedral of Chartres. In 2000 he produced for the Grande Trappe monastery another abbot’s throne that is more understated and in tune with Cistercian strictness.

ABUNDANCE SALON

Throne said to be king Dagobert's (v.600-639)



4. Throne said to be king Dagobert's (v.600-639).
6th or 7th century (seat);
Second half of the 9th century
(backrest and armrests).
Bronze gilt in places.
H. 135 cm; W. 78 cm.
Royal insignia from the Treasure of
the Abbey of Saint-Denis.
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de
France.
© BNF.

"ON THIS SEAT the kings used to sit to receive the homage of the great men of their kingdom." The throne said to be king Dagobert's is mentioned in these words for the first time by Suger (1081-1151), the celebrated abbot who began in 1130 to rebuild the abbey of Saint-Denis, the symbolic monument of the French monarchy and model of the new gothic art in France. In his *De Administratione*, he claimed to have restored this throne and was proud of this achievement. By identifying it as having belonged to king Dagobert, founder of the abbey in the 7th century, he thus intended to highlight the ancient origins of the place and its close links with the French monarchy.

THE THRONE CONSISTS OF TWO DISTINCT PARTS: a seat inspired by the Roman model of the curule chair, whose uprights take the form of the front part of the body of panthers with carved decoration, and whose seat consists of wide strips of leather. The bronze backrest and armrests with openwork foliage scrolls were added later on, probably in the reign of Charles the Bald (843-877). From 1076-1080 on, the Capetian kings are depicted on their seal seated in majesty on a similar throne, and we already find comparable thrones (with animal profiles) on Carolingian illuminated manuscripts (depicting, for example, the emperor Lothaire in his psalter).

WHILE THE CONNECTION WITH KING DAGOBERT is probably spurious and the date of the throne disputed, it has for many years had a high symbolic and almost mythical value. Illustrated by Montfaucon in his *Monumens de la monarchie française* (1729), the throne was transported to the Medals Gallery of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 1791, where it is still kept. It had its last hour of glory when Napoleon, seated on this throne, distributed the first crosses of the Légion d'Honneur in the camp of Boulogne in August 1804. In the early 20th century, a replica in gilt wrought iron was made for the basilica of Saint-Denis.

VENUS SALON

Throne of king Carlos III of Spain (1716-1759-1788)



5. *Throne of king Carlos III of Spain (1716-1759-1788).*
Mid-18th century (1763-1766).
Wood carved by Gennaro di Fiore in Naples, gilt in Madrid before 1772.
H. 172 cm; W. 100 cm; Depth 85 cm.
Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional,
Royal Palace, Palace of Saint Ildefonso.
© Patrimonio Nacional.

THE DECOR OF THE THRONE ROOM of the royal palace of Madrid has not changed since the reign of Carlos III. Having inherited the crown of Spain in 1759, the sovereign left Naples for Spain. In the capital he found a recently built royal palace in which all the interior decoration remained to be completed. He appointed his chief architect, Francesco Sabatini, a pupil of Vanvitelli, to carry out the work (completed in 1764). Mattia Gasparini was responsible for the king's bedchamber and private rooms. Giovanni Battista Natali designed for him in 1763 all the furniture of the throne room: the twelve console tables and their pier glasses, gigantic for this period, the armchair – exhibited here – the canopy and its hangings, embroidered in Naples by Andrea Cotardi with gilt silver thread on velvet woven specially in Genoa.

THE SEAT, like the rest of this furniture, was carved in Naples by Gennaro di Fiore and gilded in Madrid between 1766 and 1772. The medallion on the backrest of the throne features the profile of king Carlos III. Since the reign of Alphonso XII, each sovereign has had this original throne copied with their own portrait inserted. Today, there are two thrones installed under the canopy of the royal palace of Madrid: one with the effigy of king Don Juan Carlos, the other with that of queen Doña Sofía.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WISH EXPRESSED BY CARLOS III, the platform of the throne was framed by four of the twelve bronze lions commissioned in Rome by Velasquez, for the Mirrors Room of the old Alcázar in Madrid, where the Spanish Habsburgs held their solemn audiences. These twelve lions were perhaps a reference to those that surrounded the throne of Solomon.

Throne of emperor Nicholas II



6. *Throne of emperor Nicholas II.*
Late 19th century. Gilt wood, red velvet, gold, silver and silk thread.
H. 120 cm; W. 75 cm.
Private collection.
© Eric Reinard.

FROM THE HÔTEL D'ESTRÉE, the embassy of imperial Russia, located on the rue de Grenelle in Paris, this seat was certainly made in 1896 to mark the laying of the first stone of the Alexandre III bridge. The latter's son, the emperor Nicholas II (1868-1894-1918), came to Paris to preside at the ceremonies marking a new episode in the Franco-Russian alliance. The circular backrest of this seat bearing the imperial arms and adopting the martial theme of antique shields was inspired by the designs of the decorators Percier and Fontaine for the throne of the emperor Napoleon I.

Throne made for the Prussian embassy in Paris

SYMBOL OF THE RISING POWER of the kingdom of Prussia in the 1860s which sought to crystallise around it the unity of the Germanic states, this throne, identified by Christian Baulez, former curator in the Palace of Versailles, was delivered in 1864 to the residence of the Prussian ambassador in Paris in the hôtel de Beauharnais, rue de Lille.

The embassy ordered it from the Fourdinois cabinet-making firm in Paris. The firm was almost completely unrivalled in the field of art cabinet-making, winning the top awards at the World Fairs of 1851, 1855 and 1862.



BOTH IN ITS GENERAL COMPOSITION AND SPIRIT, THIS THRONE IS COMPARABLE to two thrones delivered in 1804 by François-Honoré-Georges Jacob-Desmaler (1770-1841) to the court of Napoleon I, one intended for the Tuileries palace, the other for the Château de Saint-Cloud, each designed based on models submitted by Charles Percier.

The repertory of motifs use is clearly inspired by the First Empire style: the laurel wreaths, griffons and lion paw feet. This unique surviving piece from the Fourdinois workshops has continued to intrigue experts: an ink drawing of it in the Fourdinois collection of the bibliothèque Forney in Paris was published in 1890 in a luxurious album of heliogravures, *Maison Fourdinois. Nouveau Recueil d'ameublements: meubles, sièges, lits, tentures, etc.* However, its restoration confirmed the presence on one of the seat uprights of the JACOB mark, pointing to the last period of the Jacob dynasty, between 1830 and 1847, before Georges-Alphonse-Jacob Desmaler (1799-1870) sold his business to the Jeanselme firm in 1847. One possible explanation is the fact that Alexandre Georges Fourdinois began his wood-carving career with François-Honoré-Jacob Desmaler before striking out on his own in 1835.

7. Throne made for the Prussian embassy in Paris.

Fourdinois firm (1835 to 1887).
"Jacob" mark, gilt wood.
H.:132.3 cm; W: 77.5 cm; Depth: 69.5 cm.
Versailles, Musée national des
Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.
© Palace of Versailles, Jean-Marc
Manai.

PERFECTLY IN TUNE with the décor of the hôtel de Beauharnais, the throne was duly installed there. It stayed there until some time in 1914, or in 1918, perhaps linked to the negotiations on the reparations imposed on Germany following its defeat in 1918, when the town house was taken over by the French state. A striking destiny for a throne linked to two empires and two celebrated cabinet-makers.

Throne of king Louis XVI, made for the French embassy in London



8. *Throne of king Louis XVI, made for the French embassy in London.*
François II (1748ap. 1808) and Toussaint Foliot (1715 – 1798) 1783
Gilt carved wood.
H.:139 cm; W. 94 cm; width 89 cm
Worcester City Museums.
© Worcester City Guildhall collection.

IN 1783, the Comte de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs at the court of Versailles, appointed the Comte d'Adhemar as ambassador to London. A complete suite of furniture was sent to London by the Royal Furniture administration (Garde-Meuble de la Couronne) to decorate the throne room of the official residence.

THIS THRONE, identified by Christian Baulez, which bore a label forbidding its use as a seat, was intended to symbolically represent the authority of the king of France. Made by François II Foliot, the seat was carved by Toussaint Foliot and gilded by Marie-Catherine Renon. The armrests, ending in two lion heads, are decorated with a naturalistic lily stem carving. The seat cross-piece between the front legs is decorated with heraldic fleur-de-lys emblems.

USED IN 1858 BY QUEEN VICTORIA, it was later given additional ornaments (bronze lion paws) as well as new trimming and padding very different from the original piece.

Throne of king Stanislaw August Poniatowski (1732-1798), king of Poland (1764-1795)



9. *Throne of king Stanislaw August Poniatowski (1732-1798), king of Poland (1764-1795).*
After Jan Christian Kamsetzer.
Circa 1785. Gilt carved wood.
H. 166 cm; W. 79.5 cm; Depth 68.7 cm
Warsaw, Royal Castle in Warsaw.
© The Royal Castle in Warsaw,
photo Andrzej Ring.

ELECTED KING OF POLAND IN 1764, Stanislaw August Poniatowski ordered the reconstruction of a wing of the royal palace of Warsaw and entrusted the interior décor to French artists presented to him by the Madame Geoffrin, an illustrious figure he had known in Paris. Several thrones feature today in the collections of the royal palace. This one, carved after the designs of the Dresden architect Jan Christian Kamsetzer (1753-1795), active in Warsaw from 1773 on, is part of the furniture of the new Throne Room of the royal palace of Warsaw. It is mentioned in the accounts for 1785-1786 as one of three seats reserved for the king. In the inventory drawn up in 1837, it is described as the "seat of the tsar Nicholas I" as it was used in 1829 for his coronation as king of Poland. The arms of the Polish Republic and the house of Poniatowski were then replaced by the crowned two-headed eagle.

RECTANGULAR IN SHAPE, the seat's wooden frame is carved and gilt. Its backrest, whose original motif has been restored, is surmounted by a cartouche with the king's arms, supported on the left by an allegory of justice and on the right by one representing peace. A carved crane, whose beak points upwards, stands at the foot of Justice to show the king's vigilance in warding off external threats. This composition is inspired by a drawing by Jean Pillement, executed circa 1764 and later adapted in a project by François Boucher. The throne was placed under a canopy executed in Lyon by the firm of Camille Pernon et Cie. By chance, this throne survived the destruction caused during the Second World War.

DIANA SALON

Throne of the emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), emperor (1736-1795), with its footstool



10. *Throne of emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), emperor (1736-1795), with its footstool.*

Between 1735 and 1796.
Lacquered red sandalwood.
H. 104 cm; W. 130 cm; Depth 90 cm.
Beijing, Collection of the Palace Museum.
© Cité Interdite.

THE SEAT FRAME IS CARVED IN RED SANDALWOOD. The backrest is adorned with a red lacquered and carved wooden panel representing sea waves, cliffs, motifs of “clouds and dragons”, as well as two fabulous dragons (kuilong) facing each other. In the centre is the headdress of the *Vairocana Buddha*, with a carved cloud motif in the middle and the character “shou”, symbol of the longevity wished for the emperor. Under the edge of the smooth seat board is a border frame slightly projecting above and below. The shape of the inward-turned feet and their extremities is typical of the Ming period (1368-1644). They rest on four carved tortoises. The footstool is decorated identically. This throne was made for one of the residences occupied by emperor Qianlong.

Duho seat

THE TAINO INDIANS OF THE GREATER ANTILLES lived on the islands of Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, as well as in the eastern region of Cuba. They are known not only for the strangeness of their material culture but also for having been the first native people of the Americas to bear the



11. *Duho seat.*
Dominican Republic,
Taino art. 15th century.
Wood. Length 84 cm; Width: 22 cm.
Private collection.
© Françoise Calmon.

brunt of the conquest led by Christopher Columbus in 1492, which was to wipe them out. They were in fact totally exterminated by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. These Indians had a monarchical type of social system based on a division into chiefdoms with a cacique (chief) at the head of each one who was both priest and hereditary monarch. The chief held the privilege of sitting on this type of ceremonial seat during religious and other rituals.

THE WOODEN TAINO SEATS have zoomorphic or anthropomorphic shapes and, as here, could also take the form of a hybrid being combining human and feline features. Although its history is unknown, this throne carved in one piece from a guayacan (*lignum vitae*) trunk and then finely polished and sculpted is a masterpiece of Taino art.

MARS SALON



12. *Throne of Pius VI (1717-1775-1799)*. Venetian wood-carving, Mid-18th century. Carved gilt wood. Venice, Ca' Rezzonico, Museo del Settecento Veneziano.
© Ca' Rezzonico - Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia.

Throne of Pope Pius VI (1717-1775-1799)

THIS THRONE ORIGINALLY BELONGED TO THE GRASSI DE CHIOGGIA FAMILY, one of the richest merchant dynasties of Venice, who welcomed pope Pius VI on his way to Vienna, in the night of 10 March 1782. This event is related by the inscription on the large gilt plaque held by two angels that crowns the throne.

FOR MANY YEARS, studies mentioned the stylistic affinities between this throne and the furniture made by Renier, of which some pieces are exhibited in the same room in the Ca' Rezzonico. But the author of this work, traditionally identified as Antonio Corradini (1668-1752), was never a wood-carver. Recent studies tend to attribute this throne to the entourage of the Gai family of wood-carvers, particularly Giovanni, son of Angelo and brother of Francesco, who specialised in wood carving.



13. *Throne of Bamoun and its stool*. Early 20th century. Carved from a single block of wood. H. 180 cm; W. 100 cm; Depth 100 cm. Paris, Musée du Quai Branly.
© Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries.

Bamoun throne and stool

THE BAMOUN KINGDOM, a pre-colonial warrior state in western Cameroon, founded in the late 16th century by Nshare Yen, has a prestigious history. Nineteen kings governed the country since its origin, with some of them leaving an exceptional mark during their reign, such as king Njoya who ruled from 1894 to 1932. Ibrahim Njoya was a great cultural patron for his kingdom, promoting the arts and techniques. He has remain celebrated above all for having invented an alphabet, shumom, and so the Bamouns were one of the rare peoples of sub-Saharan Africa to have developed their own form of writing.

BAMOUN ART IS OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY as demonstrated by this throne carved from a single block of wood. Two anthropomorphic sculptures form the throne's backrest. The female figure on the left with its long face, wide nose and prominent eyes is dressed scantily in a loincloth held by a belt. She is wearing a coloured tiara with red and black stripes. Her arms are long and thin and she holds a vessel containing kola nuts on her stomach. The male figure on her right represents a trusted servitor holding his chin in his left hand and a horn cup in his right hand.

MERCURY SALON



14. *The Apotheosis of Hercules.*
Ceiling of the Hercules Salon
1731-1736
François Lemoine (1688-1737)
Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de
Versailles et de Trianon.
© Palace of Versailles, Christian Millet.

SEATED GODS

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HERCULES, symbolising triumphant might, standing in his chariot pulled by putti, all the gods of Parnassus are represented seated, as can be seen in this large apotheosis scene painted by François Lemoine on the ceiling of the Hercules Salon in Versailles, where this exhibition opens.

LIKE THE TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNS to whom they transmitted legitimacy and authority, the gods and their emanations are usually depicted in a seated position at all times and in all civilisations: e.g. the Japanese divinities living on the summit of Mount Fuji and the Aztec rain god Tlaloc. The form and the nature of their seats change with the periods and cultures.

MONOTHEIST RELIGIONS ALSO HAVE RECOURSE TO THE UNIVERSAL THEME OF THE THRONE.

In the Bible, God is seated on a throne. Curiously, the Koran presents God as seated on a throne on the water, probably in reference to the verse of Genesis (“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”). As for Jesus, teaching or blessing, he also is often depicted seated, even when being scourged during the Passion.



15. *Statue of ancestor, adu zatua.*
Indonesia, north of Nias island.
Late 19th - early 20th century.
Hardwood, Paris, Musée du Quai Branly.
© Musée du Quai Branly, photo
Patrick Gries.

Statue of the ancestor adu zatua

THIS SEATED HIGH-RANKING DIGNITARY holds a cup of offerings against his chest. He wears the attributes that point to his elevated status: a cabled necklace (*nifatali*), a long ear pendant reserved for men and a bracelet (*töla gasa*) initially carved from a giant seashell. The mouth framed by a thin moustache, and the presence of a beard carved in parallel grooves, show a concern for realism in the execution. The line of the eyebrows ends in a partial volute, which is repeated on the ears’ stylised tragus and helix. The contours of the round body are harmonious and the difference in tone between the colour of the body and that of the abdomen indicates that the figure wore a cloth around its waist. The “tree of life” crown with its fern motifs rising above a studded headband with diamond points gives the figure dynamic vital force. The chiefs of the northern part of the island of Nias, in Indonesia, wore this type of crown made from cloth stretched on a frame of twigs fringed with incised gold leaves..

ONCE THE SCULPTURE WAS COMPLETED, the *adu zatua* was consecrated by the priests in the course of a ritual during which the figurine, placed near a window, was linked by rings of palm leaves to a stone monument standing in front of the house. These figures were intended to host the soul of the deceased and restore life to him. Rites were performed for the *adu zatua*, involving animal sacrifices and offerings made to supplicate their benevolence and protection. The presence of these statuettes in the houses was designed to maintain a close link between the world of the living and that of the dead.

Votive statuette of the god Somtus



16. *Votive statuette of the god Somtus*. Egypt, Herakleopolis. Late period. Bronze and silver inlays (eyes). H. 30.3 cm. Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art. © Palace of Versailles, Jean-Marc Manai.

THIS VOTIVE STATUETTE, exceptional for its size and the quality of the casting, represents the god Somtus, the Hellenised name of the god Sema-taouy “Uniter of the two lands”. Somtus, depicted nude, with his left arm held by his side and putting his right hand to his mouth, was one of the child gods of the Egyptian pantheon along with, for example, Harpocrates or HarSomtus. The god of Herakleopolis, capital of the kingdom of Upper Egypt, was venerated locally as part of a triad made up of himself and his parents: the ram god Herychef (his father) and the goddess Hathor (his mother). During the Greek period he was assimilated to Heracles, the Greek hero and demi-god – hence the origin of the city’s name – which in the iconography is expressed by the presence of a cudgel in his hand, symbol of his great strength.

SOMTUS HAS TWO FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS. The first, solar, is shown in the representations of him seated on a lotus, recalling the young sun about to be born. The second aspect is royal: his name alone demonstrates this. This sovereign status is reinforced by the royal attributes. The god wears the *nemes*, the emblematic headdress of the pharaohs, and the *hemhem* triple *atef* crown attributed to dead kings or child gods. A lock of hair sticks out, symbol of childhood. Somtus is depicted seated on a throne, independent of the statuette, with lion paws and tails reaching up to the top of the high backrest. They are joined at the back by a cluster of three papyrus plants, probably relating to the Chemnis swamp.

THE BASE ON WHICH THE CHILD’S FOOT RESTS is carved with a hieroglyphic inscription: “Sema-taouy gives life to Cha-Hapi-nefer, son of Nakht-heneb”. The throne bears the same dedication as the statuette, proving that the two pieces belong together.



17. *Seated Buddha*. Northern China. Tang dynasty (618-907). Gilt bronze, green patina. H. 26.5 cm; W. 11.6 cm; Depth: 11.5 cm. Paris, Musée Guimet. © RMN (Musée Guimet, Paris), Thierry Ollivier.

Seated Buddha

THIS BUDDHA DRESSED IN A MONK’S ROBE covering his two shoulders is seated on a hexagonal throne that is supported by an openwork pedestal of the same shape. His right hand is in the *abhayamudrā* pose, his left hand in the *bhūmiṣparsamudrā* pose. He is depicted with an aureole in the shape of a *mandorla*. High up in it among the clouds are five flying *apsaras* (heavenly nymphs). On the right and left, the uprights consist, in ascending order, of a small column, a figure with raised arms, a quadruped standing on its hind legs (horse and ram) and a *makara* head. Four rosettes decorate the frame. Above the Buddha’s head appears the *dhyani-buddha* triad on lotus flowers on stalks.

Christ in majesty (Rausa Christ)

THE ROMANESQUE FRONTAL REPRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN MAJESTY is associated in this work with a softening of the features that evokes the early features of the Gothic style in the ancient diocese of Liège. Its fine quality gives it an important place in this region's history of sculpture. The figure fits into the iconographic tradition of the *Majeſtas Domini* present since the 10th century, notably in ivories, miniatures and stone sculpture in the Meuse valley. The narrowness of the silhouette, in particular at the shoulders, is determined by the formal constraints imposed by the presence of the spindle-shaped aureole around the figure. The strictly frontal effigy is marked by an elongation of the trunk and the prominence of the hand raised in blessing. The hint of a smile contributes to the humanisation of the face. The sparkling eyes are small glass marbles. The curling of the beard recalls antique sculpture. While it still evokes in its main lines the Romanesque models, the drapery shows a search for naturalism that belongs decidedly to the gothic aesthetic. In this case, the Christ in majesty is not a representation of divine justice: the artist gives here an image of his humanity and, through this, his mercy.



18. *Christ in majesty (Rausa Christ)*.
Meuse school, circa 1230.
Carved and polychrome oak,
glass eyes inserted, gilding.
Said to have come from the ancient
chapel of Rausa. H. 67 cm; W. 25 cm;
Depth 20 cm. Liège, Grand Curtius.
© Ville de Liège, Grand Curtius.

ACCORDING TO A FAIRLY WELL-ESTABLISHED TRADITION, the work came from the old chapel of Rausa in Ombret, a small locality between Liège and Huy. It is said to have been given to it circa 1770 by the canons of the collegiate church of Amay, on which it depended. At this date, they were carrying out a large-scale modernisation of their church and needed to empty it of its furniture and decorations. It was dedicated to Saint Ode and housed her relics in a large reliquary which, contrary to most similar Meuse valley artefacts, featured neither Christ nor the Virgin in majesty on its sides. So it is not implausible to suppose that the statue was intended to take its place in this church as an iconographic complement of the reliquary. The original polychromy, of which unfortunately only a few traces remain, consisted of gold for the robe and the mantle, flesh tones for the skin, and black for the beard and hair and the seat. An accidental crack, also quite ancient, cuts across the face.

Guanyin Bodhisattva

THIS GOD IS ONE THE MOST VENERATED IN THE FAR EAST. A bodhisattva is a protean and syncretic figure who helps people to achieve illumination and embodies the ultimate compassion. He bears the image of Amitabha in his headdress and is frequently depicted with various attributes: a lotus flower, a willow branch, immortal peaches, a rosary, a vase of lustral water, or a young child. Called Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit, literally "Lord observing from above", he is depicted as a male figure in Buddhist India, but appears as a female figure in China from the Song dynasty (960-1278).



19. *Guanyin Bodhisattva*.
Northern China, Shanxi province.
Ming dynasty (1368-1644).
16th century. Ceramic, fahua type.
H. 54 cm. Paris, Musée Guimet.
© Archives photographiques
du Musée Guimet.

THIS ICON IS A FEMALE FIGURE, depicted seated and meditating in a grotto on a carved plinth. This raised seated position indicates her holiness, while the cracked rocky surround highlights her mysteriousness. The face is serene, and she wears a diadem. The slender and elegant hands are in biscuit ceramic while the garments and the finery are covered in polychrome glaze. This glaze, of alkaline origin, dates from the Tang dynasty (618-907). It is applied on a heat-resistant surface and the colours are derived from oxides: yellow from iron, green from copper, violet from manganese, and blue from cobalt. This technique particularly appreciated during the Ming dynasty was used for architectural pottery and more refined objects using kaolin. Most of the production workshops were located in the northern province of Shanxi and were active for several centuries. The finest pieces come from the first half of the Ming dynasty. They are characterised by the liveliness of their rendering and the brightness of their colours, as demonstrated in this fine Guanyin figure of the Musée Guimet.

APOLLO SALON



20. *Throne of Pope Innocent X (1644-1655) and its two stools.*
1655. Turned, gilt and lacquered wood, velvet and gold thread. H. 154 cm.
Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Palace of Castel Gandolfo.
© Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, A. Bracchetti.

Throne of Pope Innocent X (1644-1655)

THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFFS USED TWO SORTS OF THRONE. The first is the **liturgical seat reserved for the bishop of Rome** (bishop's chair), while the second fixed one is **that of the sovereign of the Church's States** (now Vatican City) installed in one of the apostolic palaces. The model presented here was intended to be placed in an audience room. Within the pontifical apartments, the pope sometimes used a mobile seat, the *tronetto*.

THIS SEAT, AND THE TWO STOOLS reserved for the assistants of the Roman pontiff, were made for Pope Innocent X. Kept in the pontifical villa of Castel Gondolfo, the set was designed by Bernini and is attributed to E. Ferrata. The seat and backrest are covered in crimson velvet fringed with gold thread, recalling the imperial purple of the Roman rulers.



21. *Mobile seat with the arms of Pope Paul V Borghese (1605-1621).*
17th century. Gilt iron and bronze; white silk embroidered with gold and silver threads.
H. 83 cm.; W.73 cm; Depth 50 cm.
Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Museum of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major.
© Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, P. Zigrossi.

Mobile seat with the arms of Pope Paul V Borghese (1605-1621)

UP UNTIL THE 17TH CENTURY, churches had no other seats than the episcopal throne, the seats reserved for prelates and the stalls of the canons. During some liturgical celebrations, the bishop was seated in front of the altar on a mobile seat, originally a folding stool, with its feet crossed to form an X, with armrests, but without a backrest. The bishop used it when celebrating a pontifical mass outside his diocese, as he could not use the seat of the regular bishop. The mobile seat was then placed near the steps of the altar, on the epistle side. The bishop could also use it as a prie-dieu.

DONATED TO THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR by Pope Paul V Borghese, this mobile throne is remarkable for the sumptuousness of the drapery covering the seat and allowing only its gilt bronze armrests to be seen. Its white silk is embroidered with gold and silver threads that form lilies, palm branches and triple crowns around the arms of the pontiff, framed by the crossed keys of Saint Peter.

WAR SALON



22. *Small royal stool, rü mfo*. ooun, Cameroon, western province. Wood, glass beads, canvas, cowries, / brass plate. H. 57 cm; D. 69,5 cm. Old collections of king Ibrahim Njoya, acquired by captain Hans Glauning, Arthur Speyer and Charles Ratton. Geneva, Musée Barbier-Mueller. © Photo Studio Ferrazzini Bouchet.

Small royal stool, rü mfo

IN WEST AFRICA, wooden thrones covered with multicoloured beads assembled in geometric patterns are among the most impressive emblems of royal authority.

OF ROYAL ORIGIN, this stool is called a *rü mfo*, associating the two terms “stool” and “king”. The use of precious imported beads, sheets of chased brass (for the faces), and cowry shells (small seashells used as currency), indicates that this seat was not only made for a king, but that it belonged to a rich sovereign ruling a prosperous kingdom.

Ceremonial seat

THIS CEREMONIAL SEAT, carved from andesite or sandstone, is one of the 100 to 150 similar artefacts found at Manabí. On some of them the base represents a man’s body, while on others it is an animal’s. Five types of animals are featured: bird, lizard, bat, monkey and puma, as we can see here. The use of these seats is obscure: were they used as an altar, a throne for high dignitaries or a seat reserved for shamanistic rituals?



23. *Ceremonial seat*. Manta Culture (Region of Manabí, Ecuador), circa 600 - 1500. Carved stone (andesite or sandstone). H. 84 cm; W. 67cm; Depth 45 cm. Paris, Musée du Quai Branly. © Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries, Bruno Descoings.

FROM THE 7TH CENTURY ON, the growth in maritime trade in the region of Manabí, made possible by the progress made in navigation, disrupted the traditional social structures with the appearance of a new dominant class: traders. Regular trade with the coastal regions of Peru and Colombia enabled them to acquire esoteric knowledge. Held in great prestige, the merchants then took political and religious power over their people. It seems that these seats were reserved for this new rising aristocracy which sought to establish its authority by the introduction of new practices and new symbols into the existing shamanistic rituals.

THE SEAT, ANTHROPOMORPHIC OR ZOOMORPHIC, was the key piece of these rituals. The animal with its paws retracted or tightened represents the mutation, the transformation of the master of the ritual into an animal. The communication with the beyond is made possible by the U shape of the seat: directed to the heavens, it leads to the other world, making the transition between a state of consciousness and another state.

Inca ceremonial seat

THIS LOW SEAT IS SUPPORTED BY TWO FELINES carved in the round and facing opposite directions, with their paws on two bars. This rare piece with its fine formal composition is one of the few wood sculptures in the museum's collections.



IN GENERAL, in all the pre-Hispanic societies, seats were reserved for people of high ranking. This correlation between the seat and authority was recorded by the Spanish chroniclers from their first contacts with the Taino people of Hispaniola island up to their encounter with the Incas.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THIS SEAT highlights the status of its owner: the feline is one of the iconographic themes that predominated in the pre-Hispanic Andes, particularly among the Incas for whom this animal was closely linked to the notion of power and authority.

24. *Inca ceremonial seat.*
Peru, Cuzco department.
1450-1532. Carved cedar wood.
W. 63cm; L. 35 cm; H. 25 cm.
Paris, Musée du Quai Branly.
© Musée du Quai Branly, photo
Thierry Ollivier, Michel Urtado.

HALL OF MIRRORS

MOBILE THRONES

MOBILE THRONES

Indispensable for expressing the royal majesty, the mobile throne is a universal practice. For long periods, the royal or princely courts were itinerant, and the sovereigns moved around their dominions. So their thrones had to follow them on their rounds. In the West, the folding curule chair, reserved originally for the consuls of the Roman Republic, became generalised during the late Empire: the throne said to be king Dagobert's is a remarkable example. This form of seat was also used in the pontifical liturgy when the mobile seat was placed in front of the altar during important church celebrations.

PORTABLE THRONES

In Antiquity, Persia gave the mobile throne carried on men's shoulders a dignity worthy of the dimensions of its empire. Xerxes the Great, for example, watched the disastrous naval battle of Salamine (480 BC) seated on his gold throne. The use of the portable royal seat was also very widespread in the kingdoms of black Africa where some sovereigns could not touch the ground with their feet without risking being deposed. In the West, this practice was regarded as too servile and dishonourable for sovereigns who wished to reign over free peoples and was never observed in modern times, with the exception of the *sedia gestatoria* of the Roman pontiffs.

In Asia, sovereigns were borne on palanquins and howdahs carried on the backs of animals chosen for their nobility, for example the elephant in India. The royal seat was also sometimes carried on water, like the boat of Isis descending the Nile.



Sedia gestatoria of Pope Pius VII (1800-1823)

THIS PORTABLE THRONE INTENDED FOR THE ROMAN PONTIFF was carried on the shoulders of twelve *sediari* whose number evokes the band of apostles. Used at least since the 16th century for solemn ceremonies, the *sedia* was carried in the long procession which went from the royal room serving as a vestibule of the apostolic palace and descended the Scala Regia, preceded by officers and prelates of the pontifical palace, before entering Saint Peter's basilica. This usage dates back to the 6th and even the 5th century and recalls the use of the *sedia curulis* on which the Roman consuls were borne for their installation. However, more than a portable throne of majesty whose origin goes back to Antiquity, the *sedia gestatoria* offered the faithful the symbol of the Lamb of God borne to the sacrifice.

BEHIND AND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SEDIA, two noble servitors of His Holiness completed the cortege bearing the *flabella* (large fans with white ostrich feathers), a heritage of the ceremonial used in the court of the pharaohs. With a high backrest, the *sedia gestatoria* rested on four feet and was supported by a *suppedaneum* (footstool), which was fitted on each side with two gilt iron loops into which the two shafts carried by the *sediari* were slid.

25. *Sedia gestatoria of Pope Pius VII (1800-1823)*. Early 19th century. Carved gilt wood, crimson velvet on wood, gold thread trimming, gilt bronze.
H. 181 cm; W. 95 cm; L. 115 cm.
Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Latran History Museum.
© Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, P. Zigrossi.

Pair of flabella

26. *Pair of flabella.*
Early 19th century. Ostrich feathers,
velvet on wood and gilt bronze.
85 x 110 cm (flabellum); 245 cm
(shaft).
Vatican City, Vatican Museums,
treasure of the Basilica of
Saint Mary Major.
© Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei
Vaticani, A. Bracchetti.

THE FLABELLUM, AN ATTRIBUTE OF AUTHORITY SINCE THE EARLIEST KINGDOMS OF ANTIQUITY, was introduced in the 4th century into the Christian liturgy in the form of a textile or metal fan waved by the deacon during the consecration of the Eucharistic species, like the cherubim of the heavenly court flapping their wings to honour the divine presence.

DURING THE CAROLINGIAN PERIOD the *flabella* were sometimes made with peacock feathers. In the 12th century, this accessory became an honorific ornament reserved for the ceremonial for the highest dignitaries. Under the pontificate of Pope Nicolas V (1398-1455), these accessories – called *kerubin* – were used in the Roman processions.

Others, made from black silk and stamped with the arms of the deceased, were placed around the coffin of a cardinal during the requiem mass. In the 16th century they were made from ostrich feathers, as can be seen in the bas-relief in the church of Santa Francesca Romana illustrating the return to Rome of Pope Gregory XI.

SINCE THIS PERIOD, two Papal noblemen have followed the papal procession, holding immobile on either side of the *sedia gestatoria* these symbols of the justice and immutability of the pontifical authority.

Phra Thinang Prapatthong howdah of prince Inthawaroros Suriyawong

A HOWDAH IS A SORT OF NACELLE CARRIED ON AN ELEPHANT'S BACK in which Asian sovereigns rode to travel long distances. The howdah of prince Inthawaroros Suriyawong, originally from Chiangmai, was presented in 1905 to crown prince Vajiravudh who later became king Rama VI. The portable seat is surmounted by a canopy made of wicker and bamboo covered with lacquered leather enriched with mother-of-pearl, ivory and gold leaf.



27. *Phra Thinang Prapatthong Howdah of prince Inthawaroros Suriyawong.*
Early 20th century.
Carved gilt wood, lacquered bamboo.
H. 168 cm; L. 76 cm; W. 171 cm.
Bangkok, National Museum.
© Courtesy by National Museum
Bangkok, Fine Arts Department,
Thailand.

THE DECORATIVE SCENES ADORNING BOTH THE CANOPY AND THE NACELLE, illustrate the battles opposing monkeys and demons described in the famous passage of the Ramayana recounting the war between Rama, son of king Thotsarot of Ayodhya, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, and Thotsakan, king of the demons of Lanka. This epic was often used to glorify the sovereign as a reincarnation of the god. In the

lower part we can recognise the demon Kirtimukha, identifiable by its horns, claws and gaping maw, as it is depicted in the Indian decorative motifs used in the architecture of Asian temples. It is generally used for openings such as doors, windows and arcades. The nacelle is supported by four uprights on which are painted Nagas, the legendary serpent of Vishnu.

Palanquin royal

THE PALANQUIN, A SORT OF SEAT OR LITTER installed on permanent shafts and carried by men in eastern countries, was reserved for high-ranking dignitaries. It could sometimes be carried on the

backs of animals such as a camel or elephant. During the sovereign's journeys, the palanquin was traditionally accompanied by a large parasol, emblem of the royal dignity. The form of this palanquin is borrowed from the design of timber houses with a roof having two slopes and projections that is found in the monastic and palatial architecture of Thailand, particularly in Bangkok.



28. *Royal palanquin*. 1861?. Wood, silk and glass (palanquin); wood, silk and mirror (parasol). H. 120 cm; W. 86 cm; L. 86 cm (palanquin); H. 385 cm; D. 116 cm (parasol). Fontainebleau, Musée national du Château. © Château de Fontainebleau, photo J-p Lagiewski.

THIS ROYAL PALANQUIN WAS PRESENTED TO NAPOLEON III (1808-1873) by the ambassadors of Siam during their reception in 1861 at Fontainebleau palace, where it is still kept. Its two curtains indicate that it was specially intended for the empress. It was during the reign of Napoleon III, in 1856, that diplomatic relations were resumed with the kingdom of Siam, interrupted at the end of the reign of Louis XIV. In the mid-19th century a Franco-Siamese treaty of friendship was signed. Napoleon III sent a diplomatic mission bearing presents for the king of Siam, Rama IV Mongkut. In return, sumptuous diplomatic gifts were sent to the French sovereign: loaded with forty-eight chests filled with presents. The return mission set off in late 1860 and arrived in Toulon in June 1861. A replica of the diplomatic mission of Phra Naraï, received on 1 September 1686 by Louis XIV in the Hall of Mirrors, the mission of Rama IV Mongkut was received on 27 June 1861 by Napoleon III in the Ballroom of the Palace of Fontainebleau, as can be

seen in a painting commissioned by the emperor from Gérôme and intended for the History Galleries of Versailles.

With the war loot acquired during the ransacking of the Summer Palace in Peking, they formed the core of the Far Eastern collections exhibited in the Chinese museum of the empress Eugénie in the Palace of Fontainebleau, inaugurated in June 1863.



29. *Reception of the Siamese ambassadors by Napoleon III and the empress Eugénie* in the large Henri II ballroom of the Palace of Fontainebleau on 27 June 1861. 1864. Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). Oil on canvas. Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon. © RMN, Droits réservés.

PEACE SALON

Virgin in Majesty

SAVED FROM THE VANDALISM OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION BY ALEXANDRE LENOIR, this *Virgin in Majesty* is one of the most precious wooden sculptures of the 12th century to have survived in France. Wearing a crown, the Virgin is seated on a throne with a high backrest and her feet rest on a footstool. Dressed in a rich cloak held by a clasp, she holds the terrestrial globe in her right hand. The Christ child on her knees makes the sign of benediction. In presenting to the faithful the image of the Virgin in majesty, the sculptor illustrates the title of *Sedes Sapientiae* (Seat of Wisdom) that the litanies give to Mary; by placing the child Jesus on her knees, he shows that her Son is the veritable incarnation of Wisdom.



Statue of a seated god

THIS FRAGMENT OF MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE, expertly carved, represents a seated figure covered in voluminous drapery. It may be the representation of an emperor (this piece had been falsely attributed to the colossal statue of Augustus presented in the permanent collections of the departmental museum of antiquities of Arles) or a god such as Jupiter.

The latter identification appears to be the most probable as the emperor is very rarely depicted seated and he did not seem to have a throne in the imperial aula of his palace.

30. *Statue of a seated god*. 1st century. Marble. H. 82 cm; W. 85 cm; Depth 61 cm. Fragment of sculpture from the old theatre (1788). Arles, Musée départemental Arles antique. © Musée départemental Arles antique, Cl. M. Lacanaud.



Shakyamuni Buddha

THE BUDDHA IS REPRESENTED SEATED HERE IN THE EUROPEAN MANNER on a throne decorated with columns, the feet resting on a footstool. His hands make the gesture of calling on the earth as witness. He is dressed in a monastic robe with smooth and elegant folds. His face is serene, the eyes half-closed, and his brow is adorned with the urna, the distinctive sign of great men. His head with its wavy hair and his *ushnisha* is framed by a large circular halo.

31. *Shakyamuni Buddha*. India, Gandhara region. 2nd – 3rd century. Grey schist. H.: 64 cm. Private European collection. © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Giraudon.

Part 1 – Presentation of the exhibition

NOBLES SALON



32. *Portable throne of the Habsburgs*.
Late 18th century.
Gilt bronze and silk cover.
H. 116; W. 75; Depth 60 cm.
Vienna, Hofmobiliendepot Museum.
© Tina Haller.

Portable throne of the Habsburgs

THE CHOICE OF AIX-LA-CHAPPELLE TO CELEBRATE THE CROWNING of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire was quite deliberate. It was intended to perpetuate the reference to Charlemagne, restorer of the imperial dignity in an ideal and unique reign to which his successors wished to be intimately attached by sitting on the imperial throne installed in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Aix. With the crowning of Henri III in 1028, the Carolingian city asserted its role as the unique coronation city and the archbishop of Cologne became the rightful master of the ceremony.

THE OLD CAPITAL AND ITS CATHEDRAL were the setting for coronation of an emperor (Ferdinand I) for the last time in 1531. Thereafter, for greater convenience, the investiture ceremony took place in the cathedral of Frankfurt, where the election of the emperor took place. As the imperial throne of Charlemagne could not be transferred owing to its bulk and weight, a new mobile imperial seat made its appearance. Like other mobile seats, it consists of a simple metal frame covered with a precious fabric to enhance its prestige.

Part 1 – Presentation of the exhibition

QUEEN'S GUARDROOM



Portantina sedan chair of Pope Leo XIII

THE ITALIAN WORD "PORTANTINA" DESIGNATES THE SEDAN CHAIR whose use dates back to the Middle Ages. To mark the episcopal jubilee of Pope Leo XIII (1810-1878-1903), the diocese of Naples presented this *portantina* to the sovereign pontiff.

THIS CHAIR IS DESIGNED AS A VERITABLE PORTABLE THRONE. The fabric covering the back of the chair and its roof evoke a canopy. The fishing net and the dolphin recall the boat of Saint Peter and form a kind of platform that raises the pontifical seat.

33. "Portantina" of Pope Leo XIII.
1887. Carved wood, velvet, silver, coral,
hardstone, tortoiseshell.
H. 185 cm; W. 85 cm; Depth 100 cm.
Vatican City, Vatican Museums.
© Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei
Vaticani.

CORONATION ROOM

The Coronation of Napoleon - Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)



34. *Coronation of the emperor Napoleon I and the empress Josephine in Notre-Dame de Paris, 2 December 1804.*
Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825).
Circa 1805. Oil on canvas.
Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.
© RMN, Peter Willi.

THE LARGE COMPOSITION of David illustrates perfectly the distinction between authority and power in the thrones of the two principal players, presented as counterpoints to each other: the Emperor and the Pope. The young and dashing emperor, crowned with gold laurels, with his martial pose, carrying a sword at his side and occupying the central part of the painting, is contrasted with the bowed, haggard and balding figure of Pope Pius VII, pressed into a narrow space against the altar. With his eagle profile of a dominator, Napoleon is standing. The Pope, recognisable by his small white skullcap, is seated on a mobile seat. With the place given to these seats, David manages to prefigure this inversion: he obscures the two imperial chairs used as a throne, of which we see only a detail, and the overhead canopy. On the left, the artist gives prominent space to the empty cathedra velata of the Pope which is shown in the composition to be as useless as the pontiff in the ceremony.

Mobile seat of Pope Pius VII (1800-1823)



35. *Mobile seat of Pope Pius VII (1800-1823).*
19th century, attributed to the Jacob brothers.
Carved, painted and gilt wood in imitation of bronze, red wool covering.
H. 74 cm; W. 81 cm; Depth 50 cm.
Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.
© RMN, Daniel Arnaudet.

ON 2 DECEMBER 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned emperor in the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris. The seat presented here, from the collections of the Palace of Versailles, came from the studio of the painter David, from whom Napoleon I commissioned the painting of his Coronation, exhibited in this room. We can recognise this mobile seat on the right of the composition. Pope Pius VII is seated on it, his hand raised in a sign of benediction.

These rooms, located above the Queen's Grand Apartment, were the former apartment of the Princesse de Chimay, a lady in waiting to queen Marie-Antoinette. King Louis-Philippe had it refurbished to hold part of the collections for his History Galleries with works illustrating his own reign. Afterwards, these rooms were dedicated to the first campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Consulate and reopened in 1958. In 1970, the prolongation of the visit circuit was created in the attic rooms of the South Wing, dedicated to the First Empire. It is in the first of them, evoking the imperial family, that this mobile seat is usually presented.

Throne of Napoleon I for the sessions of the Legislative Body

THIS THRONE WAS INTENDED FOR NAPOLEON I during the sessions of the Legislative Body, set up by the Constitution of the Year VIII. The imposing seat, flanked by two impressive winged chimaeras and with lion heads as armrests, is surmounted by an arched pediment on which a ribboned crown of laurel is carved. The backrest shows the symbols of justice (sword and hand of justice) and the seat has a large rosette of flowers with palm branches. This emblem of political authority underwent significant modifications as the regimes changed: under the Restoration, the two imperial eagles were replaced by two stylised pine cones, and the letter "N" in the centre of the laurel crown on the pediment was removed.

Throne of the emperor Napoleon I for the Senate



36. *Throne of the emperor Napoleon I for the Senate*. Senate on 3 March 1804 from the Jacob workshop, Jacob-Desmälter (1770-1841), after the design by Jean-François Thérèse Chalgrin (1783-1811). Mahogany, silk and gilt embroidery. H. 132 cm; W. 87 cm; Depth 60 cm. Senate of the French Republic. © photo Senat, G. Butet.

MADE IN 1804 BY THE CABINET-MAKERS GEORGES JACOB AND JACOB-DESMALTER, based on a design by the architect Jean-François Chalgrin (1739-1811), this throne intended for the Senate was inspired by a marble seat in the Roman style confiscated in 1796 from the Pio-Clementino museum of the Vatican, since then kept in the Louvre museum. The latter seat was carved by F. A. Franzoni with some antique features and called the “throne of a priestess of Ceres”. When it arrived in France, this sculpture attracted David who made a fine sketch of it.

THE THRONE MADE OF GILT CARVED WOOD is upholstered with red velvet and embroidered with gold thread. It features the bee as the imperial emblem. Its straight backrest is carved with foliated pattern, palmetto branches and laurel leaves, surrounding the imperial letter “N”. The armrests represent two winged sphinxes. A canopy held up by six gilt plaster Victories surmounts the throne. It is kept in the throne gallery that was fitted out in the reign of Napoleon III, the present conference room of the Senate.

Throne of Paul I and its footstool



37. *Throne of Paul I and its footstool*. Gilt carved wood, gold and silver thread. Circa 1800. H. 173 cm; W. 18 cm; Depth 96 cm (seat). H. 23 cm; W. 64 cm; Depth 42 cm (footstool). Saint-Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum. © The State Hermitage Museum, photo Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

AFTER BECOMING GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA IN 1799, the Russian emperor Paul I (1754-1801) ordered this throne for the Knights’ Chapel in Saint Petersburg, near the Voronstov palace. The carved and gilt wooden throne was intended to celebrate his new dignity. The work was entrusted to Telesforo Bonaveri and based on a design by the neoclassical architect Giacomo Quarenghi (1744-1817), in charge of the construction of the chapel. The armrests are in the form of two winged eagles whose talons form the legs and feet.

POPE'S ROOM

Throne of Henri V (1820-1883)

THIS SEAT IS THE THRONE DESIGNED FOR HENRI V, Comte de Chambord, grandson of Charles X and last French descendent of the senior branch of the Bourbons, in exile since 1830. After the fall of Louis-Philippe in 1848, he became the sole legitimate heir to the crown. Installed at his request in the throne room of his palace in Chambord, this Renaissance-style throne symbolised the presence on French soil of the royal heir. The pedestal is surmounted by a large shell and a carved fleur-de-llys. Below is the motto "DOMINE SALVUM FAC REGEM", "Lord, protect our king", inscribed on a sheet of griotte marble inset in the backrest.



Throne of king Louis-Philippe

THIS LARGE THRONE IN THE LOUIS XIV STYLE WAS DELIVERED TO KING LOUIS-PHILIPPE in 1837 by the merchant Durozeau: carved and gilt wood, feet with volutes linked by an X-shaped crosspiece, openwork strip of shell patterns, incurved armrests with scrolls and leaf patterns, and square backrest covered in crimson velvet with gold trimmings and fringes. Intended for the chapel, it was then placed in the bedroom of Louis XIV (1855) by Louis-Philippe who used it symbolically as his throne in Versailles, as can be seen in the painting by Franz-Xavier Winterhalter executed in 1841 and kept in the Palace of Versailles. So this throne is in reality only a simple armchair copying the Louis XIV style, in the eclectic spirit of the 19th century when historicism gradually supplanted creativity.

38. *Throne of Louis-Philippe.*
Delivered in 1837 by the merchant Durozeau to king Louis-Philippe. Carved gilt wood, backrest covered with crimson velvet with gold trimmings.
H. 113 cm; W. 70 cm; Depth 64 cm.
Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.
© RMN, photo Gérard Blot.

1792 ROOM

39. *Furniture for the Council of ministers.*
Emile Gaudissart (tapestry) and André Frechet (seat).
20th century. Gilt wood.
H. 119 cm; W. 76 cm; Depth 66 cm.
Paris, Collection of the Mobilier National.
© photo Isabelle Bideau - Mobilier National.

Furniture for the Council of Ministers

THIS SUITE OF SEATS for the President of the Council of Ministers and the seventeen ministers (Interior, Fine Arts, Agriculture, Finance, Post & Telegraphs, Colonies, Justice, Ex-Servicemen, Merchant Marine, Aviation, Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry, Navy, Education, Public Works, Defence, Transport) was ordered in 1929. Covered with tapestry, these seats are distinguished by symbolic motifs representing the different ministries. The President's seat has a higher and more elaborate carved gilt wooden backrest, decorated with a cluster of victors and "RF", the monogram of the République Française, on the tricolour flag.



40. *Seat of the President of the Republic for the 14th of July parade.*
Christophe Pillet (born in 1959).
20th century. Frame of louro preto wood, moulded plywood, steel shoe, ivory leather upholstery.
H. 97 cm; W. 90 cm; Depth 70 cm.
Paris, Collection of the Mobilier National.
© photo Isabelle Bideau - Mobilier National.

Seat of the President of the Republic for the 14th of July parade

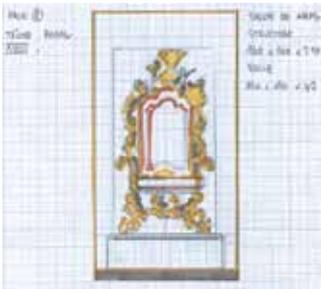
IN THE SERIES OF SEATS MADE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL STAND on the 14th of July, one is intended specially for the President of the Republic. Isolated at the front of the stand, this seat is placed under its large tricolour awning. Copying the principal codes of the throne since its origins (platform and canopy) this seat, the last avatar of the throne of the kings of France, is a genuine Republican throne.

PART II

EXHIBITION SCENOGRAPHY

INTERVIEW WITH MARC JEANCLOS

“IT IS NOT WE WHO LOOK AT THE THRONES, IT IS THEY THAT LOOK AT US...”

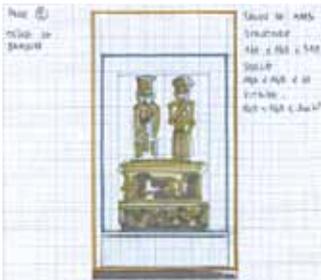


1. Prototype of the stand-structure. © Jeanclos 2011

“I AM VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES as I handled the scenography of some exhibitions and was a partner on others: Topkapi, Kang Xi, Dresden, etc. But exhibiting thrones is of course very different from what I have done up until now, especially when the exhibition is held in the Grand Apartments, a setting that involves a number of constraints.

FIRSTLY, THIS AREA IS ALREADY EXTREMELY “FILLED”: filled with History and with furniture, paintings, decorations, moulded plasterwork, etc. So it was necessary to create in these rooms, which already form an exhibition circuit, a second and clearly identifiable exhibition that would not disrupt the first one and in which the visitors can always see where they are.

THE SECOND CONSTRAINT INVOLVED THE VISITORS: the Palace of Versailles is one of the most visited places in the world, and a considerable crowd can be found in the Grand Apartments: so they had to be managed by creating both proximity and distance for mounting the exhibition.



2. Sketch. © Jeanclos 2011

LASTLY, THE THIRD CONSTRAINT WAS TECHNICAL: this is not a place where you can do what you like! You can't pour a concrete floor or pierce the walls. Without touching anything, working on the spot with the materials required for the scenography can create huge problems, with dust, for example. So you have to make very careful choices. Lighting the objects is also tricky: you can't install sources of light just anywhere...

I EXAMINED THESE ROOMS VERY CAREFULLY and looked at the objects with attention and then I concluded that the solution must be transparent, light and independent. I hit on this idea of stands surmounted by openwork metal structures framing the thrones, like boxes without sides, enabling me to both isolate the thrones and reveal them to the visitors, giving to them their symbolic aura while maintaining the total identifiability of their setting. This space, both infinite and closed, in which they are exhibited thus enhances their full significance. It is no longer we who look at the thrones, it is they that look at us.

THE STAND-STRUCTURES present numerous advantages as well: they are made in an outside workshop, so limiting to the minimum their assembly on the spot; they contain their own lighting; light and mobile, it is possible to position them to adapt to the constraints of each room and each object. Moreover, at a time when events are reminding us that powers, even the most solidly established, are quite fragile after all, this way of showing these symbols of authority “in their nudity”, if I may say so, expresses in some way this fragility of power.”

Marc Jeanclos

Scenographer of the exhibition

Part 1I – Exhibition scenography

MARC JEANCLOS, FROM OBJECTS TO SCENOGRAPHY

AFTER STUDYING AT THE SCHOOL OF BEAUX-ARTS IN PARIS, Marc Jeanclos trained in designing and making stands and pedestals for works of art under outstanding craftsmen and acquired the know-how that enabled him rapidly to strike out on his own.



3. Sketch for the integration of the stand-structures in the Hall of Mirrors. © Jeanclos 2011

KNOWN IN PARTICULAR FOR HAVING DESIGNED THE SETS OF THE SPECTACULAR Grand Gallery of Evolution of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris, he became one of the key references for the display of objects, with institutional or private clients all over the world: New York, Beijing, Zurich, Tokyo, Berlin, Bogota, etc.

THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOW-HOW ACQUIRED then enabled him to widen his field of action: from scenography to museography, the scope of his work now covers all the aspects of displaying and staging collections and exceptional objects.

HIS WORK IS CHARACTERISED BY THE SPECIAL GAZE that he brings to the works, a gaze in which his artistic sensibility always takes precedence over technical analysis, and in which reflection never blocks his creativity. This original approach allows him to work in symbiosis with leading artists such as Peter Klasen, Herve di Rosa and Pol Bury, in designing exhibitions of their works.

AS HE HIMSELF MAKES MOST OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE SCENOGRAPHY, or with his teams, the solutions that he produces for the problems raised are always unique, and emerge from an approach whereby technical mastery is entirely harnessed in the service of artistic feeling.

KEY DATES

1983	Founding of Ateliers Marc Jeanclos	1999	<i>Topkapi at Versailles, Treasure of the Ottoman Court</i> , Palace of Versailles
1983	Pre-Columbian Art, Galerie Mermoz, Paris	2001	Hermes Museum, Tokyo
1986	Musée Dapper, Paris	2003	Galerie des Bijoux, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
1988	Alexandre Calder and Fernand Léger, Galerie Louis Carré, Paris	2005	Musée des Invalides and Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature
1991	"Schock Corridor" by Peter Klasen, Galerie Louis Carré, Paris	2006	<i>Splendours of the Court of Saxony</i> , Palace of Versailles
1993	Grande Galerie de l'Evolution, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris	2007	Jewellery collection of Victoire de Castellane, Christian Dior
1994	Oriental Antiquities, Musée du Louvre	2008	Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Toulouse
1995	Jean Schlumberger, Musée des Arts Décoratifs	2009	Treasure of Tintignac, Musée des Antiques, Toulouse
1996	Medicine in the Time of the Caliphs, Institut du Monde Arabe	2010	Hugues de Semur, Musée du Hieron, Paray-le-Monial
1997	Egyptian Antiquities, Musée du Louvre, Paris		
1998	Vuillaume Collection, Musée de la Musique, Paris		

PART III

AROUND THE EXHIBITION

PUBLICATIONS

Les éditions du
cerf



Thrones in majesty, l'autorité et son symbol

Jacques Charles-Gaffiot

With contributions by Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Chantal Delsol,

Philippe Lauvaux and Jean-Paul Lepetit

Approx. 250 illustrations, hard covers

Format: 23 x 31 cm

Price: €49

On sale: 1 March 2011 in the bookshop of the Palace of Versailles,

10 March 2011 in other bookshops

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WHETHER SOBER OR MAJESTIC, reasonable or extravagant, thrones always convey the same symbol of legitimately established authority.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN THE SUMPTUOUS SETTING OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES, a place par excellence of the exercise and representation of sovereignty, an exhibition brings together thrones from all over the world. The catalogue of the exhibition, this book offers a remarkable and rigorous exploration of the throne as a symbol of authority in its political, social, economic and religious dimensions.

THE STARTING POINT FOR THIS HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC EXPLORATION is an obvious observation: sovereignty always brings two distinct notions into play: authority and power. While power, ephemeral and difficult to acquire, remains a fragile attribute constantly under threat, authority ensures to its holder both enduring power and universal esteem: it establishes him, inspiring an obedience that amounts to recognition of legitimacy.

ALONG WITH ITS ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES – platform, canopy and footstool – the throne is often decorated with fantastic and imaginary animals, winged lions, chimeras and fabulous dragons. On this decorated seat, the majestic authority of the sovereign is always depicted as a seated figure.

THE EXHIBITION OF THESE THRONES, stable or mobile, simple or sumptuous, objects of deference or derision, will send a message out to the masters of our world, sovereigns or heads of state, local worthies and magistrates: power can be held on to only by following the lesson taught us by the study of these fascinating emblems.



Thrones in majesty

68 pages

Format: 22 x 28.5 cm

Price: €10

On sale: 2 March 2011

ISBN: 978-2-84278-844-5

English version - ISBN: 978-2-84278-852-0

Collection: Exhibition

BEAUX-ARTS MAGAZINE, SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE "THRONES IN MAJESTY" EXHIBITION

Two distinct notions are connected to the exercise of sovereignty: authority and power. Whereas the crown has for a long time been associated with power, the throne is regarded as the attribute of authority. Numerous images depict kings seated on their thrones in order to express their authority and inscribe it in the kingdom's history.

This special issue of *Beaux Arts magazine* accompanies the exhibition *Thrones in majesty* in the Palace of Versailles. It presents forty thrones including those of illustrious figures in the history of France, such as those of king Dagobert and Napoleon. The works exhibited come from all over the world and will enable visitors to grasp the universality of the seated representation of authority, whether it is religious or political.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Interview with Jean-Jacques Aillagon.
- Thrones and Sovereigns (France, Germany, Romanov, Poland, Ming, Popes).
- Seated gods.
- Mobile thrones (Popes, Africa, Hapsburg, Siam).

Part III – Around the exhibition

MINI-SITE OF THE EXHIBITION WWW.TRONES.CHATEAUVERSAILLES.FR



TO ACCOMPANY THE EXHIBITION "THRONES IN MAJESTY", the website

<http://www.trones.chateauversailles.fr> offers a selection of the finest thrones presented in the Palace of Versailles from 1 March to 19 June 2011 in an original visit circuit in the Grand Apartments. Each throne, in high definition, is put into perspective with its place of origin. The Hall of Mirrors, for example, is contrasted with images as surprising as those of the Royal Palace of Bangkok and the Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. This virtual visit through different periods and civilisations invites net surfers to explore the universality of "seated" authority, the central theme of the exhibition.

THE WEB TV OF THE EXHIBITION, which offers a dozen videos, enables you to prepare for and enrich your visit. The backstage aspects of the exhibition, short modules presenting thrones and the interviews with Jean-Jacques Aillagon, as well as with the curators of the exhibition: Jacques Charles-Gaffiot and Hélène Delalex, are accessible on the social networks and the content sharing websites where the Palace of Versailles is present: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, iTunes U. These videos will also be available on the website <http://www.trones.chateauversailles.fr>.

Part II – Around the exhibition

BOOKLET-GAME BY PARIS MÔMES

Paris MÔMES

A booklet-game for 6-12-year-olds on the exhibition “Thrones in majesty”



TO HELP YOUNG VISITORS to better understand the exhibition and prolong their visit, Paris Mômes has produced a booklet-game. The objective is to highlight the different types of thrones presented in the Grand Apartments of the Palace of Versailles by zooming in on some ornamental thrones and on the famous figures to whom they belonged.

A MAP OF THE WORLD provides information on the origin of these thrones and a chronological frieze places them in history (some are over 1,500 years old). The inner pages invite the young visitors to answer questions in the form of a game and on the last page they can draw the throne that they imagine for a future world. The drawings will be published on the websites of the Palace of Versailles and Paris Mômes.

BOOK PRIZES ON THE HISTORY OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES will be awarded to the lucky participants in a draw. The booklet-game is available at the reception of the Palace and can be downloaded from the website of the Palace of Versailles (www.trones.chateauversailles.fr) and from that of Paris Mômes (www.parismomes.fr).

Part III – Around the exhibition

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**ETABLISSEMENT PUBLIC DU CHÂTEAU, MUSÉE
ET DOMAINE NATIONAL DE VERSAILLES**
RP 834
78008 VERSAILLES CEDEX

Places of the exhibition

Grand Apartments and French History Galleries.

Information

Tel: 01 30 83 78 00

www.chateauversailles.fr and www.trones.chateauversailles.fr

Getting there

SNCF Versailles-Chantier (departure: Paris Montparnasse)

SNCF Versailles-Rive Droite (departure: Paris Saint-Lazare)

RER Versailles-Rive Gauche (departure: Paris RER Line C)

Bus no.171 Versailles Place d'Armes (departure: Pont de Sèvres)

Disabled access

People with reduced mobility can be dropped off by car or taxi close to entrance H in the Cour d'Honneur.

Opening times

The exhibition is open every day except Monday from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm (last admission at 5:00 pm) until 31 March, and from 9:00 am to 6:30 pm (last admission at 6:00 pm) from 1 April.

Rates

Exhibition included in the visit of the Grand Apartments.

€15 (Palace + exhibition), reduced rate (Palace + exhibition) €11.50.

Audioguide: Palace + exhibition.

Thematic visits

Thematic visits dedicated to the exhibition are programmed for individuals on:

13, 19 March, 2, 3, 7, 30 April, 4, 17, 18, 22, 29 May, 8, 15 and 19 June.

Information and reservations

Tel: 01 30 83 78 00 or by email: visites.thematiques@chateauversailles.fr or directly on the spot, North Ministers Wing, subject to availability.

For groups

Information and reservations by email: visites.conferences@chateauversailles.fr

VISUALS AVAILABLE FOR THE PRESS

CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

Visuals available for the press

CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

These visuals are copyright-free only in the context of the promotion of the exhibition "Thrones in majesty" held in the Palace of Versailles from 1 March to 19 June 2011.



Throne said to be king Dagobert's (v.600-639)
6th or 7th century (seat);
Second half of the 9th century
(backrest and armrests)
Bronze gilt in places |
H. 135 cm; W. 78 cm | Royal
insignia from the Treasure
of the Abbey of Saint-
Denis | Paris, Bibliothèque
nationale de France | ©
BNF.



Throne of Louis-Philippe
Delivered in 1837 by the
merchant Durozeau to
king Louis-Philippe |
Carved gilt wood, backrest
covered with crimson velvet
with gold trimmings |
H. 113 cm; W. 70 cm; Depth
64 cm. | Versailles, musée
national des Châteaux de
Versailles et de Trianon |
© RMN, photo Gérard Blot.



*Louis-Philippe I,
king of the French in
the uniform of a
general officer*
1841
Franz-Xaver Winterhalter
(1806-1873)
Oil on canvas |
Versailles, Musée national
des Châteaux de Versailles
et de Trianon | © Château
de Versailles, Jean-Marc
Manai.



*Coronation of the
emperor Napoleon I
and the empress
Josephine in Notre-
Dame de Paris,
2 December 1804*
Jacques-Louis David
(1748-1825)
Circa 1805
Oil on canvas |
Versailles, musée national
des Châteaux de Versailles
et de Trianon | © RMN,
Peter Willi.



Inca ceremonial seat
1450-1532
Peru, department of Cuzco |
Sculpted cedar wood |
Paris, Musée du Quai
Branly | © Musée du Quai
Branly, photo Thierry
Ollivier, Michel Urtado.



*Throne of King
Ghêzo for the ato
ceremony*
Between 1818 and 1847
Anonymous
Afro-Brazilian or
Afro-Portuguese style |
Wood, metal | Paris, Musée
du Quai Branly | © Musée
du Quai Branly, photo
Patrick Gries.



Ceremonial seat

Circa 600 - 1500
Manta Culture (Region of Manabí, Ecuador) | Carved stone (andesite or sandstone) | H. 84 cm; W. 67cm; Depth 45 cm | Paris, Musée du Quai Branly | © Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries, Bruno Descoings.



Statue of ancestor, adu zatua

Late 19th - early 20th century
Indonesia, north of Nias island | Hardwood | Paris, Musée du Quai Branly | © Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries.



Throne of Bamoun and its stool

Early 20th century
Carved from a single block of wood | H. 180 cm; W. 100 cm; Depth 100 cm | Paris, Musée du Quai Branly | © Musée du Quai Branly, photo Patrick Gries.



Throne of the emperor Napoleon I for the Senate

Commissioned by the Senate on 3 March 1804 from the Jacob workshop, Jacob-Desmaller (1770-1841), after the design by Jean-François Thérèse Chalgrin (1783-1811)
Mahogany, silk and gilt embroidery | H. 132 cm; W. 87 cm; Depth 60 cm | Senate of the French Republic | © photo Senat, G. Butet.



Small royal stool, rü mfo

Bamoun, Cameroon, western province | Wood, glass beads, canvas, cowries, brass plate | H. 57 cm; D. 69.5 cm | Old collections of king Ibrahim Njoya, acquired by captain Hans Glauning, Arthur Speyer and Charles Rattou | Geneva, Musée Barbier-Mueller | © Photo Studio Ferrazzini Bouchet.



Throne of the emperor Nicolas II

Late 19th century
Gilt wood, red velvet, gold, silver and silk thread | H. 120 cm; W. 75 cm | Private collection | © Eric Reinard.



Votive statuette of the god Somtus

Late period
Egypt, Herakleopolis | Bronze and silver inlays (eyes) | H. 30.3 cm | Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art | © Château de Versailles, Jean-Marc Manaï.



Throne made for the Prussian embassy in Paris

Fourdinois firm (1835 to 1887)
"Jacob" mark
Gilt wood | H.: 132.3 cm; W. 77.5 cm; Depth. 69.5 cm | Versailles, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon | © Palace of Versailles, Jean-Marc Manaï.



Duho seat

15th century
Dominican Republic, Taino art
Wood | Length 84 cm; Width: 22 cm | Private collection | © Françoise Calmon.



Throne of king Louis XVI, made for the French embassy in London.

1783
François II (1748 ap. 1808) and Toussaint Foliot (1715 - 1798)
Gilt carved wood | H.: 139 cm; W. 94 cm; width 89 cm | Worcester City Museums | © Worcester City Guildhall collection.



Portable throne of the Habsburgs

Late 18th century
Gilt bronze and silk cover |
H. 116; W. 75; Depth 60 cm |
Vienna, Hofmobiliendepot
Museum | © Tina Haller.



Throne of Paul I and its footstool

Circa 1800
Gilt carved wood, gold and
silver thread | H. 173 cm; W. 18
cm; Depth 96 cm (seat). H. 23
cm; W. 64 cm; Depth 42 cm
(footstool) | Saint-Petersburg,
State Hermitage Museum |
© The State Hermitage
Museum, photo Vladimir
Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets,
Yuri Molodkovets.

Phra Thinang Prapatthong Howdah of prince Inthawaroros Suriyawong

Early 20th century
Carved gilt wood,
lacquered bamboo | H. 168
cm; L. 76 cm; W. 171 cm |
Bangkok, National
Museum | Courtesy by
National Museum
Bangkok, Fine Arts
Department, Thailand.



Statue of a seated god 1st century

Fragment of sculpture from the old theatre (1788)
Marble | Arles, Musée
départemental Arles
antique | © Musée
départemental Arles
antique, Cl. M. Lacanaud.



Royal palanquin 1861 ?

Wood, silk and glass
(palanquin); wood, silk and
mirror (parasol) | H. 120 cm;
W. 86 cm; L. 86 cm
(palanquin); H. 385 cm; D. 116
cm (parasol) | Fontainebleau,
musée national du Château |
© Château de Fontainebleau,
photo J-p Lagiewski.



Throne of king Stanislaw August Poniatowski (1732-1798), king of Poland (1764-1795)

Circa 1785, After Jan Christian Kamsetzer
Gilt carved wood | H. 166 cm;
W. 79.5 cm; Depth 68.7 cm |
Warsaw, Royal Castle in
Warsaw | © The Royal
Castle in Warsaw, photo
Andrzej Ring.



Guanyin Bodhisattva

16th century
Northern China, Shanxi
province. Ming dynasty
(1368-1644) |
Ceramic, fahua type.
H. 54 cm. Paris, Musée
Guimet | © Archives
photographiques du Musée
Guimet.



Abbot's throne

Goudji (1941-) 2000
Silver, lapis-lazuli, ebony,
wrought iron | H. 200 cm;
W. 100 cm | Champagne-
sur-Rhône, Abbaye Saint-
Pierre, Regular Canons of
Saint Victor | © Marc
Wittmer.



Seat of a dignitary with its footstool Second quarter of the 5th century AD

Seat carved from an alder
trunk | H. of the seat:
65 cm; W. of the footstool:
36 cm | Germany, Burg
Bederkesa | © Museum
Burg Bederkesa, Landkreis
Cuxhaven, Deutschland
(H. Lang).



Throne of king Carlos III of Spain (1716-1759-1788)

Mid-18th century (1763-1766)
Wood carved by **Gennaro di Fiore** in Naples, gilt in
Madrid before 1772 | H. 172
cm; W. 100 cm; Depth 85
cm | Madrid, Patrimonio
Nacional, Royal Palace |
Palace of Saint Ildefonso |
© Patrimonio Nacional.



*Christ in majesty
(Rausa Christ)*

Circa 1230

Meuse school | Carved and polychrome oak, glass eyes inserted, gilding | Said to have come from the ancient chapel of Rausa | H. 67 cm; W. 25 cm; Depth 20 cm | Liège, Grand Curtius | © Ville de Liège, Grand Curtius.



*Furniture for the
Council of Ministers
20th century*

**Émile Gaudissart (tapestry)
and André Fréchet (seat)**
Gilt wood | H. 119 cm;
W. 76 cm; Depth 66 cm |
Paris, Collection of the
Mobilier National |
© photo Isabelle Bideau -
Mobilier National.



*Throne of the
emperor Qianlong
with its footstool*

Between 1735 and 1796

Lacquered red sandalwood |
H. 104 cm; W. 130 cm;
Depth 90 cm | Beijing,
Collection of the Palace
Museum | © Cité Interdite.



*Seat of the President
of the Republic for
the 14th of July
parade*

20th century

**Christophe Pillet
(born in 1959)**

Frame of louro preto wood,
moulded plywood, steel shoe,
ivory leather upholstery |
H. 97 cm; W. 90 cm; Depth
70 cm | Paris, Collection of
the Mobilier National |
© photo Isabelle Bideau -
Mobilier National.



*Shakyamuni
Buddha*

2nd - 3rd century

India, Gandhara region |
Grey schist | H. 64 cm |
Private European collection |
© Christie's Images /
Bridgeman Giraudon.



Throne of Pie VI

Mid-18th century

Engraving on Venetian wood
Sculpted and gilded wood |
Venice, Soprintendenza
speciale per il patrimonio
storico artistico ed
etnoantropologico per il polo
museale, Ca'Rezzonico,
Museo del Settecento
Veneziano | © Ca' Rezzonico
- Museo del Settecento
Veneziano, Fondazione
Musei Civici di Venezia.



Seated Buddha

Tang dynasty (618-907)

Northern China |
Tang dynasty (618-907) |
Gilt bronze, green patina |
H. 26.5 cm; W. 11.6 cm;
Depth: 11.5 cm |
Paris, Musée Guimet |
© RMN (Musée Guimet,
Paris), Thierry Ollivier.



*Throne of Pope
Innocent X*

1644-1655

Turned wood, gilded and
lacquered, Silk velour and
gold threads | Vatican City,
Vatican Museums, Castel
Palace Gandolfo | © Foto
Servizio Fotografico Musei
Vaticani, A. Bracchetti.



Mobile seat with the arms of Pope Paul V Borghese

1605-1621

Gilt iron and bronze; white silk embroidered with gold and silver threads | H. 83 cm; W. 73 cm; Depth 50 cm | Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Museum de the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major | © Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, P. Zigrossi.



Sedia gestatoria of Pope Pius VII

1800-1823, Early 19th century
Carved gilt wood, crimson velvet on wood, gold thread trimming, gilt bronze | H. 181 cm; W. 95 cm; L. 115 cm | Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Latran History Museum | © Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, P. Zigrossi.



Pair of flabella

Early 19th century

Ostrich feathers, velvet on wood and gilt bronze | 85 x 110 cm (flabellum); 245 cm (shaft) | Vatican City, Vatican Museums, treasure of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major | © Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani, A. Bracchetti.



"Portantina" of Pope Leo XIII

1887

Carved wood, velvet, silver, coral, hardstone, tortoiseshell | H. 185 cm; W. 85 cm; Depth 100 cm | Vatican City, Vatican Museums | © Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani.



Mobile seat of Pope Pius VII

(1800-1823)

19th century, attributed to the Jacob brothers
Carved, painted and gilt wood in imitation of bronze, red wool covering | H.: 74 cm; W. 81 cm; Depth 50 cm | Versailles, musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon | © RMN, Daniel Arnaudet.

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L'EXPRESS

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-

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