



ARRE Technical Meeting
“Refurnishing Palaces and Castles. An exercise in style?”
National Domain of Chambord, 17-18 November 2014

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- Samuel Wittwer, Director of Palaces and Collections

La Reggia di Venaria Reale, Italy

- Andrea Merlotti, Manager of the Research Centre
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Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów, Poland

- Magdalena Herman, Assistant Curator
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Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua, S. A, Portugal

- Hugo André Xavier, Curator of the National Palace of Pena
- António Nunes Pereira, Director of the National Palace of Pena

The Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, Russia

- Nino Vakhania, Head of the Exhibition department
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Historic Royal Palaces - Hillsborough Castle, United Kingdom

- Christopher Warleigh-Lack, Curator

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- Céline Delmar, Secretariat–Coordination
- Emeline Pelzer, Trainee

Greeting

Frédéric Bouilleux

The subject of refurbishing is particularly important to us. We have been thinking about this subject recently – and for a long time, as Chambord has the ‘bad’ reputation of being an empty castle. During the last Board meeting, we adopted a project that enabled us to spend two years thinking carefully about the identity of the National Domain of Chambord. This identity is complex because the domain includes a park, forest and castle whose purpose and aims at the time of construction remain unclear. For many years, Chambord was presented as a hunting lodge, then as a castle supposed to consolidate the power of King Francis I and also as a residence. We have had to question the real identity of the castle and the domain. The Director General and the Board called this project: Chambord or an ideal city.

This issue of identity is at the heart of discussions we hold regularly about the need to refurbish the castle and how best to go about it (what period? Complete or not?). Identity is an important element, which should enable us to enhance our discussions and contribute to our reflection on the matter.

Introduction

Luc Forlivesi

The question of refurbishing being an exercise in style is an interesting one. It was not simply a technical question but one that questioned the meaning we give to this refurbishing and the relationship between the monument and its decor and furniture. There are castles in France where a costly and complex treasure hunt will lead you to find the original items of furniture, where the sources for refurbishing exist. This is not the case at Chambord, which reached the end of the French Revolution completely empty. The predominantly conceptual nature of the architecture became more important than the decor and we were confronted with the following question: Was Chambord more a monument than a castle?

The conservation team is more concerned by which date / period should be represented: how can we explain to the visitor that Chambord is an unusual 16th-century monument, which was inhabited by subsequent owners, sometimes less sporadically and temporarily. Another question is that of the virtual restitution of the 16th-century decor. No royal decor from Francis I remains in France today. So not only must we show the visitor the all-important ‘container’, but also the contents that have changed over the centuries.

We thought it would be interesting to put these various questions into perspective at this technical meeting.

Emptiness as an opportunity: choices for the refurbishing of Venaria (2006-2014)

Andrea Merlotti

The history of the Palace of Venaria fits in well with the subject of refurbishing. From the end of the Second World War until the 1970s, Venaria went through a period of emptiness, neglect and disrepair. Following ten years of restoration, it was re-opened in 2007; the former garden layout and architecture were reconstructed and returned to the Palace. However, we were unable to reinstate the furniture, paintings and tapestries that had been missing for decades, if not centuries, scattered across other Piedmontese, Italian and European palaces. So the absence of furniture and an art collection is one of our main problems. We have been able to restore the main areas in Venaria, reclaiming some of the large paintings, but the real issue was to find items to display in the 60 rooms that we recovered completely empty. It was both a major challenge and an opportunity because its empty state gave us huge freedom that we would not have had with an entirely furnished palace.

The reasons behind our refurbishing choices were both political and historical. The furnishing and interior design of Venaria came down to one question: what did we want to tell palace visitors, in order then to know which rooms to exhibit? After lengthy reflection, we finally decided to create a new museum devoted to the history of the Piedmont and the House of Savoy. This was an unusual decision as it was a response to a century of total neglect of the artistic and architectural history and heritage of the Piedmont and the House of Savoy. For 40 years, the history of this monument and that of other great royal palaces were of no interest to Italian and Piedmontese political leaders. At that time, Piedmont’s economy was founded entirely on the automobile industry and the palace was seen more as a source of problems than a possible source of earnings.

Economic developments in the 1980s and 1990s led to a reflection on the opportunities offered by royal palaces and the tourism industry. Preventive conservation and complete restoration were carried out. It then became impossible to restore the palace without telling the story of the House of Savoy, without presenting this forgotten story to Italian tourists. However, even if Venaria was empty, the large furniture storehouses in other Piedmont residences, forgotten at the end of WWII, allowed us to carry out a major

communal restoration operation. Today, a visit to Venaria starts with the Great Gallery and ends with the stables, both of which retrace the history of the monument. The choices made for the restoration of Venaria clearly focus on the history of the palace.

Clara Gorla

The tour circuit through the succession of 16th and 17th-century State bedchambers evokes the splendour of the palace, the architecture and the art of the Court of Savoy. We wanted to include two different types of decor on the tour circuit: a philological reconstruction and another, more evocative one. The reconstruction has restored original conditions of the main areas based on literary and documentary sources, as well as more recent critical studies (as for example in the reconstruction of the decor and the refurbishment of the Hall of Diana). In the empty rooms of the Palace apartments from the 17th and 18th centuries, which were devoid of any original furniture or painting collections, we have chosen an evocative interior based on documented literary sources and the furniture inventory of the Palace. Thanks to the loan of works of art and pieces of furniture from other residences and museums, we have been able to recreate former conditions of the areas realistically, as suggested by their original use. This also enables us to show the best expressions of the figurative culture and taste of the collections belonging to the Court of Savoy.

There is no precise description of the Palace interiors during the 17th century, but in literary sources, the State bedchambers are described as containing more than 4000 paintings by ancient and modern painters in golden sculpted frames, hanging on the walls. This wing of the palace was therefore refurbished as a painting gallery (Princess Ludovica's apartment). The paintings are hung high up to imitate the way paintings could have been hung in the 17th century. This choice allows for the rotation of borrowed pieces. For the definition and construction of the tour circuit, it is essential to be able to borrow other works on a long-term basis, mainly from other historical residences and museums in the Piedmont, and also from private collections. As many of the paintings come to us from outside, it is often necessary to submit them for restoration before exhibiting them. This is generally entrusted to the foundation of Venaria's restoration centre. This restoration work is one of the main objectives of the Venaria consortium for cultural development that aims to reconstitute the heritage that has been dispersed, safeguard it and make it available to a wide public.

The tour circuit as a whole, which now includes approximately 600 works of art, presents a series of different approaches: a didactic and historical approach in the first part of the basement and at the end; a philological arrangement as in the Hall of Diana; and a more evocative arrangement as in the apartments of the *piano nobile*. These different approaches aim to connect with contemporary art and culture, with the installations of contemporary authors in the gardens and the palace (Giuseppe Penone, Giovanni Anselmo, Brian Eno, Peter Greenaway). For example, this is the case with the multimedia areas (audio-visual installation by Peter Greenaway) in the old kitchens, in order to create an immersive environment. Thus, the tour communicates information through the different narratives and visual language conveyed through photographs, texts, panels, audio guides and a series of multimedia items.

Luc Forlivesi: Are the scenes in the kitchens projections of people? **Clara Gorla:** Yes, in the kitchen areas in the basement there are several screens, which simultaneously display various cooking scenes portrayed by Italian actors, with the voices, noises and lighting that recreate the history of these spaces and their original purpose, telling the simple everyday stories about life at Court. The kitchen is an empty room; there is no furniture. In every room in the basement and on the first floor there are film projections portraying hunting, walks, conversation, etc. **Antonio Nunes Pereira:** When did the royal family stop using it? Do you have communication for visitors that explains how the apartments were organised, decorated? Do visitors know who lived in these rooms and when? **Andrea Merlotti:** The palace was abandoned by the House of Savoy at the beginning of the 19th century. We have explanations about the apartments and life at Court. The problem is that if we want to recount certain episodes of Court life, we have to explain a certain historiography that is very difficult for the public to understand as a whole. We tell visitors that a dynasty existed (the House of Savoy), which has history not only of regional value, but also of international and European value. Then there are audio guides for those who wish to extend their knowledge of the palace. We also have educational tours for schoolchildren, dealing with life at Court. **Antonio Nunes Pereira:** What do you mean by philological reconstruction? **Clara Gorla:** For the Hall of Diana, we really based it on text and visual sources, research carried out on the original materials, and conservation and restoration. (There is a series of engravings from the 17th century, showing the original decor, which was fundamental in recreating the original state). It is almost an archaeological reconstruction, with very strict objectives around authenticity. **Samuel Wittwer:** Are there any explanations for visitors about the period when the palace was abandoned and destroyed? In Germany, this is a huge problem. The communist period is no longer

represented in our castles. **Andrea Merlotti:** Two years ago we created a little museum of the reconstruction, at the end of the tour. It tells the history of the restoration work carried out from the 1970s up until now. But we try not to mention the political aspect. We are also currently working on an application that will explain the reconstruction of the palace, room by room.

Hillsborough Castle is still a royal residence that was a private family home. How can mediation help us to combine heritage/conservation policies with the need for change and use?

Christopher Warleigh-Lack

Hillsborough Castle, situated on the main route between Belfast and Dublin, is the sixth site managed by Historic Royal Palaces. It is currently the official residence in Ireland of the British royal family and of the British Secretary of State of Northern Ireland. So, this is a castle full of furniture which is still used: the Queen still sleeps on the bed and sits on the chairs.

One of our challenges about the history of the site is to demystify the old myths. Hillsborough is regarded as a neutral space, owned and run by a colonial power. It has a contentious story even if it was never claimed physically by one or other side in the conflict of Northern Ireland. The architectural space is often seen as important. We have a problem with that because in 1934, almost all the house was destroyed by fire. After the incident, the room was changed and moved (chimney, doors, furniture).

Concerning the history that we have to present, the interpretation of Hillsborough does include the gardens, which are quite spectacular and always seen as a neutral and safe space. So, our first priority is to improve the gardens and make them accessible. Then, in the house, we only have 8 or 9 spaces. As it is a royal residence, we are unable to have interpretation material and barriers of any kind. What we are trying to enhance is the idea that the queen has just left the room or that the Prince of Wales may come through a door. If we have interpretation panels, this is difficult to do. At the moment, we have about 6000 visitors per year. In 5 years, we intend to have 250 000 visitors. A guided tour may not be the way to present the Palace. What we plan to do is to install Wi-Fi in order for people to flow freely through these spaces but to have their own application on their mobile phone with a guide. The internal spaces project house is looking at a 3-year strategy, to represent these rooms, refurnish and rehang the paintings. The other idea is that the visitor would follow the route through the spaces, and we would present the history in a chronological way. In the entrance, we would contextualize Hillsborough to the visitor by rehang royal portraits. In the dining room, we would present the family portraits. We were also thinking about how chronologies could fit the period of the governors when Hillsborough castle was known as a governor house. Another idea would be to adopt the 19th century as a theme, because a late 19th-century house fits very comfortably with the wish of the royal family.

The paintings have become a big issue for me: my colleagues in London are very anxious about hanging paintings of English monarchs in a House in Northern Ireland. Recently I have discovered that a number of royal British portraits are hanging in Irish sites, including in castles. So I think there is maybe more flexibility about it. One of the things that I managed to ensure is that the royal collections are very keen to work with us. But at the same time, I am concerned that I emasculate or denigrate people who are viewed in a particular way by different sections of the community. So I have to treat it rather carefully.

Luc Forlivesi: Have there been any examples of damage to some portraits or symbols? **Christopher Warleigh-Lack:** Not that many, as people who have antipathy for English history said that they would not enter the house. **António Nunes Pereira:** You said you would hang the portrait of the royal family in this room and the portraits of the governors in the state room where the British monarchs make investitures. Don't you think that hanging the governors there as the representative people of the power of England over Ireland could be politically embarrassing? **Christopher Warleigh-Lack:** Yes, the governors used to hang in this space until two years ago and they were moved. The paintings will be moved to another place soon.

A chair, a painting and a dozen rooms: a future for Babelsberg Palace in Potsdam

Samuel Wittwer

Babelsberg is a neo-Gothic style summer house in Potsdam, built by Wilhelm I. After his death, it was already open as a museum and then given to the State in 1918. It remained a museum, completely preserved, until WWII. Under socialist government, a school was installed there and all the furniture removed. It was set up again as a museum just before the fall of the Berlin wall.

Today, the main feature of Babelsberg is the garden, a huge park with lots of buildings in it.

The building was always a private residence, never an official residence and this distinguishes it from other palaces. The concept of a State apartment is something like a museum, where you work with symbols. When it is private, the symbols are on a different level; they just refer to the family and not to the State.

In the 1850s and 60s national monuments were set in the park, commemorating events in national history. During the socialist period, one of them was covered with plaster. One of the issues we are currently discussing is whether to remove this plaster or not. Another problem is that all the signs of the post-WWII period were eliminated in the 1990s, as people could not stand their past for the first few years. They eliminated everything and reinstated the former periods. All the furniture in the palace disappeared, and we have almost no photographs of the condition during this period.

In the 1990s, the walls of the palace were repainted. For one exhibition, we put up a huge old photograph to show how the room was before. It worked with the perspectives, but it can't work with everything. We have different types of room: rooms with absolutely no furniture, rooms where we can work with replacement pieces and rooms where we can work with reconstructions.

What we want to do with the entrance hall is to show something that has been reconstructed, as in the 19th century, then to show all the fragments in the other parts of the palace. We want to create a shocking impression, to show the story behind it.

On the first floor, we want to create museum-like rooms as an introduction to the history of the building and its construction, with some portraits of the family, just to show who lived there. In two other rooms, the intention is to empty them completely and simply place a few items of furniture to show a private 19th century interior. Then, we will do a dining theme room about entertaining people in Babelsberg.

On the 2nd floor, in the big Ball room, the room y is not accessible, so it will not be shown to the public. In other rooms, we will present different topics, like for example neo-Gothic architecture and the garden as a national monument. In the last room, we want to present items which were on the desk, to tell the story of these items.

This part of German history is not taught at school. It is a black spot. This period is a little-known part of German history. Therefore, we have to think not only about the style of the palace, but also of history.

António Nunes Pereira: Do you intend to explain to visitors what these rooms were for before they had these very different approaches across the palace? Are you going to explain how it was occupied as a house?

Samuel Wittwer: Yes but only in some rooms. In the other parts, people should concentrate on one particular aspect, without being distracted by the story of the room. If visitors want to get more of a feel for the workings of the house, then they have to buy a book.

Magdalena Herman: Do you have any idea how you will deal with the restoration of textiles? **Samuel Wittwer:** Yes, we do; more and more I get into conflict with restorers textile restorers because they can reproduce brilliantly and it makes the original part look shabby and dirty. In other buildings I am thinking about putting in new fabric but with a patina, so that it looks like it has aged in a normal way. But here, the contrast of the partly dirty and shabby chairs with the new restored elements is deliberate and tells visitors that this is a reconstruction.

How best to show a Renaissance bed: feedback from the ‘Bed Committee’
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Muriel Barbier

The musée national de la Renaissance (National Renaissance Museum) was inaugurated in 1977 in a castle that had been built from 1538 onwards for Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France under Francis I and Henry II. We started to think about the question of beds and their upholstery and trimmings following a project at the musée national de la Renaissance, and several other projects. The museum houses a bed from the collection of the Cluny museum, which has historically been designated as that of Francis I. As from the 19th century, this bed was intended firstly as part of the reconstruction of a Renaissance bedroom, then of Francis I’s bedroom. Today, we believe that elements of the bed date back to the 16th century, and have been mounted on a slightly more modern frame (17th/19th centuries). Today we are aware of its composite nature but the bed is displayed in a room that was in all likelihood a bedroom, in the usual position of a bed in the 16th century. Our main difficulties stem from the fact that the castle has lost practically all of its decor; it houses a collection from another reserve – that of the Cluny museum, but visitors expect to see the furnishings of a castle and a portrayal of daily life in the Renaissance.

Other institutions were posed with similar problems, so we created the scientific bed committee. This working group includes heritage curators, independent or contracted art-historians, restorers, upholsterers, all of whom are known for their expertise in the field and have been confronted with this type of work on one or more occasions. For the time being we are restricting our work to the 16th and 17th centuries as our sources are very different from those of more recent periods.

The aim of this working group is to pool our experiences with the restitution and restoration of 16th and 17th-century textile trimmings and bed covers, to share any documentation we may have on the subject and to index the sources of the archives and the images we have received. We were quickly confronted with terminology problems, so we are trying to establish a glossary of precise terms so as to be speaking the same language and to understand what is written in the 16th and 17th-century sources. We are also trying to create as comprehensive a corpus as possible, covering the beds located in various historical monuments and museums, and to address the ethical and museographical issues posed by such reproductions.

Our considerations began, following several observations, for example, the fact that we received very few Renaissance beds. Our sources are not always very complete; inventories have provided us with partial descriptions that can, however, point us in the right direction. Tales can provide further information, especially on the type of weave and the colour of the cloth. Pictures do not always seem completely reliable, nevertheless, they give us an idea about the colours, the thickness of the layers and the fastening mechanisms. As for architectural drawings and etchings, they are even more questionable; do they really depict a collection of actual models or are they just drawn from the imagination?

The reproduction exercise is particularly arduous. Isn’t it delusional to try to make a defunct reality (that we often have little concrete information about), tangible? We can only skim the surface of what a certain era was like, mainly because we are also confronted with other complex, material realities: fabrics and precious materials are expensive; making a fabric appear old is difficult because today, fabric is made with machines; finding skilled upholsterers who can transfer their skills to the forms of a different time is also problematic. Antique beds are not always able to bear the weight of new bed linen; the length of time required for such reproductions is also problematic in institutions where time is of the essence for communication reasons.

Finally, which exact beds should we reproduce? Inventories mention numerous types of bed linen that were changed according to the season, travelling Court members, life events, etc. It is important to know the source of the archives well and the characteristics of antique fabrics so as to select a particular moment in time and provide the necessary supplementary information for the public to understand what precise period has been chosen, what we really want to show and why. Ultimately, it is possible that virtual reproduction would be the solution to all these difficulties.

Samuel Wittwer: Why not leave the bed bare or with a neutral fabric to show its volume and tell the story of this bed in the 19th century etc.? **Muriel Barbier:** I would also tend to present it with white trimmings, and an adjacent screen showing different moments in history and the various hypothetical reproductions that could be envisaged. Especially when you consider that reproducing such important bed covers is costly and the work would not be finished for 10, 20 or even 30 years. The object would be frozen in a state that may well change with further research discoveries.

Luc Forlivesi: For similar reasons we are looking at a virtual reconstruction of Francis I’s bedroom; we are discussing the project with the musée national de la Renaissance and also with interior designers because we have reached the limits of our own skills/knowledge on the subject. This project also makes sense on a mediation level, reconciling the public’s expectation to visit the furnished rooms of Francis I at

Chambord with the scientific integrity of a museum whose aims are not to present a fake – bearing in mind that a virtual reconstruction can serve as a trial for a real décor in the future.

Presenting the “HistoPad Chambord” project (augmented reality)

Edouard Lussan and Bruno de Sa Moreira

The histopad is a digital coproduction which will enable the public to discover Chambord in a new light as from June 2015. The aim is to welcome visitors from all over the world and enable them to travel back in time to the Renaissance and discover Francis I’s castle. A touch-screen tablet will allow the visitor to adapt his visit: he will be able to choose his language (from a choice of ten or so languages to start with), to walk around the castle freely and know where he is thanks to the histopad. As the histopad knows where the visitor is, it will be able to tell him what he has not seen and help him to optimise his visit, suggesting different tour scenarios.

The histopad will allow him to see the decor as it was during the Renaissance, thanks to an image of the “gates of time” located in the rooms, that the visitor can scan. The idea is to rebuild as accurately as possible the former decor of a room where the architecture has been modified and the contents are subject to interpretation. To achieve this, the reconstruction will be made in cooperation with the conservation team, the scientific committee and the company that will all work together thanks to SketchUp software. This method will allow us to list all the elements we wish to place in the room and to correctly select the characteristics of all the objects. The difficult part is developing the reference base.

After the visit, it will be possible to obtain more information on the reconstructed decor, thanks to captions and texts explaining the images and thanks to the integration of real pieces, present in the room, into the virtual reconstruction or items that might be kept elsewhere – in a storehouse, for example. A treasure hunt for children could be created in the virtual decor.

The advantage of the augmented reality tour is that it allows visitors to relate better to the space. The histopad suggests a plausible reconstruction that does not pretend to be authentic, but that helps to imagine the decor as it might have been. At the same time, it improves the visitor’s experience of the castle, giving supplementary information about the collections that still exist today. Lastly, it is a means for the museum to increase the number of visitors and to easily obtain data on their behaviour.

Élisabeth Caude: Is it reasonable to imagine several gates of time? **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** At Chambord we have decided that there will be only one Renaissance tour for 2015. In the long-term, we could envisage a reconstruction of every century, made available with a sliding cursor. **António Nunes Pereira:** When you use a histopad in a room, does it always have to be oriented in the same direction? **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** No, the histopad is able to follow the visitor’s movement thanks to the gate of time scanner, which identifies the visitor’s position in the room. **Samuel Wittwer:** How will this influence Francis I’s bedroom? Will it be left empty? **Luc Forlivesi:** Not for the time-being, but maybe we will eventually realise that the histopad is enough for the visit. **Samuel Wittwer:** Is there not a risk that the virtual might become more authentic than reality? **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** Well there might be some confusion, but what is interesting is to get the visitor to look at the real room and use the virtual perception. The goal is really to learn. In earlier experiments, we noticed that the visit tends to be longer; visitors stay longer to try out our suggestions. Our primary aim is not to make a game of it, even if there is a fun aspect to this type of learning. **Samuel Wittwer:** What is the cost of such an investment? **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** We are asking institutions to be partners, not providers. By that, I mean that we are offering to cover all or some of the cost this work entails, including the equipment of the palace with tablets. Revenue will come from the rental of tablets to visitors. We propose to pay a part of this revenue back to the Palace, knowing that visitor frequentation increases with this tool. For example, the number of visitors to William the Conqueror’s Castle in Falaise has increased by 25%. The other advantage of this tool is that it will progress with time. If we want to correct some content, it is easily done. In terms of use, this tool will be available for rental, targeting mainly families. It will replace audio-guides. **Magdalena Herman:** You said that it will be possible to make changes but what will happen when we move a piece? This happens quite regularly in our residences. Will we have to redo the whole application? **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** That will not be a problem, because we will be using an interface of objects and we will be able to update it outside visiting times. If an object is moved, we also need to move it in the virtual space. If the object is in the storehouse, we can leave it, to show it to visitors – it is up to the museum to decide. **Samuel Wittwer:** But to carry out these manipulations, we depend on you... **Bruno de Sa Moreira:** We are even more partners because we will only get a return on our investment if the tool is a success. So we are keen to make the tool as good as possible, and to make any required changes or add items. A minimum of two updates per year are planned.

Refurnishing the Withdrawing Room of the Countess of Edla, formerly that of Queen Amélie of Orleans – harmonisation of three different epochs.

António Nunes Pereira

Pena National Palace is a Germanic-style romantic castle on top of a hill. The withdrawing room of Queen Amélie was first a spacious sitting room where she could receive friends and family and keep personal objects and a secretary. Initially the room was covered in cheap Portuguese fabric, but now there are trompe l'oeil paintings of the Republic in 1917 on the walls. In the 1980s, some paintings were hung over the wall paintings. This was a problem because, even if the queen actually had paintings hanging on her walls, there was no trompe l'oeil at the time. Later, the wall paintings were not restored but covered with fabric and little by little, former palace decorators used objects to create the atmosphere of a cinema set with no connection to the past.

Today, we have devised a project to combine these 3 periods: a reminder of how the Countess of Edla used the room, the room as it was at the end of the monarchy with Amélie and the wall paintings that did not yet exist at these times. We started our research by looking at receipts and other documents that could tell us what furniture was acquired by the queen and kings, which pieces were still in the Palace and which were missing. The second step is to track down the location of the missing pieces and maybe get them back and restore them.

If we cannot find the furniture, we will have to replace it with identical pieces, and for those we need to look at secondary sources to try to understand exactly what a queen's cabinet was like in the 19th century.

We had many difficulties with the terminology; according to the description of the Palace and from some watercolour paintings, we came to the conclusion that it was something like a withdrawing room, where the queen withdrew privately to write or to welcome friends. It was a very personal room but not a boudoir; it was not a room where she was alone. She welcomed people there for the privacy.

We produced a few documents, like a list of all the designations of the room throughout the time that the Palace was in use, then a list of objects that featured in inventories of that particular room, a list of objects that we would like to include in the refurnishing and a list of the pieces we have with a proposal for substitution.

We want to arrange the furniture to represent the 19th century and at the same time, we have to make it easy for the visitor to understand these rooms and to get an idea of a typical 19th-century interior. With these aims in mind, the rooms cannot be arranged exactly as they were originally, so we are creating new rooms, with a corridor for visitors that separates each room into two distinct parts.

As we do not have the original room and as we are rearranging furniture that was sometimes never there in the first place, what we really need is an interior designer with an excellent knowledge of the decorative arts and art history. Final decisions about the arrangement will of course be made by the curator, the director and the restorer, but an interior designer remains central to the process.

Samuel Wittwer: What exactly would be the job of an interior designer in detail? **António Nunes Pereira:** It is important to have someone to think about ways in which the interior can be designed as a reconstruction. It is also a communication issue: I must be sure that it is obvious to anyone who goes inside the room how a certain cabinet was used, even in a layout which is not the original. The visitors should understand the room without much explanation. But I would never call upon an interior designer trained in a school that deals with contemporary design. **Christopher Warleigh-Lack:** In Hillsborough castle, we are using an interior designer. I think it is a different case, because we are talking about a place which is still used to live in, the designer was actually nominated by the Prince of Wales so, of course we accepted him. In our case, he is very much guided by the historical research; I tell him which paintings he should use and he concentrates more on how to hang them.

Luc Forlivesi: For the decor of Francis I's bedroom at Chambord, the scientific committee is working together with an interior designer who is also the scenographer of the exhibition.

The aim is to receive advice on implementing the decor based on a list of technical specifications that have been defined in a scientific manner. What we need to know is just how far we can reconcile the scientific requirements with the potential perception of the public, bearing in mind that we need to explain to them a certain number of prerequisites of the style of that period and the arrangement of a room. So we are wondering about setting up interpretation rooms to explain the project and complete some of the information on this type of refurnishing.

Current use of the furniture of the Mobilier national (17th-18th centuries): characteristics and functions

Christiane Naffah-Bayle

Under the Ancien Régime, royal residences rarely had permanent furnishings. They were furnished and equipped a few days before the arrival of the sovereign by the royal stewardship, *l'Ostel le Roy*, instituted in the 13th century. The collections at that time were stored in various monuments, depending on the space available and often for reasons of convenience. In the 17th century, Louis XIV and Colbert ordered the institution of the Garde Meuble de la Couronne (the Royal furniture depository). This encouraged the work of cabinet-makers, bronze-casters, carpenters, sculptors, gilders, tapestry-weavers and upholsterers. Having changed location several times, in 1774 the Garde Meuble moved to a monument built specially by Jacques-Ange Gabriel, at the edge of the place Louis XV, today known as the place de la Concorde. From 1777, on the first Tuesday of each month between Easter and All Saints Day, the exhibition gallery was open, showing its most prestigious items and thus becoming the first museum of decorative arts in Paris.

In 1789, the Navy moved its management into the building of the Garde Meuble. During the French Revolution, it disappeared temporarily, only to re-appear in 1800 under the name: *Garde Meuble de la Maison du Premier Consul*, and then in 1804 as the *Mobilier Impérial*.

The institution moved regularly throughout the 19th century. Not until 1937, when its administration merged with that of the manufacture des Gobelins, the manufacture de Beauvais and the Tapis de la Savonnerie, did it ultimately settle in the Enclos des Gobelins in a building constructed to this end by Auguste Perret. Since then, under the name *Mobilier national*, it has continued to create, maintain and supply furniture and decoration to places of power that have become the main seats of the French Republic.

The collections of the *Mobilier national* were created or acquired from the 17th century onwards for the *Garde Meuble de la Couronne*, the *Garde Meuble Impérial*, and later for the *Mobilier national*. The collections are full of contemporary creations; tapestries, rugs and furniture made by the research and creation workshop: ARC (*Atelier de Recherche et Création*). Today the collections of the *Mobilier national* include over 100,000 cultural objects and items separated into three categories according to historical, aesthetic, scientific and practical criteria: cultural heritage pieces, cultural goods of value and everyday objects.

Cultural heritage pieces include masterpieces and items of exception. They belong to the public domain and are inalienable; for the most part, they are no longer used today to furnish embassies and ministries (except for contemporary pieces), but are loaned or kept under contract in French museums and historical monuments for renewable 5-year periods. They are also loaned out for temporary scientific exhibitions in museums, cultural institutions and French or foreign monuments.

The second category concerns *cultural goods of value*, of lower quality, belonging to the public domain. Some are considered as common objects, which correspond to the furnishing missions of the *Mobilier national*. *Everyday objects* are often contemporary or 'de style' and are used as additional items. They are acquired by the furnishing department with an operating budget that does not come under the public domain. Every 50 years, we examine all these objects to re-evaluate their heritage value. All of these cultural heritage items, goods of value and everyday objects undergo treatment in a systematic process that is a virtuous circle: creation, use, restoration, preventive conservation, exhibition, storage and transit.

The primary role of the *Mobilier national* is to furnish the various houses, residences and buildings of the French president, the prime minister, French embassies, ministerial and government offices, and those of all the heads of the main bodies of the French State. Daily use of furniture leads to wear and tear. There are seven restoration workshops at the *Mobilier national* for decorative tapestries, seating upholstery, seating woodwork, cabinet-making, textiles and chandeliers. Conserving, restoring, reproducing, embellishing, replacing and crafting, all aim to prolong the physical life, original appearance, use or memory of a cultural object across the centuries. In each case, we strive for optimal conservation of the original materials and the reversibility of any additions or intervention. When an item is restored for exhibition, the worn parts are not replaced or completed, but rather stabilised. This conservational approach re-establishes the readability of the object by protecting and respecting the original materials. When a cultural object is in daily use, notions of comfort and solidity are prioritised; any missing parts are reproduced and faulty parts are sometimes replaced, using more recent materials. This code of conduct that characterises the *Mobilier national* in its binary approach, underlies the proven skills and practices that are guided by the life history of the piece. When it comes to preventive conservation, there are huge requirements related to accessibility, checking, dusting, and packaging; these would justify implementing a separate collections project covering all the cultural goods of the *Mobilier national*.

In order to refurnish the palace-museums of France with equivalent pieces, based on scientific, archival, historical and iconographic information obtained together with the depositors, several hundred furniture items are deposited or loaned long-term for permanent exhibitions (Louvre, Versailles, Compiègne, la Malmaison, Chambord, etc.). The advantage of these deposits or loans is that cultural goods are revived, restored and examined. In addition to loans for temporary exhibitions, the *Mobilier national* organises exhibitions over approximately 1000 m² in the Gobelins gallery, designed at the beginning of the 20th century by the architect Jean-Camille Formigé. The next exhibition, in March 2015, is entitled « L'esprit et la main, héritage et savoir-faire des ateliers de restauration du Mobilier national », on the theme of heritage and craftsmanship in the restoration workshops of the *Mobilier national*.

The storehouses of the *Mobilier national* are on 2 different sites, one in the Perret building measuring 6000 m² and another, larger one outside Paris. We are currently working on a storehouse master plan. For each batch of similar cultural objects, we are establishing an optimal reserve with restorers, creating dedicated areas for passive (storage) or active tasks: furniture reception and packing area, furniture presentation area, quarantine area for infested items, storage of 'administrative problem furniture', storage of furniture awaiting restoration, etc. Lastly, we are working on a research programme with the Palace of Versailles Research Centre about the history of European Garde-Meubles from the end of the Middle-Ages until the present day.

Antonio Nunes Pereira: You have a lot of researchers working on the furniture. Do you advise institutions that wish to refurnish rooms in the style of a particular period or era? **Christiane Naffah-Bayle:** In general, we wait until colleagues consult us, but sometimes we make proposals directly. We have had no experience abroad yet, but we have a lot to share, so why not? **Samuel Wittwer:** What happens if an item kept elsewhere is damaged? **Christiane Naffah-Bayle:** We receive an annual inventory statement from each embassy describing the cultural items. If a piece is no longer in use, or is damaged, we ask that it be returned and if necessary, it is restored in our workshops at the expense of the ministry of foreign affairs. We can send a replacement piece if requested.

Palace-museums and their furnishing: the museographical adventures of the Mobilier national

Jean-Jacques Gautier

Several aspects need to be taken into consideration in the refurnishing work of the Mobilier national.

Our work involves very close collaboration between the institution receiving the item and the Mobilier national. This collaboration is based on both archive documents in our possession and the history of the place receiving the loans: We almost need to carry out archaeological work of the building before we can start refurnishing.

The public approaches a space with a particular vision, determined by the history of the building as it has been imparted. It needs to be able to identify the historical heritage in what it sees and visits but also adapt its vision to a more scientifically accurate portrayal of the furnishing. We also need to consider the distribution of the various apartments around the furniture before making furnishing decisions. This is one of the problems posed by a sequence of adjoining rooms, whereby the need to create a coherent tour path for visitors. The link between rooms must be made apparent to the visitor. In the case of Azay-le-rideau, which is a difficult castle to decipher, we had to recreate an ideal layout and reorganise the order of the rooms. Apart from an understanding of the actual place, archive sources add credibility to the proposals we make. Castle collections are also very important. At the Mobilier national, we are lucky to have a lot of resources, with entire collections sometimes coming from the same castle. This is important because an item of furniture needs to correspond to inventory descriptions from the period in question. The Mobilier national has the advantage of being able to provide extremely authentic pieces of furniture. We have pieces whose history can be traced back through the inventory numbers they bear, sometimes as far back as their creation or back to a time where there is a description of them.

It is rare that the Mobilier national is asked to intervene in a completely empty space. More often than not, the Mobilier national has to complete a collection that is already in place. It sometimes has to work around outdated museum layouts, the changes brought about by time, and layers of former arrangements; it must gradually try to see how it can improve the presentation of the items on display – remembering that we are never totally impartial to the trends that surround and influence us. We need to recreate the atmosphere of the rooms, even if that means using other pieces when the originals no longer exist. It is also important to give a historical side to the collections, linking them to the history of the place. We sometimes find this in the 19th-century approach.

A recurring question is: should we re-introduce the 19th century approach in castles – an approach that has been abandoned, as it was considered not historical or scientific enough? Yes, because these are the best documented periods (including the use of photographs). **Samuel Wittwer:** Is there not a risk that we

will only see 19th century living-rooms, forgetting the history of the place? **Jean-Jacques Gautier:** There was a desire to historicise in the 19th century that sometimes froze entire apartments in a state thought to be representative of the Renaissance. The advantage of the 19th century is that its historicising approach speaks to the collective imagination. Moreover, most of the re-interpretations that occurred in the 19th century did not replace the Renaissance. It was more a case of superimposing an arrangement that did not erase the other parts. Let us also not forget that all of this remains reversible and improvable.