The Material Turn: Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin and the Art of Embroidery in Louis XV’s France

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The Material Turn: Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin and
the Art of Embroidery in Louis XV’s France

by

Pamela J. Koons

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Art History, Hunter College
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Thesis Sponsor:

December 12, 2018
Date

Tara Zanardi
Signature

December 12, 2018
Date

Maria Loh
Signature of Second Reader
Dedicated to the memory of my loving grandparents,

Burt and Eleanor Parks
“I would not be a Designer if I did not maintain
(and it would not be difficult for me to prove)
that Design is the basis and Foundation
of Embroidery.”

Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *L’art du Brodeur*, 1770
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PREFACE

Most influential in developing the topic of my thesis was my first seminar taken in Fall 2017 with Dr. Tara Zanardi about the global eighteenth century. Throughout the semester, Professor Zanardi introduced me to the current research of Dr. Heidi Strobel and her work on Miss Mary Linwood, an English woman from the eighteenth century who grew renown fame for her needlepainting. Needlepainting was a form of embroidery dating back to the eighteenth century where, with use of needle and thread, the embroiderer would stitch an image with an extraordinary likeness. When I really started thinking about my thesis topic, I considered writing about Mary Linwood. However, I knew at best, writing about Linwood would be unnecessarily challenging and would lack any sort of originality, so I kept looking. After a desperate email to my undergraduate advisor and mentor, Dr. Frances Gage, about what to do for my thesis, especially now that my key interests from nineteenth-century French painting had changed to eighteenth-century decorative arts, she recommended an essay to me. This small essay was about embroidery dating from 1600-1800, which is how I came across Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin. Charles-Germain had everything I was looking for—he was French, a leading embroiderer under the reign of Louis XV, wrote a treatise on embroidery and had a compelling story of friends, family and connections. This is how my thesis began.

Although my key interests in studying art has been on female artists, I knew this topic would be a challenge for me in more ways than one. Embroidery, cross-stitch, sewing or what have you has almost always been considered as a feminine pastime. However with my research, I found that the embroidery trade—that is, up until the nineteenth century—was almost exclusively male. This discovery of course raised the major question of how embroidery became the major pastime for women and why it was seen as such lowly work, that is, craft. The course of my research has focused around the concept of embroidery being considered as a branch of
the fine arts in the eighteenth century, how it evolved from being a luxury to being portrayed as merely women’s work and to reassert embroideries status as an important aspect of art history—specifically during the eighteenth century.

Although this thesis revolves around Charles-Germain, Louis XV, male costume and the luxury guilds of eighteenth-century Paris, my background of women artists, scholars and my newly developed historical and art historical knowledge from the last year and a half is what made this project possible. Rozsika Parker, a British psychotherapist, art historian, writer and feminist published the book The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine, in 1984, which served as a major turning point in art history and is still as influential as ever, especially throughout the course of this project. While I do not cite Ms. Parker in my thesis, her words have echoed throughout all of my research in the last year: “To know the history of embroidery is to know the history of women.”

There are many art and fashion historians who can draw a fine line, separating art and costume or garments from one another. Dress, often in the eyes of art historians is a mere frivolity that has no significant meaning in the world of art history. However, portraits by the renaissance masters would prove us wrong. The higher arts, such as painting, since the Renaissance has had a strong hold on the concept of self-fashioning to best represent oneself—this would include wearing the best materials, the latest fashions, accompanied by embellishments such as lace, jewels and embroidery. As students of eighteenth-century art history, we are looking at dress, especially embroidery, in the wrong way. We must look at the foundation of the garment as the canvas, embroidery as the medium and the needle as a paint brush. This following thesis is the culmination of many interests and courses of academic study throughout my career as a student of art history and has become the forefront of my academic consciousness.
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The eighteenth century is commonly characterized by its scholars as a wide-spread dedication to the attainment of beauty and artistry in all realms of life.¹ This characterization was most revealingly expressed through embroidered dress under the reign of Louis XV (r. 1715-1774) at the court of Versailles. Due to eighteenth-century notions of proper court etiquette and the elite’s practice of self-fashioning, dress served as a symbol of social position and proximity to the king. While eighteenth-century dress was visually appealing for many reasons—the cut, style, fabrics and the many accessories—the true source of a garment’s beauty and elegance was found in its artful embroidery. Aristocrats at courts all over Europe, especially those at Versailles, were seduced by embroidery; “by the novelty of the materials, the variety of the designs, and the beauty of their execution.”² Wearing such elaborately embroidered garments under the court of Louis XV was a necessity, but a necessity in which the elite spared no expense. While it was originally Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) who advocated and enforced his court of noblemen and courtiers to wear luxurious dress at all court functions, it was not until the reign of Louis XV when the true artistry of court dress had been revealed. During this monarchical transition between great grand-father and the new king was an equally important transition in conceptions of dress. Tailoring, once thought to be the most important aspect of dress, lost its prestige, shifting the focus onto embellishment, which included incredible feats of embroidery with new stitches, patterns and colors. Because of this shift, embroidery became the new focus of court dress to promote the courtier’s wealth and status. As such, throughout the course of this thesis my focus is on men’s fashion at the court of Louis XV. By examining elite men’s fashion,

² Ibid., 89.
and embroidery’s essential role, I show the relationship between embroidery’s new importance and its ability to convey prestige and luxury at court.

Playing a major role in styling new trends of court dress through the art of embroidery is Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, the brodeur du roi for Louis XV. Not only did Charles-Germain hold a position at court, being the exclusive designer to the king, but he also wrote the treatise L’art du Brodeur, published in 1770. L’art du Brodeur was a transformative text that elevated the status of embroidery as a fine art, all the while serving as a handbook for master embroiderers and guilds. Charles-Germain above all, designed court dress for the king, as well as for many members of the monarchy, including the queen, the mistress and the daughters of Louis XV. Although the majority of his embroidery designs no longer exist, nor do the embroidered garments, his influence survives in extant garments from the eighteenth century and in the changes to embroidery practices in the second half of the 1700s. By way of his treatise and work as an embroidery designer, Charles-Germain sought out to elevate the status of embroidery through men’s dress at court.

Due to his position in court, Charles-Germain helped to influence the styles and trends worn by the king of France and his courtiers. Nevertheless, not everyone could afford a designer such as Charles-Germain. The noblemen of Louis XV’s court obtained these elaborately embroidered garments from master workshops, whose work, as illustrated by the objects that will be examined in the course of this thesis, reflects the work of Charles-Germain. This study is positioned under the reign of Louis XV’s court to examine the art of embroidery as expressed by men’s court dress, specifically that which was designed and embroidered by embroidery guilds in eighteenth-century Paris. Charles-Germain was a pivotal figure in Louis XV’s court whose prolific treatise, L’art du Brodeur, elevated the status of embroidery as a high art form. In order to address the greater professionalism and artistry of the trade, I situate Charles-Germain and his
treatise in the context of embroidered court dress, concepts of etiquette and the luxury guilds under the reign of Louis XV.

As a precursor to examining dress from the eighteenth century and embroidery’s historic tradition, it is first necessary to discuss a brief history of the trade. The true origins of embroidery, mentioned in Greek mythology and the bible are lost. Textile scholar Lanto Synge (b. 1945) suggests embroidery probably originated in China, with examples having been found in archaeological excavations dating as far back as the fifth century BCE. Some scholars believe embroidery has existed since the Stone Age, though this would have been a simpler version of sewing; sewing that was plain and practical, piecing skins and furs together to provide clothing, with additional stitching to reinforce areas prone to greater wear and tear. Some of the earliest examples come from excavations in China, leaving others to believe embroidery was to have begun as early as the fifth and third centuries BCE. In spite of the timeline discrepancy, historians can agree embroidery is believed to have reached Sweden sometime between the years 300 to 700, and then quickly spread throughout Europe. Throughout the history of embroidery, the church was among its greatest patrons. For example, the medieval church in Europe fostered one of the embroidery’s greatest peaks in history, the Opus Angelicanum, a Latin term meaning work of the English. This type of needlework was made in the Middle ages and was exported all throughout Europe, known for its artistry in ecclesiastical vestments. Imagery varies from figures of the Virgin Mary and the saints, as well as religious scenes and geometrical patterns. European courts applied embroidery to secular dress, whose lavish decoration served to display a

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4 The idea that embroidery has existed since the Stone Age is the common belief amongst most historians. However, other than cave paintings that depict figures in embellished dress, there is no concrete evidence. One of oldest found (and still considerably intact) embroidered object dates back to the ancient Egyptians in the second century BCE, with the boy king, Tutankhamen (1341-1323 BCE). In 1922 when Tut’s tomb was found, inside were many examples of needlework embellished on textiles and garments done in appliqué, applied, beaded and stitched.
monarch’s power and prestige. During the Middle Ages the production and consumption of embroidery became structured. Guilds regulated the training necessary to become professional embroiderers, while sumptuary laws were established, restricting the wearing of embroidered garments to specific social classes. Although embroidered garments were limited to those of ample status, across many centuries and cultures embroidery was practiced in different settings by both men and women in all levels of social class. Both men and women worked in embroidery guilds and workshops, while women embroidered at home for domestic purposes and leisure.

Beginning during the reign of Louis XIV and throughout the eighteenth century, embroidery is believed to have made a major reappearance. It became an increasingly valuable medium of expression through styles of dress, as it helped to influence social, economic and cultural meaning. Members of the monarchy and aristocracy became the leading patrons for embroiderers. Embroidery was lavishly time-intensive, a highly specialized art form that utilized very costly materials, making it the ultimate signifier of luxury, as represented by the embroidered jacket in (fig. 1). Individually licensed designers and embroiderers were often retained by a monarch, such as in the case of Charles-Germain under Louis XV, or employed by a noble household to embellish garments, furnishings and decorations, both for everyday use and special occasions. Additionally, during the eighteenth century women from all economic levels were expected to have sewing skills, either plain or decorative, depending on their social class.

The desire for and demand of embroidery continued to intensify throughout the century. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, smaller-scale pictorial embroidery was considered

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6 Ibid., 409.
7 Ibid.
8 There are two distinct classifications of needlework: that which is plain and that which is decorative. What would be considered as plain needlework are basic sewing techniques that one would use to mend clothing and mark household linens. On the other hand, decorative needlework would qualify as embroidery, consisting of a variety of different stitches that are meant to create intricate designs on clothing or other goods.
a feminine, leisurely and mostly middle-to upper-class accomplishment art. Embroidery was one creative outlet that was able to be practiced by women of all social strata they could work on their stitches in different settings. However, embroidery and needlework were not simply a product of domestic leisure for women. Many professional embroidery workshops existed that employed both men and women—though women were the primary laborers.

The textile arts, particularly embroidery, can be an especially difficult to study. Surviving garments is a rarity from the reign of Louis XV. One of the main issues with studying clothing is the general lack of objects, or objects that are in salvageable condition. A major reason there are limited sartorial examples from eighteenth-century France is due to the French Revolution (circa 1789-1795), whose mob riots looted palaces and destroyed paintings, furniture, and clothing. In Louis XVI (r. 1774-1791) and Marie Antoinette’s (1755-1793) efforts to preserve Versailles and the innumerable amount of decorative art it possessed, the Assemblée nationale declared all possessions inside had been abandoned. As a result, in the last several years of the century (approximately 1793-1799) all furniture items were either sold or rented; objects of “artistic merit” were given to museums such as the Louvre (founded in 1793) to be added to their collection and the Central Museum for the Arts, whose initial collection was comprised of only art objects that once belonged to the Crown; all metal statuary in the palace was sent to the foundry and made into cannons, though the sculptures that decorated the gardens of Versailles remained. There were no fewer than 17,182 lots on offer, the majority of which were acquired by Paris merchants and citizens. It was also decreed that the house and gardens of Versailles, as well as any other residencies (such as the Palace à Tuileries) would be placed under the care of

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10 Shen. “Embroidery,” 408.
12 Ibid.
the Republic. It is not perfectly clear what happened with clothing, accessories and embroidered objects within the palace. Based on the limited quantity of examples from Louis XV’s reign, it is presumable these objects were discarded, recycled within their own decade for other clothing, or with time became irreparably damaged.

Historic textiles are delicate objects and are particularly sensitive to the elements. Environmental factors, such as lighting and temperature are known to affect severely garments, therefore these objects are rarely displayed. Most textiles owned by museums or galleries reside in archives due to their fragile state. Especially in the context of the eighteenth century, garments have frayed and tattered lining, non-embroidered embellishments such as *spangles* and *frissures* are either missing or are hanging on by a thread. In museum collections, there are typically more examples of embroidery samples or men’s waistcoats versus complete suits. Due to the often missing components (jackets, breeches) in the course of my research, I have often turned to examples of eighteenth-century portraiture to fill in the missing pieces.

**Literature Review**

There has been a significant shift in scholarship within the last several decades, a “material turn” so to speak, consisting of eighteenth-century decorative and fiber arts, including textiles, court dress and embroidery. Art historians who specialize in dress, textiles, and embroidery have provided a new specialized field within the discipline. Rozsika Parker, a psychotherapist and art historian, wrote the first major text on embroidery, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. As suggested by the title, Parker focuses on the history of embroidery,

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13 In the occasional instance they are displayed, they are presented behind temperature-regulated glass in acid free frames and mounts, or in large cases, both preventing unprotected hands from touching (which is equally damaging as these factors, if not more so), and harsh temperatures. In order for an object to be exhibited, the conservators ensure the textile is in relatively good condition, leaving no strings, threads, buttons or embellishments hanging loose, and any frayed fabric to be covered in a transparent, acid-free fabric to keep the garment intact.
homing in on how this art form became known as craft or “women’s work” in the early modern world. Parker does not analyze the artistic purpose of professional or young girls’ embroidery, but rather focuses instead on how the medium became a demonstration of upper-class femininity. She emphasizes that, in the beginning of the Middle Ages, ending roughly around the early nineteenth century, both sexes worked in professional embroidery workshops. As per the guild statutes, guilds were owned and operated by men, except for in one rare instance Parker brings to the reader’s attention: Mabel of Bury St Edmunds, who worked on orders directly from Henry III (r. 1216-1272). Overall, Parker explores the concept that embroidery has always been an art form for the wealthy; whether leisurely creating it themselves as schoolgirls or wives or paying professional embroiderers, such as Charles-Germain or Parisian embroidery guilds, for expensive embellishments to plain fabric. While my research does explore in detail embroidery practice in relation to gender, Parker’s scholarship has helped to guide my research and situate the art and history of embroidery before the trade became regarded as craft.

The early 1980s introduced a new wave of research and exhibitions on embroidery and embroidered court dress. The first to study Charles-Germain and promote his claims on the elevated status of eighteenth-century embroidery is the Los Angeles Museum of Art (LACMA). Charles-Germain and his treatise L’art du Brodeur became the basis for the LACMA’s exhibition, entitled An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century in 1983, the first exhibition to focus solely on court dress from the eighteenth century. In addition, this museum owns one of the largest collections of garments and accessories from eighteenth-century Europe in the United States. This exhibition lead to the translation into English of Charles-

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14 Embroidery served as a pre-puberty rite for girls in well-to-do families who worked over their samplers and learned decorative stitches, while their brothers studied Latin and mathematics.

15 Competing with the LACMA for the largest collection of eighteenth-century costume is the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection, which in the last decade has been merged with the collection belonging to the Brooklyn Museum’s Costume Institute.
Germain’s treatise by Nikki Scheuer, making it accessible to non-French speakers for the first time. Within the corresponding exhibition catalogue are many topics such as the importance of dress, including fancy dress in the context of a royal court such as Versailles; the proper movement and etiquette that would have been expected at court; lastly, embroidery as both a fashionable status symbol and a mode of decorative arts. This catalogue was the first source that provided insight to how an eighteenth-century court functioned in terms of dress and etiquette as status symbols by examining dress from the end of the reign of Louis XIV until the French Revolution. The research by the LACMA for the exhibition catalogue contains information on the importance of court dress and material on the embroidery guild that are both integral to my interpretation of *L’art du Brodeur*, helping to serve as a historical basis for my thesis.\(^{16}\)

However, the catalogue focuses on aspects of eighteenth-century court life, such as dress and movement, while briefly discussing Charles-Germain’s treatise, but does not assess how influential his position as *brodeur du roi* was on the styles and trends under the reign of Louis XV and the prestige he brought to the embroidery trade.\(^{17}\)

Philip Mansel has contributed much to the study of eighteenth-century embroidery, dress and court life. Throughout his work, he discusses a transition of status through acceptable means of dress. In “The Rise of the Frac,” Mansel addresses the function of clothes; not only do they clothe the wearer, but they also convey the wearer’s aspirations, attitudes and, in eighteenth-century Europe especially between 1760 to 1830, their status. Focusing on these seventy years, Mansel discusses the traditional *habit habille* and the aristocracy’s distaste for such expensive

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\(^{16}\) The catalogue includes scholarship from Edward Maeder, Alicia M. Annas, Natalie Rothstein, Nikki Scheuer, Anne Ratzki-Kraatz, Anna G. Bennett and Aileen Ribeiro.

\(^{17}\) Following *An Elegant Art*, decades later in 2016, the LACMA put on another exhibition, recalling Charles-Germain’s treatise and eighteenth-century dress. Entitled, *Reigning Men: Fashion in Menswear 1715-2015*, this exhibition explored the history of men’s fashionable dress spanning three centuries to re-examine the common conception of fashion as feminine. The exhibit begins by exploring the eighteenth-century *habit habille*, otherwise known as the three-piece suit and its evolution to the modern day skinny-leg tuxedo. *Reigning Men* places its focus on style and technique, cultural influences and how fashion tastes from the reign of Louis XV have profoundly shaped men’s dress as it is today.
garments that bled their pockets dry, to the adoption and imposition of uniforms including the frac. European courts favor of the uniform; they were more affordable because of the lack of embellishments all the while identifying the status of the wearer by way of the pins, sashes and medals that would adorn these uniforms, as seen in the portrait of the Comte de Vaudreuil by Élisabeth Louise Vigée le Brun (fig. 2). However, Louis XV, who was partially indebted to keeping the textile and embroidery guilds afloat was reluctant to wear the uniform. Due to rules established by the court and enforced by Louis XV, the demand of embroidered dress lead to a surplus of embroidery guilds under his reign. As fashion trends began to alter once again in favor of little to no embroidery on some men’s garments, such as with the uniform, Louis XV continued to enforce embroidered court dress at all court functions to keep the embroidery guild afloat. However, as more European courts adopted the uniform, Louis XV, too, grew a liking to uniforms, making them accepted at court, though not for ceremonies, balls or other events. Very few examples of what would have been considered a uniform exist today, but the fundamentals of an elite uniform are illustrated in Le Brun’s Comte de Vaudreuil (fig. 2). The uniform would have been solid in color with no prints, designs and very little embroidery, if any. There would have been few embellishments, such as a sash or medal to show militial status in relevance to the king, as well as the option of lace to show wealth.

Following the uniform, at the end of Louis XV’s reign and the onset of Louis XVI’s, the frac anglaise was introduced. The frac became the new standard for dress at Versailles and Paris, made of cheaper materials with few embellishments—if any—and a much sleeker fit. In Dressed to Rule, Mansel argues that not only do clothes make the man, but also make the court of Versailles. In other words, members of court were not only dressing themselves in these

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18 These elite uniforms would not have been military uniforms by any means. The base of a military uniform was taken and adapted to the elite, so they could show their position in proximity to Louis XV, while displaying militial power and wealth.
luxurious and pricy garments, but in doing so they are also representing Louis XV and France. Mansel begins by examining the court of Louis XIV at Versailles and follows the widespread adoption of uniforms, which rulers from England to China used to demonstrate status and control over their members in their court. Mansel also discusses clothing in terms of military and mourning dress, two crucial styles of dressing and performing as a proper courtier in European courts. To further establish the evolution of men’s dress under the reign of Louis XV, seen in the forms of uniforms and the frac, I draw on the scholarship of Mansel to address these new developments in men’s fashion and how they played a role in court dress and self-fashioning. Although the uniform and frac are representative of a shift away from embroidered dress, these garments demonstrate that elites still had a preference for this mode of embellishment, just on a much smaller scale.

Steering away from fashion and focusing on the artistry behind embroidery is Lanto Synge, a specialist in decorative arts and antiques who identifies himself as a leading expert on antique textiles and who has contributed significantly to the field of textile studies and specifically embroidery. While his area of expertise consists of English embroidery, he contributes much to the overall history of embroidery while considering other European influential sources. In Art of Embroidery, Synge encourages readers and students alike to explore the rich and diverse history of the art form while simultaneously elevating its status. Synge asserts that needlework should not be regarded merely as a humble or homely craft that was taught to young school girls in the form of samplers and practiced by housewives married to the nobility for practice and décor. Embroidery was practiced by Queens from high-ranking societies (e.g., Mary Queen of Scots being one of the most prolific figures) and professionals

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19 He explains the earliest forms of needlework were plain and practical, sewing together furs and skins to create clothing, while an early example of embroidery was used to give greater strength to areas most prone to wear and tear.
belonging to the trade were some of the highest paid throughout all luxury guilds. Synge’s work in *Art of Embroidery*, serves as a testament to embroidery as high art, the basis Charles-Germain’s treatise, as well as this thesis. While this text provides a historical basis deriving off of the work of Parker, it too, leaves out Charles-Germain from the discussion.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, more scholarship on embroidery, in both garment history and the decorative arts was introduced. In 2004 the Hermitage museum produced the exhibition *Western European Embroidery in the Hermitage: from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Century*, accompanied by the catalogue *Art of the Embroiderer* attributed to Tatiana Kosourova.\(^\text{20}\) Objects from the exhibition are household goods, accessories and garments that demonstrate the floral, decorative embroidery that occupied many palace interiors and men’s *habit habille’s* throughout the eighteenth century. Featured in the exhibition were many samples of decorations for men’s jackets that could be made-to-order, consisting of all different textiles (silk, velvet, brocades), adorned with materials such as silk, sequins, colored glass and foil. For many members of the elite who had funds to purchase clothing, often opted for these cheaper materials in place of gold and precious stones to create the effect of luxury without spending exorbitant sums of money.\(^\text{21}\) The research for this catalogue does not contain much in the way of analyzing court dress and its function, but rather serves as an encyclopedic work of embroidery and embellishment materials from the eighteenth century, including how such garments were made, while providing a vast array of illustrations and details. To establish the manufacturing process of court garments, I draw on the Hermitage Museum’s scholarship to discuss more in-depth dress under the reign of Louis XV.

\(^{20}\) This exhibition featured many secular works of embroidery that were displayed for the first time. Such examples include wall decorations, furniture upholstery, bed covers, table cloths, women’s skirts and samples of boarders from men’s jackets.

\(^{21}\) Although the nobility had a substantial sum of money they could allow for their wardrobe, especially those within the court of Versailles who were given a monthly sum, garments were so extraordinarily pricy with these added embellishments that typically the royal family were the only ones who could afford authentic gems, gold and silver.
Heidi Strobel is the leading historian of Miss Mary Linwood (1755-1845). Comparable with the theme of embroidery as art, Linwood became known for her needlepainting, a type of embroidery executed in a way that the stitches mimic the brushstrokes of an oil painting. Needlepainting, especially that of Linwood, became a commodity amongst the European upper classes, with smaller-pictorial work being considered a feminine, leisurely middle-to upper-class accomplishment art. Linwood’s needlepainting caught the attention of people from all social classes, including the monarchy, for which they attended her many installations of large-scale embroidered works. Strobel examines the work of Linwood, her success and the status of her objects as commodity, as well as how her work connects to the craze of embroidered objects circulating in Europe. My study builds on the scholarship of Strobel, through a comparative approach of the elevated status of embroidery as illustrated by Linwood’s needlepaintings and court dress from the court of Versailles. Although Strobel’s work does not focus on court dress, she helps to defend the concept as put forth by Charles-Germain that embroidery is art.

A historian in both fashion and art, Aileen Ribeiro, is a leading contributor in eighteenth-century court dress. The scope of her research primarily focuses on the eighteenth century, and she mainly examines French and English dress, looking to both sartorial and visual examples. In Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe, Ribeiro surveys dress worn by both the middle and upper classes throughout Europe in the 1700s. She tackles what dress meant in terms of status and identity and how etiquette is an essential aspect of self-presentation. Additionally, Ribeiro

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23 She had many royal followers, such as Catherine the Great of Russia (r. 1762-1796), Queen Charlotte (r. 1761-1818) and her husband George III (r. 1760-1820), and earned several awards and medals for her submissions to the Royal arts society.
24 While it is not certain that Linwood herself would have been exposed to L’art du Brodeur, there is plenty of evidence that French fashions and other French texts have been circulated throughout eighteenth century England. European cities would have had their own embroidery guilds out of necessity and due to the increasing population of embroidered dress amongst the elite and would have sought influence from France. Additionally, Charles-Germain’s text was widely acclaimed throughout eighteenth century France. In considering these two factors, it is very possible that Charles-Germain’s treatise would have been circulated throughout Europe, especially England.
25 Ribeiro holds a position on the board of the British Art Journal and Costume, the Costume Society Journal.
discusses the rise of the designer and the evolution of ready-made clothes to be ordered at a high-end store. Ribeiro’s work serves as both a historical basis and encyclopedic foundation for my thesis. By clearly defining the role of dress in European courts and forming connections between dress and etiquette, a theme in which I examine, Ribeiro’s scholarship proves essential for my research on embroidery.

While there is a substantial amount of scholarship on embroidery, there is a paucity of research done on the eldest Saint-Aubin brother, Charles-Germain, and his embroidery practice. Aside from the translation of his treatise, L’art du Brodeur in 1983, the only text that examines the artist, his career and his major book of sketches is the anthology, The Saint-Aubin Livre de caricatures: Drawing Satire in Eighteenth Century Paris, published in 2012. This text is the first comprehensive study on a collection entitled, Livre de caricatures tant bonnes que mauvaises, of Charles-Germain’s (and presumably some of his family’s) sketches and watercolors, which poke fun at aristocrats and the monarchy. These drawings were meant for private entertainment amongst the Saint-Aubin family, and offer commentaries on general happenings within the country, critiques of contemporary theatre, music and fashion, and gossip within the court of Versailles. Scholars of eighteenth-century France from different fields analyze drawings from the book with the efforts to further develop an understanding of the relationships between members of court and those who work for them, like the Saint-Aubin family. To further explain, Charles-Germain, his father and grandfather both worked for the French king, from Louis XIV to Louis XV. While this title would have immensely elevated the

26 As will be explained in the first chapter, Charles-Germain created many albums of sketches that in the last years of his life, he gathered to be published. None of these books were published in his lifetime, but instead years after. While his albums of sketches have been published, no information about him has been up to this point.
27 Livre de Caricatures was a collection of drawings that was created by the Saint-Aubin family, simply for the enjoyment of the Saint-Aubin family. It is unclear if there were family friends who would have had the privilege of viewing this, but it certainly would not have been shown to members of the court. Such critiques and puns would have offended Charles-Germain’s clients, risking his position brodeur du roi.
status of the entire Saint-Aubin family, they would not have been considered noblemen or courtiers of the court but would have been allowed access to see and hear first-hand the gossip of the court. Whereas the researchers who contributed to the Drawing Satire project have provided the foundation for my knowledge and history of the Saint-Aubin family, their analysis of the family’s drawings does not answer fundamental issues that are central tenets of my study, particularly, the impact Charles-Germain has had on the artistry of embroidery and court costume under his title as brodeur du roi.

This new scholarly focus on embroidery in the last few decades has greatly influenced my present research, while providing a wealth of information on the decorative arts, fashion, and embroidery as an art form. However, none of these scholars or institutions have extensively studied Charles-Germain and his work as brodeur du roi. The work by the LACMA in translating Charles-Germain’s treatise has allowed his work to be readily available to a much larger audience, while producing one of the first and most prolific exhibitions within this niche of embroidery as art. Historians of fashion and decorative arts such as Mansel, Synge and Ribeiro have contributed to the history of embroidery, while encouraging scholars to explore collections of fashion and embroidery. While the majority of these scholars have accredited Charles-Germain with elevating the status and professionalism of the embroidery trade at some point within their text, none of these scholars have researched the history of his career, his relationship to the monarchy and his treatise to position him in the center of embroidery practices in eighteenth-century France. On the other hand, the research by these various scholars have advocated for the elevation of eighteenth-century embroidery, as seen most revealingly through the dress of the period and other embroidered objects. The aforementioned works have served as primary sources of historical and analytical information as well as serving as a point of departure for my own research into Charles-Germain, his treatise, court dress, etiquette and luxury guilds.
Although many examples of embroidered dress from the eighteenth century have been destroyed throughout the last few centuries, especially those manufactured under the reign of Louis XV, there remains a fraction of French court costume. With the assistance of some of these existing examples, Charles-Germain’s treatise and the operation of the luxury guilds, my thesis helps to shed new light on the importance of embroidery to men’s courtly dress and acknowledge it as an art form in its own right. Throughout the course of this thesis, I examine key issues, such as: why was embroidery held in such great regard and seen as form of fine art form; who was able to obtain these luxurious objects and what exactly were they; who made these objects; and how does Saint-Aubin’s work and treatise relate to broader ideas about the importance of embroidery and dress in France and the court. Chapter one confronts the main theme of embroidery as a fine art form, especially throughout the eighteenth century. Charles-Germain believed embroidery should be elevated in such a way that it was equal to the fine arts being taught at the royal academy. As will be explained throughout chapter one and the course of this thesis, embroiderers and designers like artists, required schooling (in the form of an apprenticeship), years of experience in the trade, mastery in all techniques, materials and tools, to create an exceptional work of art. This chapter examines the Saint-Aubin family’s tradition of embroiderers, Charles-Germain’s career and relationships within the court of Versailles and his appeal to the higher arts. Although Charles-Germain worked primarily for the king, due to his title other members of the monarchy and nobles sought his patronage, one of the leading examples being Madame de Pompadour, with whom he developed an amicable relationship. I analyze Charles-Germain’s treatise, L’art du Brodeur, to explain its claims of elevating the status of embroidery, as well as definitions and uses for the numerous tools and gadgets of the trade.

Throughout the eighteenth century was an increase of innovation within the embroidery trade. Charles-Germain in L’art du Brodeur writes extensively about these innovations in
technique and material to further elevate the status of embroidery, which I explore in chapter two. These innovations include new methods of stitches, new materials that were used on embroidered dress to replicate the finery of jewels and gold thread, but without the exuberant prices, as well as how these costumes were consumed. Chapter two then examines the evolution of court dress as influenced by two major stylistic periods of the eighteenth century, the Rococo and Neoclassicism, as well as the influence from the French Enlightenment. Drawing heavily on the LACMA and the Hermitage exhibition catalogues I discuss this evolution of style and trends with the aid examples of court dress and samples of clothing under the reign of Louis XV and within a few years of his death. Secondly, I argue for the social significance of court dress and how fashion worked in conjunction with proper corporeal movement and etiquette to characterize the noblemen and courtiers of Louis XV’s court.

Chapter three examines the luxury guilds in eighteenth-century Paris. I explain the process of obtaining court dress, in which there were three options: hiring a retinue of a designer, embroiderer and tailor to design clothing; purchasing embroidered fabric from local shops or embroidery workshops with little customization; or, purchasing embroidered appliqués to apply to different foundations to keep costs low. I then describe the hierarchical structure of the luxury guilds, including how they oversaw and regulated the quality and artistry of the embroidery guild’s products. Lastly, I debunk the preconceived notion that embroidery is only performed by women, by investigating the gender distinctions influenced by enlightenment ideas, as enforced by Louis XV’s court and the guild corporations.
CHAPTER ONE

The Art of Embroidery: Charles Germain de Saint-Aubin, *dessinateur du roi*

“To embroider is the art of adding the representation of such motifs as one chooses—flat or in relief, in gold, silver or color—to the surface of a finished piece of cloth.”

--Charles Germain de Saint-Aubin

During the eighteenth century the Saint-Aubin family name was one of prestige and power, dominating major aspects of the art world: engraving, designing, and embroidery. Of this dynasty, most widely known are brothers Gabriel and Augustin, both of whom were accomplished artists. Gabriel-Jacques (1724-1780) was employed as a draftsman, etcher, and printmaker. Younger brother Augustin (1736-1807) worked as an engraver and was appointed as the official engraver at the *Bibliothèque Royale*. In addition to these two successful brothers is a family steeped in the rich history of design and embroidery, two things which, in the eighteenth century went hand-in-hand. Charles-Germain, the eldest sibling, may not receive the same scholarly attention as his two brothers, but during his lifetime, he carried on the family tradition as *Dessinateur du Roi pour la broderie et la dentelle*, a position he occupied at the court of Louis XV.

In this chapter, I set in motion the theme of embroidery as a high art form in the eighteenth century, by first examining the Saint-Aubin family dynasty and Charles-Germain’s

29 This wordy title roughly translates to the designer of embroidery and lace to the King’s wardrobe.
career, title and proximity to the court at Versailles. Continuing with Versailles, is a discussion of Charles-Germain’s relationships with the monarchy, his royal patrons and his other artistic pursuits inspired by the monarchy, which in turn lead to hundreds of sketches and watercolors produced by the Saint-Aubin family. Lastly, I examine his prolific treatise, *L’art du Brodeur*, which served as a groundbreaking text that made a major impact on the practice of embroidery in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is because of the Saint-Aubin family dynasty and the family-wide interest in art making that lead to Charles-Germain’s concept for his treatise. *L’art du Brodeur*, in particular, sheds light on Charles-Germain’s embroidery practices and his overarching debate about fine and decorative arts. Lastly, I discuss materials, tools and techniques from the treatise, to examine embroidery as material culture rather than as simply an embellishment of fashion.

Charles-Germain, depicted in a sketch by his younger brother Augustin in (fig. 3), was born January 17, 1721 to parents Gabriel-Germain (1696-1756) and Anne Boissay, both of whom worked as professional embroiderers. His paternal grandfather Germain (1657-1734), the first professional embroiderer in the family, in the 1680s moved himself and his family from the countryside of Beauvais in northern France to the center of Paris to establish an embroidery atelier. The move to Paris elevated his social status when he secured a position as an embroiderer in the household of the duchesse de Lesdiguières (1655-1716). This position gave Germain the opportunity to serve as concierge and embroiderer to the duc de Villeroy (1644-1730)—tutor to Louis XV—who, as depicted by Augustin-Oudart Justina in (fig. 4) has been clothed in rich embroidery and embellishments since the young age of seven—and therefore a key figure in the regency period until his death in 1734.

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30 Ibid., 6
31 Jones, *The Saint-Aubin Livre*, 6. The duc of Villeroy, otherwise known as François de Neafoville was born to a noble family whose father was governor of the young Louis XIV. He became close friends with Louis XIV, was a
Germain’s embroidery skills were highly valued at a prosperous moment when luxury trades in high-end, fashionable apparel from Paris were coveted both in France and abroad.\textsuperscript{32} He further established himself and family name by creating business networks through intermarriage with individuals from the same social ranks and trade. For example, after the passing of his first wife, Germain married a daughter of a fellow Parisian embroiderer, creating a new family alliance.\textsuperscript{33} By placing himself and his family in the fashion center of the eighteenth century and immersing himself in prosperous trade, the Saint-Aubin family advanced their status and professional success to achieve a level of respectability that was maintained until the end of the ancien régime.\textsuperscript{34}

Germain’s three children continued in a similar milieu, working or marrying into the luxury trade industries. His daughter married a \textit{marchand-mercier} and his youngest son became one. Germain’s eldest son, Gabriel-Germain (Charles-Germain’s father) sustained the family trade and became an embroiderer. Having such ties to \textit{marchands-merciers} within the family was crucial to a master or craftsman’s success. A \textit{marchand-mercier}, a French term that translates to merchant of merchandise, is a type of entrepreneur working outside of the guild system, constrained by their own set of rules and regulations. In the eighteenth century, \textit{marchands-merciers} were shop owners whose specialty was selling objects of luxury and art used to decorate homes, such as fashionable furniture, chinoiserie, paintings, mirrors, Sèvres porcelain, textiles and embroidered goods.\textsuperscript{35} Having family working for this trade helped in elevating the Saint-Aubin’s status, granting them access to a larger market and most importantly, clientele

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 7. \\
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 6. \\
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Marchands-merciers} were characterized in Diderot’s Encyclopédie as sellers of everything and makers of nothing. Since this trade was not confined to the rules of the guilds, by law they did not have to choose a specialization of goods and could therefore use their many connections to cater to their elite circle of connoisseurs.
\end{footnotesize}
with a taste for luxury items. Gabriel-Germain surpassed his father’s professional status, securing the post of Brodeur du Roi in 1732.36

Charles-Germain, the eldest son, as tradition had it, was destined to carry on the family tradition of dessinateur. Similarly, all surviving children found careers in the making or dealing of the arts, or married marchands-merciers.37 Watching his brothers attain some amount of success, Charles-Germain became tempted by the attractions of a career in fine art and pursued other creative pursuits aside from embroidery. Charles-Germain became a versatile artisan and designer who experimented in a variety of media. Colin Jones and Juliet Carey, editors of The Saint-Aubin Livre de Caricatures, have approximated that by the end of his life he had composed over 40,000 drawings, ranging from quick sketches to designs for the court.38 Charles-Germain pursued many artistic endeavors deriving from his love for nature, as represented in one of his thousands of botanical drawings shown in Bruyères et marguerites (fig. 5), and his close relationship with the court of Versailles and the aristocracy, for which his family belonged.39

One such endeavor was in 1748, when Charles-Germain published a set of engravings titled Les Papillonneries humaines, rococo designs presented as butterflies engaged in human antics, the main source of inspiration being the aristocrats they so closely worked with, as seen by his engraving, entitled La Toilette (fig. 6).40

In part due to the lack of success in his etchings and seeing his brother Gabriel’s difficulties in establishing himself as an artist, Charles-Germain made the decision to rely on embroidery as a profession. In 1745 at the age of twenty-four, Charles-Germain left his father’s

36 Ibid., 7.
37 The youngest brother Athanase (1734-1783) followed in his uncle’s footsteps and became a marchands-mercier, though he was incredibly unsuccessful. Louis-Michel (1731-1780) became a porcelain painter for the Sèvres porcelain factory. Most widely known today, Gabriel, became an established artist of great notoriety, but had little money. Most successful was Augustin, who achieved great fame and wealth through his work as an engraver. 38 Ibid. 6.
39 The first of these endeavors came about in 1745 when Charles-Germain and Gabriel worked together on illustrations for an erotic novel Thémidore by the budding author Claude Godard d’Aucour (1716-1795).
40 Ibid., 8.
workshop to begin one of his own on the rue de la Verrerie, on the western edge of the Marais.\textsuperscript{41} Charles-Germain made note in his sketchbook, \textit{Recueil de plantes}, that he had “extreme diligence in constantly inventing new embroidery designs, a decided taste for work and the desire to look;” thus, making his shop an overnight success while earning him unexpectedly high levels of compensation.\textsuperscript{42} By 1747, Charles-Germain was designing for the monarchy at Versailles, including the prestigious commission of designing the dauphins’ attire for his wedding, represented in engraving \textit{M. le Dauhpin et M. la Dauphine en Habits de nôces} (fig. 7).

Business prospered, as did his reputation. Around 1760 he relocated to the rue des Prouvaires in the parish of Saint-Eustache to the north of Les Halles, where he would remain throughout the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{43} This neighborhood was home to the prestigious \textit{marchands-merciers} and proved to be a great move for his career and social elevation. It was this reputation that led him to sign an exclusive contract with the \textit{marchand des dentelles de la reine} (the queen’s lace merchant), for his fancy design work to appear at the royal court. It is believed by Jones and Carey that around this time, Charles-Germain began styling himself as \textit{dessinateur du roi}, a title he gave himself to appear more respectable. This contract guaranteed him 1,200 livres annually, as well as additional compensation for any work he did directly for the queen, Maria Leszczyńska (1703-1768).\textsuperscript{44} Charles-Germain would have been working closely with the monarchy by the time Charles van Loo’s royal portrait of the queen (fig. 8) was completed. While there is no evidence that Maria’s dress was designed by Charles-Germain (though based on the timeline, it is possible), this portrait depicts the grandeur of women’s court dress as well as the incredibly high standards his designs were expected to transcend.\textsuperscript{45}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[41] Ibid.
\item[42] Ibid.
\item[43] Ibid., 9.
\item[44] Ibid.
\item[45] As Aileen Ribeiro has pointed out in the course of her studies, we must examine the depiction of clothing with a grain of salt. It is very unlikely that artists would depict every embellishment and embroidered detail when painting
\end{footnotes}
Aside from the royal couple, Charles-Germain worked extensively for other members of the court. One of his most generous and influential patrons was Jeanne Antoinette Poisson (1721-1764), otherwise known as the Marquise de Pompadour, the king’s titled mistress and then royal friend, depicted in François-Hubert Drouais’ portrait in (fig. 9), seated at her tambour frame in a heavily embroidered dress. Having such court patrons at this level of prestige enhanced Charles-Germain’s reputation, earning him a steady string of jobs both within the walls of Versailles and beyond. His portfolio expanded with prestigious commissions, including patrons such as Louis XV’s granddaughter Clotilde, the king’s final mistress, Madame du Barry, the dauphin and dauphine (future Louis XVI and his wife, Marie-Antoinette), as well as the kings of Prussia and Portugal.  

The legacy of the Saint-Aubin family and his personal and economic success, was founded on embroidery. Charles-Germain himself defined it as, “the art of adding to the surface of a fabric already manufactured and finished, the representation of such object as one desires.”

Because of his diligence in the trade—and perhaps as an attempt to being taken seriously as an artist—Charles-Germain sought to make embroidery recognized as a branch of fine arts. In 1769, Charles-Germain presented a paper on embroidery to the Académie Royale des science, arguing that fancy embroidery work conjoined manual skill with high art, and should therefore be regarded as such. This essay was received with high acclaim, producing an illustrated book *L’Art du Brodeur*, in 1770. The book provides a historical outline of the art of embroidery from

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Ibid. Charles-Germain’s decision to remain in the embroidery trade no doubt lead to countless successes, both personally and economically. But this choice by no means meant that he gave up pursuing other artistic avenues. In fact, the artistic practice of draftsmanship proved to be a family activity cherished by the Saint-Aubins, resulting in family projects such as *Livre de caricatures tant bonnes que mauvaises*, a collection of caricatures designed to poke fun at the aristocracy. Charles-Germain also had his own personal collections of drawings and watercolors he assembled together later in life, these collections serving as further support to his artistic skill and greater call for professionalism and the elevation of embroidery.

the very beginning of civilization, while highlighting the key features of French design in the mid-eighteenth century (beginning approximately around 1730)—which he believed was the very pinnacle of the art form. Accompanied with the text were many engravings of design motifs, examples of stitches as well as the tools of the trade, as seen in Charles-Germain’s engraving in (fig. 10). I continue to examine L’art du Brodeur, some engravings from the text, as well as the Académie’s involvement later in this chapter.

After the publishing of his book, Charles-Germain was in high demand, perhaps even more so, but the treatise’s publication did not save him from all difficulties. In the 1760s, he lost two of his most prestigious patrons: the Marquise de Pompadour in 1764 and queen Maria Leszczyńska in 1768.48 By the late 1770s and early 1780s, fashion was shifting from heavier materials that could support the weight of complicated embroidery, towards lighter materials such as cotton and linen. What’s more, there was a move away from the rococo to less ornate, more neoclassical-influenced designs. This change meant a reduced demand for luxurious embroidery in which the Saint-Aubin dynasty had specialized throughout the century, represented in (fig. 11). This waistcoat is a rare surviving example of a linen waistcoat with finely embroidered floral motifs in the satin stitch, chain stitch and knots, representative of this adoption of lighter materials and less ostentatious embroidery.49 The embroidery design mimics lace patterns—another valuable and luxurious material men wore to adorn their suits, primarily at the neck and cuffs.

Towards the end of his life, Charles-Germain began to take a bit of a step back from his career as a designer as his attention was brought to family matters. After the death of his uncle Pierre in 1775, followed by the death of his brothers, Louis-Michel in 1779, Gabriel in 1780 and

48 Ibid.
49 During the eighteenth century these knots had no formal name. In modern hand embroidery these knots are most similar to the French knot.
Athanase in 1783, Charles-Germain shifted his focus from court patronage to his families’ passion of drawing. The last years of his life were spent assembling collections of his and his brothers’ drawings, “which he planned to bequeath to posterity.” The first of these, entitled *Recueil de dessins*, was a collection of the finest drawings by himself and his brother Gabriel, published in 1786. Second, was a volume that had close associations with leisure and pleasure. This collection of engravings entitled, *Livre de caricatures tant bonnes que mauvaises*, can be interpreted as a sort of “family album” but is most commonly associated with Charles-Germain due to his position he held at court. There are 287 drawings crammed into 155 pages, of which three-quarters of the drawings have been attributed to the Saint-Aubin family: fifty-six by Charles-Germain, sixty-four by Gabriel and 111 by Augustin. However, other family members contributed to this project: father Gabriel-Germain, sisters Catherine and Agathe, both Charles-Germain’s daughters and Augustin’s wife. Lastly was a collection entitled, *Album, Recueil de Plantes copies d’après nature par de Saint-Aubin, Dessinateur du Roi Louis XV, 1735-1785*. As a teenager, Charles-Germain grew smitten with botany and nature, and began what would be the life-long project of life-drawings and paintings from nature. These drawings were not merely a leisure activity or training in becoming a textile designer but were the source of Charles-Germain’s influence for hundreds, if not thousands, of embroidery designs. While the relationship between his botanical drawings and designs would be worth exploring, there are very few examples that survive, either as sketches or embroidered garments, which scholars can identify with certainty as his.

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50 Ibid., 12.
51 Ibid.
52 Charles-Germain’s botanical drawings serve as the key influence for his embroidery designs. However, during this century botanical drawings weren’t only popular in terms of designing embroidery, but was an interest amongst scientists, artists, art collectors and other learned individuals. Throughout the eighteenth century were many scientific discoveries, one of which included a focus on identifying and depicting the thousands of flora specimens. Many explorations were performed by scientists with artists in tow, touring exotic locales with the hopes to record all of these species as seen in nature and often life size. Botanical drawings were collected by connoisseurs, having extreme popularity in personal collections and curiosity cabinets.
Royal Appointment

It is easy to characterize the adult life and career of Charles-Germain as solidly planted within the “luxury trades which serviced the cultural needs of the social and political elite in the last half-century of the ancien régime.” Because of his dedication to his trade and the ties his family built upon for decades, Charles-Germain was awarded with one of the highest honors—being appointed as the marchand des dentelles de la reine, for which he became regarded as dessinateur du roi. This title came with prestige, status, a yearly salary, great renown and reputation and perhaps most importantly, access to the royal court. By being granted this access, Charles-Germain was able to establish more patrons, from within the court at Versailles and other countries.

As the principal embroidery designer of his day, Charles-Germain benefitted greatly from government patronage. Of all of his royal patrons, he seems to have enjoyed a good personal relationship with the Marquise de Pompadour. The Marquise was a major patron of the arts and pursued artistic study as an amateur. She purchased a myriad of luxury goods with her salary allotted by Louis XV, including Charles-Germain’s embroidered works. The Marquise herself was regarded as an excellent gem carver, was considered essential in the planning of buildings and palaces and lastly, was a leisurely embroiderer herself. Additionally, Charles-Germain and the Marquise worked on a drawing together that has been published in Receueil de plantes. At the bottom of a page in this collection, Charles-Germain wrote: “Madame la Marquise de Pompadour a travaillé à ce bouquet en mil sept cent cinquante sept,” hinting that he and

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53 Jones, The Saint-Aubin Livre, 12.
54 Melissa Hyde has written extensively about Madame de Pompadour and her involvement in the arts, both as a patron and as a creator. To learn more about her skills in the arts, sense of self-fashioning and patronage, refer to Melissa Hyde’s book Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics; Colin Jones’ “The Fabrication of Madame de Pompadour: The Art and Artifice of the Leading Mistress of Louis XV;” and, “Framing Ambition: The Interior Politics of Madame de Pompadour,” by Katie Scott.
Pompadour worked on one drawing together.\textsuperscript{55} A few pages later, a note which is believed to have been written by engraver Pierre-Antoine Tardieu (1874-1969), relates that the Marquise de Pompadour greatly admired Charles-Germain, giving “him frequent gifts of furniture, Japanese porcelain and, on one occasion, Chinese inks,” while he reciprocated with gestures of artistic dedication and guidance.\textsuperscript{56} In spite of this apparent camaraderie, Charles-Germain had his opinions about the Marquise, as expressed in the \textit{Livre des caricatures}, where she was represented unfavorably. Moreover, it has been noted that the Marquise’s obituary was inscribed in verse by Charles-Germain, being translated as:

\begin{verbatim}
Here lies d’Etiolle Pompadour
The flower, the ornament of the court,
Unfaithful wife and accomplished mistress
Whom both Marriage and Love mourn.
Whatever envy may say
Marriage and Love are not wrong
The first to mourn her life
The second to mourn her death.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{verbatim}

As an inhabitant of Paris who derived a large part of his income from Versailles, “he would have been among the successful artists, artisans and dealers who were in touch with both street rumor and court gossip, who benefited personally but were also from time to time disappointed, even appalled, at government policies, for some of which Charles-Germain, like many of his contemporaries, held the Marquise responsible.”\textsuperscript{58} In considering the many engravings by the Saint-Aubin family featured in the \textit{Livre de caricatures}, the Marquise, especially when represented by Charles-Germain, were hardly vicious but very critical.

Charles-Germain, though in good graces at court and his workmanship held in high esteem, did not have such a friendly relationship with Louis XV or Maria Leszczyńska, or any

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 188.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 190.
other members of the aristocracy other than the Marquise. There is however, one drawing in the Saint-Aubin’s *Livre de carictures* entitled, *Les talens du jour*, by Charles-Germain that alludes to a relationship between Louis XV and the art of embroidery. *Les talens du jour*, dated 1758 (fig. 12) depicts a statue of Cupid on a pedestal in a trelliswork niche. Inscribed on the pedestal are the words “*les talens du jour*”—referring to the talents, accomplishments or gifts of the day.⁵⁹ At the ground below is a fictive scroll, quoting from Voltaire: “Qui que tu sois, Voicy ton Maître: Il le fut, il l’est, ou doit l’être,” roughly translating to: The Master, of course, is Love.

Charles-Germain’s Cupid has come alive; his body is in flesh tones instead of marble. His quiver is full of arrows resembling a skein of threads used by embroiderers. Instead of holding the customary arrow in one hand, the Cupid brandishes a needle, or perhaps a crochet hook—a tool that is used for the chain stitch done on the tambour.⁶⁰ In Cupid’s other hand is a tambour being handed down to an enthusiastic courtier, or most likely the king himself.⁶¹ Strewn about below this male figure are the attributes of the arts and sciences: a globe, architect dividers, a musical score and an artist’s palette—as well as a sword and military standard.⁶² On the other side of the statue sits a woman in pink, smiling while embroidering on a lap-top tambour. Though she also has not been identified within the composition, within the context of the *Livre de caricatures*, it is easy to identify her as the king’s mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour.

While this drawing has been argued to be a criticism of Louis XV’s supposed effeminization by Pompadour and the strong hand the Marquise had in the French government; it can be interpreted as Charles-Germain using his expertise to construct an image of the key individuals upon whom

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⁵⁹ Juliet Carey, *The King and His Embroiderer In The Saint-Aubin Livre De Caricatures: Drawing Satire in Eighteenth century Paris* (England, Voltaire Foundation, 2012), 261. ⁶⁰ Ibid., 263. ⁶¹ Ibid. The characterization is rather ambiguous. The blue coat is calls to mind many portraits of Louis XV, in which he wears a blue velvet coat. Furthermore, the inscription and presence of the Marquise de Pompadour help to support this. ⁶² Ibid.
he relied for patronage. Jones and Carey concur that Louis XV, amongst many other male nobles, often embroidered leisurely, though would not have been depicted in front of their tambour, much like the Marquise. Charles-Germain’s drawing serves as commentary shared by the majority of France on the state of Louis XV and Pompadour’s relationship while simultaneously linking his key patrons to his trade and attesting to the nobility of the art form.

**L’art du Brodeur**

Charles-Germain’s book, *L’art du Brodeur*, was groundbreaking in the eighteenth century. Destined to serve as a guide for professional embroiderers, this text became one of the most important sources on eighteenth-century needlework. This treatise provides a wealth of information that otherwise, over the years, has become extremely difficult to locate. Charles-Germain discusses many topics in *L’art du Brodeur* providing the reader with his knowledge in terms of the history of embroidery; informative descriptions of the embroiderer’s trade, such as precise detailing of stitching techniques; methods of assembling and aspects of design; caring for and cleaning embroidered objects; and firsthand information on eighteenth-century working conditions, social values and aesthetics, including the state of embroidery trades in Paris (discussed in chapter three) amongst many other topics. This treatise has become an irreplaceable source of knowledge for the modern textile scholar, costume or art historian and student of the eighteenth century.

*L’art du Brodeur*, was an essay written and illustrated in 1769 by Charles-Germain originally entitled *La Description de L’art du Brodeur* (The Description of the Art of the Embroiderer). This essay was then submitted to the Royal Academy of Science in his efforts to declare the art of embroidery to be considered a higher art form. Charles-Germain’s essay was

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63 Ibid.
received well by academy jurors Messieurs Duhamel and Jeaurat who had been appointed to 
examine this submission. The academy concluded as follows:

All that concerns this Art [of Embroidery] appeared to be explained all the clearer 
in as much as this Work was accompanied by beautiful Illustrations drawn by M. 
de Saint-Aubin himself. M. de Saint-Aubin had agreed to accept the invitation 
that the Academy had extended to those who are completely knowledgeable of an 
Art, to cooperate with it in connection with an Histoire des Arts on which it is 
working. The Description which M. de Saint-Aubin had given of L’art du 
Brodeur was judged worthy of inclusion. In witness whereof I have signed the 
present Certificate.\textsuperscript{64}

This approval lead to the publishing of L’art du Brodeur, which not only discusses materials and 
tools and offers advice, but provides the first, yet brief, written history of embroidery as told by 
Charles-Germain, which in recent studies has been heavily scrutinized. Charles-Germain 
submitted his humble pamphlet to the Royal Academy of Science as a submission for an on-
going project to ensure French cultural and intellectual hegemony across the arts and sciences. 
Because his pamphlet was held in such high acclaim, he was awarded with the honors of writing 
his manual to be published as part of a series of seventy-two treatises on different luxury 
products that was overseen by the Academy of Science.

Almost every scholarly book that discusses the history of embroidery makes a reference 
to Charles-Germain’s career and designs, his treatise or his engravings that accompany the text. 
The LACMA with the assistance of historian Nikki Scheuer, made L’art du Brodeur more 
accessible to scholars and students alike; who over the course of two years in the early 1980s 
translated the text and put the original engravings in the proper order.\textsuperscript{65} Through an analysis of 
the text, Scheuer noticed capitalization used to indicate the importance of the guild systems in 
the eighteenth century, pointing to the precise and highly specialized nature of the work

\textsuperscript{64} Saint-Aubin, L’art du Brodeur, 14. Extract from the Registers of the Royal Academy, dated July 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1769.
\textsuperscript{65} Scheuer and the LACMA found the engravings that correspond with Charles-Germain’s text, were mistakenly 
placed out of order by the printer in 1770 and were never corrected, until over two centuries later.
performed by members of different professions, as is discussed below. Reflected in the translation is Charles-Germain’s attention to gender when describing various embroidery tasks. Shifting between masculine and feminine was indicative of the types of embroidery undertaken by the different genders and helps to correct the relatively recent, but widespread notion that embroidery was a woman’s job or pastime. This is in large part due to a woman’s education throughout the eighteenth century being based on their competency in decorative needlework, a topic that will be discussed further in chapter three.\(^\text{66}\) However, during the eighteenth century and earlier, only men would have been master embroiderers, often due to the great physical strength that was required to stretch embroidery frames, seen in Charles-Germain’s engraving in (fig. 13), or to embroider large items such as furniture.\(^\text{67}\)

To summarize, Charles-Germain first claims that books on religion or history show embroidery to be more ancient than painting, one way in which he establishes his argument that embroidery is a fine art, and it had its first beginnings in Asia. The Phrygians were known to excel at embroidery—at one point embroidery was referred to as *phyrgies*—while the Greeks helped to cultivate the art form, as recorded in some of their sumptuary laws. Like many other art forms, embroidery was passed from the Greeks to Romans, and Romans to early modern Europeans.\(^\text{68}\) Charles-Germain also notes that the art of painting and sculpture helped to provide the art of embroidery with greater mastery of forms and shading of colors, further attesting to his desires on raising the art form. Although no surviving examples of Charles-Germain’s embroidery work have been found, in the extant examples of eighteenth-century embroidery, one

\(^{66}\) For more on women’s education, refer to Roszika Parker’s *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* or Judith Tyner’s *Stitching the World: Embroidered Maps and Women’s Geographical Education.*
\(^{67}\) Saint-Aubin, *L’art du Brodeur,* 11. Women, on the other hand, would have stuck to embroidering women’s dresses or appliqué work, or would have become seamstresses. The gendering of embroidery and the luxury trades is a theme throughout this thesis, more prominently discussed in chapter three. Chapter three discusses the gendering of the luxury guilds, the exclusion of women within these corporations as well as the small niche they were able to carve out for themselves as seamstresses.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
can examine the treatment of thread and subtle gradations of color, as depicted in (fig. 14). In this waistcoat floral motifs are scattered along the chest and stomach, with a most extraordinary depiction of a pastoral scene on the pocket and pocket flaps. The embroiderer(s) of this waistcoat demonstrates mastery of forms, shading and color, as represented by the abundant fruits, trees and bulls, with a simple needle and thread on silk.

Following the short section on the history of embroidery is the definition of embroidery and a detailed explanation of what an embroidery designer does, as well as what exactly his job entails. First and foremost, Charles-Germain defines embroidery as “the art of adding the representation of such motifs as one chooses—flat or in relief, in gold, silver, or color—to the surface of a finished cloth.”\textsuperscript{69} He goes on to discuss the popularity of embroidery in the eighteenth century, the luxuriousness and the over-abundance that came with it. Textile manufacturers in Lyon helped to introduce \textit{paillettes} and \textit{spangles}, or what we would know today as sequins, to enrich the colors of embroidery work. They produced rich fabrics costing six-hundred francs an \textit{aune} (equating to approximately 1.188 meters) for men’s suits; a steep sum that few could afford.\textsuperscript{70} Fabrics were not the only costly investment, but so were materials. As Charles-Germain claims, you could embroider with almost any material. Most popular were gold, furs, pearls, mother-of-pearl, cut marcasite, precious and semi-precious stones, even diamonds. However, he claims, the use of these extravagant materials was only impressive if placed in the right area. “Distributed with taste,” he claims, “they add to the overall effect: cadence in the shapes; the correct juxtaposition of large to small; of strong to weak; of soft to brightly colored; especially of blank space and repose—in a word, a selected imitation of Nature and the principles common to all the Arts.”\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 17. As per Charles-Germain’s words “They have just produced fabrics costing six hundred francs the \textit{aune} for men’s suits, and this excessive price does not frighten people anymore.”
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
Along with the definition of his trade, Charles-Germain discusses the element of design in embroidery. He argues a direct relationship between the two, emphasizing that “Design is the basis and foundation of Embroidery.” Design determines shape and placement, provides harmony, regulates proportions while bringing merit to the work by the economy through the opposition or blending of methods of embroidery. But to be successful, Charles-Germain states the designer needs to be knowledgeable about both the details and difficulties of embroidery, so they can be aware of the possibilities while executing and make a successful design. It would also be useful for embroiderers to understand the basic elements of design, so the stitching is precise, and designs do not become muddled. Emphasizing this point once more, Charles-Germain asserts that, “the Design is the spirit of the Embroidery.”

Embroidery had of course been written about before 1770, however, there was no in-depth history and certainly no treatise written about it. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, several treatises in the luxury trades and fine arts had been published. One of the most influential was the Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing, written and published in 1688 by John Stalker and George Parker. Although there is no evidence that this book belonged in Charles-Germain’s library, it is the one major treatise written about a luxury trade within the century and quite possibly could have served as an influence. The Treatise on Japaning served as an informative text on materials, tools and techniques required for the trade, quite similar to Charles-Germain’s treatise. In the century following L’art du Brodeur, came a slew of treatises in the luxury trades, including: Treatise on the Art of Weaving by John Murphy from 1842; A Treatise on Crochet and Knitting by Anna Grayson Ford from 1899; and lastly, the next major

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 This text was written by Englishmen John Stalker and George Parker. I have not been able to locate a copy in the French language. My evidence to support this idea lies on extreme popularity of lacquer—and the desire to imitate true Japanese lacquer—throughout the eighteenth century. It may be far-fetched, but an artisan such as Charles-Germain would certainly stay up-to-date on all things of luxury trade.
embroidery treatise to be published entitled, *A Treatise on Embroidery* by Heminway and Sons in 1909. One text produced in the eighteenth century parallel to Charles-Germain’s treatise is Diderot’s *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. The original *Encyclopédie* is comprised of seven volumes and was published in France between 1751 and 1772 and had many contributors such as Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717-1783) and various writers called the *Encyclopédistes*. This text was the first general encyclopedia that described such topics as the mechanical arts, in which many of the luxury trades were included, such as embroidery. While Diderot does not go into as much depth about embroidery and is not nearly as educated in the trade as Charles-Germain, Diderot too, makes the claim that embroidery is an established art form.\(^75\)

The majority of this treatise examines the correct way to create design, prepare materials, and the techniques for executing approximately two dozen stitches, all of which is accompanied by illustrations by Charles-Germain. Topics include preparation for embroidery, stretching the frame, materials, tools and gadgets, and an extensive section on stitches, which provides a history of the stitch, how to execute the stitch, the best materials to use for the stitch and some tips and tricks for successfully creating the distinct stitches. These sections are imperative to understanding the art of embroidery and the art of dress in the eighteenth century and are closely examined in the next chapter. Chapter two revisits *L’art du Brodeur* in order to explain stitches and techniques in detail as described by Charles-Germain, followed by a discussion and examples of eighteenth-century men’s dress. Moreover, I explore the evolution of clothing throughout the reign of Louis XV, their indicators of status and rules of etiquette as to be expected in the court of Versailles.

\(^75\) The volume that encompasses the section of embroidery was published in 1763, six years before Charles-Germain submitted his treatise to the Royal Academy of Science. While Charles-Germain was certainly the authority on embroidery, it is safe to assume the *Encyclopédie* helped to foster these ideas. Moreover, the similarities in image plates between the two texts is further proof of influence.
CHAPTER TWO

The Art of Appearances: Embellishments, Court Dress and Etiquette

“...comfort was neither understood nor expected but even the most ordinary objects of everyday use were required to be artistic.”  
Max von Boehn

“The work of fashion is an art. Darling, triumphant art, which, in this century, has received honors and distinctions. This art enters into the palace of kings, where it receives a flattering welcome.”

Louis-Sébastien Mercier

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the art of tailoring, which in the simplest of terms can be defined as cutting and sewing, lost its prestige and was supplanted by embroidery. This shift deemphasized a garment’s structure and brought attention to its surface. Professional embroidery in the eighteenth century satisfied this popular demand for surface embellishments, all the while attaining a new standard of beauty and the practice of artful embroidery. Moreover, embroidery acquired a heightened level of importance attained by the traditional fine arts supported by the crown, such as painting and sculpture. Conducive to further progress in the art

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78 Ibid.
of embroidery were new stitches and techniques, a wider range of quality fabrics and thread colors as well as increasingly elaborate pattern designs. With these new techniques and materials came the elevation of the practice of embroidery, as it was being recognized as a high-art from throughout the century. As a result, there was an increased level of professionalism amongst designers and embroiders due to the high demand of embroidered goods by the elite, especially those belonging to the court of Louis XV. Embroidered works of this period are distinguished by their great expressiveness, which resulted in part from an inventive use of everyday-turned-luxury goods, especially in clothing and accessories, such as stockings or stomachers. Dress and costume from the eighteenth century, particularly from France, had its own set of unique qualities from other European courts. Throughout the course of the century, French garments made frequent changes in style, beginning with the death of Louis XIV to the end of the French Revolution (circa 1789-1795). Fashion in the eighteenth century, however, was not merely a basis for dictating dress; it also served multiple functions, including conveying crucial signs of status, wealth and identity. During the reign of Louis XV, two major styles, the Rococo and Neoclassicism, helped influence sartorial trends, encouraging embroiderers to use materials in inventive ways. Fashion, when paired with the luxurious embroideries of the century and proper etiquette, helped to distinguish social class, particularly the upper classes from the rising middle class that sought to imitate elites. Thus, fashion worked in conjunction with proper corporeal movement and etiquette to characterize aristocrats.

Aileen Ribeiro notes that most people immediately think of Paris and the courts of Versailles when considering eighteenth-century dress, often forgetting both England and Italy who were considered to be leaders in fashion in their own right. By the turn of the century there

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was already an assumed supremacy in French style and taste, which was being reflected at the
court of Versailles, as well as courts all across Europe. This chapter illustrates how France
became the style leader during the court of Louis XIV and maintained that status throughout the
1700s under Louis XV’s reign, in spite of changing trends and attempts to lower the costs spent
on clothing; the timeline of men’s fashion throughout the century; as well as the true mark of the
elite—proper etiquette. I situate Charles-Germain and his treatise *L’art du Brodeur* in the context
of these subjects in order to address the greater professionalism of embroidery, the skill required,
and technical difficulty involved, as well as the relationship of embroidery to high fashion at
court. Charles-Germain’s embroidered work and treatise attributes these changes in trends to the
profession of embroidery and the connection to dress produced in France because of his skill in
the trade and his position to the French court. His expertise in his profession awarded him the
attention of the court, aiding in elevating the art of embroidery, and, as a result, his designs had a
direct impact on the dress worn by French courtiers as well as the wealthy elites all over Europe.
This chapter further helps to establish Charles-Germain’s claims on the art of embroidery by
evaluating popular stitches and their techniques, which were then applied to basic garments to
transform its wearer to convey courtly ideals of elegance, finery and luxury. The chapter comes
to an end with a discussion on court etiquette, which when paired with embroidered dress
provides an idea of the polite society of Louis XV’s Versailles.

Men’s clothing is often rarely discussed in relation to women’s fashions; nonetheless it
underwent major shifts in style, material, and construction. In previous decades men’s fashion
was considered to be relatively drab, and there were very few significant changes in styles of
dress. Developing under Louis XIV and sustained under the reign of Louis XV, men began to
embrace new colors, textures and embellishments in their wardrobe, dressing as “flamboyantly”
as women. Dress has played an essential role in Western society and many other cultures well
before the eighteenth century. However, during this period dress was vital in the everyday life of the elite; taking so much precedence that many individuals emptied their wallets to create an appearance worthy of their status and position in the court. The very first step in creating the appearance for the nobleman is designing a suit, or a *habit habillé*. For wealthy clientele, the opportunity to commission an elite embroidery designer, such as Charles-Germain, to design a custom piece, such as the custom designs shown (fig. 15) for Louis XV and the dauphin’s marriage, was an immense privilege of extraordinary cost. For those who had a smaller budget for clothing, there was the option to order designs out of a catalogue to then be customized for the wearer, for instance, samplers such as those in (fig. 16-18). If choosing from one of these three examples, the customer would have had options for customizations such as a different fabric color for the waistcoat (fig. 16) and jacket (fig. 17 & 18) and preference for materials.

For those in the middling sort—that is, those who had money but not as much of it or lacked royal connections—one could order pre-embroidered pieces (I will refer to as appliqués), from a specialty shop or embroidery workshops to then be sewn onto clothing. As pictured in Jean La Pautre’s *La boutique du brodeur* (fig. 19), these specialty shops would have a vast array of options, from pre-embroidered fabric that was ready for purchase, custom-ordered dress, or appliqués. For those in the low and working classes, clothes were typically hand-me-downs or consignment clothes from the upper class, stripped bare of any embroidery or embellishment.80 In the case of an upper-class client, after the embroidery pattern was set, both the design and fabric would be sent to an embroiderer to be prepped. Great designers, such as Charles-Germain, had a large clientele making it difficult for him to embroider all the commissions himself.

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80 During the eighteenth century, women in low-income homes were expected to have sewing skills; these skills were often the most basic to mend and repair fabrics—not to adorn. Although women had the tools to embellish, they could neither afford materials, nor had the permissions to wear embroidered dress. Those belonging to the lower classes could not wear embroidered dress, even on the off chance they could afford it due to sumptuary law. In short, sumptuary laws were established in the attempt to regulate consumption. These laws reinforce social hierarchies and morals based on an individual’s social rank, permitting clothing, food and luxury items.
Therefore the materials and design, such as the jacket design in (fig. 20), would be sent to an embroidery workshop where it would be worked on by two to three stitchers, accompanied by extensive instructions on technique and materials. Often times, the embroidery techniques determined the choice of foundation or vice versa, which was typically be discussed between designer and client.

In his treatise, Charles-Germain discusses extensively the preparation for embroidery, what to expect, possible problems, and of course, the tips and tricks he learned from the trade. To summarize his process of preparation, when an embroiderer is being commissioned to embroider clothing or furniture, he will first get the measurements for the article from the designer, upholsterer, or whoever designed the embroidery, along with a simple line or color drawing of the item and any further instruction. When these drawings have been approved by the customer the embroiderer traces them on oiled or transparent paper, then referred to as papier de serpente. The transfers are then backed with another paper called grand-raisin and both are pricked and pounced, as seen in the bottom left panel in Alessandro Paganino’s Libro quarto (fig. 21).81 After the design has been adequately transferred to the fabric by this method, the design is carefully removed and, if need be, the process is repeated on the other sections of the fabric until the entire design is transposed onto the fabric.

After the pouncing has been completed an embroiderer follows the outline of these marks as exactly as possible with a quill or paintbrush dipped into black or blue India ink, as illustrated in the bottom right panel of (fig. 21). Charles-Germain notes this very crucial step requires a

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81 The prick and pounce technique is an old transfer method for embroidery that is no longer used in today’s practice. The embroidery design, drawn on paper, was pricked along the outlines and then pinned to the fabric for embroidery. As illustrated in the bottom left panel of (fig. 21), powdered soot, charcoal or colored chalks were then brushed over the pattern and pushed (pounced) into the small holes on the transfer paper. The paper was then removed, leaving behind a faint pattern the embroiderer could use as a guideline. For other sources on the prick and pounce technique, refer to Charles-Germain’s treatise, L’art du Brodeur, 1770; and, Judith Tyner’s Stitching The World: Embroidered Maps and Women’s Geographical Education, 2015.
steady hand—for these reinforcement lines need to be clear enough to follow, but as thin as possible to be able to create the slightest of details with thread and needle. “The perfection of these results,” Charles-Germain writes, “depends a great deal on how well this step is executed.” Lastly, the fabric is sprinkled with fine bread crumbs, absorbing the excess charcoal or soot, without damaging the fabric. This method of transferring and preparation is the most common, however in some instances, such as the incorporation of a large amount of gold or many diverse colors, the design can be transferred onto green transparent paper and attached to the fabric with small stitches that will hide under the finished design. This process allows the embroiderer to get a clearer view of the design, can help support the added weight of gold thread and protect delicate fabrics. What remains of the paper is almost entirely cut away by needle holes and can be easily torn away. Following the prick and pounce, the embroiderer traces over the pounce with ink or chalk, depending on the fabric.

The next important step when preparing for embroidery is to stretch the material, especially when working with articles that are contoured, such as saddlecloths, men’s suits and church ornaments. Preparing and stretching the frame is the most dangerous step of embroidering. Charles-Germain explains the process, claiming it takes both experience and great care to place properly the fabric without damaging it and without injuring oneself. This first step in preparing the fabric is crucial for ensuring the quality of the final product, so much so that Charles-Germain encourages the masters to stretch the material, rather than apprentices or

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82 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Art of the Embroiderer by Charles Germain De Saint-Aubin, Designer to the King, 1770* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983), 20.
83 Ibid., 21.
84 Ibid., 21.
women. Not only is it essential for the fabric to lay properly, for if the tension is not perfect the whole embroidery when finished will be puckered and therefore spoiled, but it also requires immense strength. Workers have to be careful, however, for if the fabric is too delicate and is pulled too tight, it can easily tear.

Also needing preparation are the embroiderers themselves. Several people can work at one frame at a time—typically only two or three workers depending on the garment and size of the frame. As shown in an engraving from *L’art du Brodeur* (fig. 22), embroiderers were to sit with their dominant hand on top of the fabric and the other hand below to pull and push back the needle. Charles-Germain recommends that embroiderers sit on a chair in proportion to his or her size and the tightened frame. This position lessens the strain on the workers’ backs and eyes, especially after working for long hours, and makes the job more efficient. Some of the major supplies needed are up to the embroiderers to supply, such as their own needles, thimbles and scissors. However, Masters provide the necessary furnishings: spindles, bobbins, containers for trimmings, candlesticks, heat, water and all materials to be used.

The second half of the treatise is dedicated to the different kinds of embroidery, some of which are pictured in *L’art du brodeur* (fig. 23-24). Charles-Germain explains, one embroiders in: *ronde-bosse* (embossed or high relief); in *bas-relief* (low relief); in *or nué* (shaded gold); in *passé* (satin stitch); in *passé-épargné* (modified satin-stitch); in *guipure* (gold thread over shaped vellum sections); in *Broderie de rapport* (rapport embroidery); in *couchure* (couching); in *gaufure* (waffle pattern embroidery); in *satiné* (gold thread embroidery); in *paillettes* (sequins);

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86 In the eighteenth century women were not able to own their own workshops but could nonetheless be a master in this trade. This discrepancy meant women could not design embroideries but could only stitch. For more information on guilds and gender, please refer to chapter three.


88 Ibid., 24. The following chapter will discuss luxury guilds and the hierarchy within these trades, however, the mentioning of master’s requires a brief explanation of how trades operated. In short, a Master of a workshop would take-on apprentices to teach them the fundamentals of a particular trade. This relationship between Master and apprentice was a sort of transaction—the Master did not pay the apprentice, other than supplying all necessary materials, lodging and food. In return, the Master got a few years of free labor.
in *taillure* (appliqué work); in *jais* (tiny glass tubes); in *soie* (thick thread); in *chenille* (chenille thread); in *laine* (wool); in *tapisserie* (needlework on canvas); in *chaînette* (chain stitch); in *Broderie de Marseille* (embroidery of Marseille); in *noeuds* (knots); and in *blanc* (white work).  

Along with these twenty-one types of embroidery are dozens of techniques and stitches, as well as the incorporation of metal elements and beads, which became an established practice among professional embroiderers by the sixteenth century. Charles-Germain provides a very thorough description of each stitch, including technique, difficulty and in some instances, examples of what sorts of objects one would see these stitches executed on and some accompanying illustrations. To understand his premise of considering embroidery as a high-art form in the eighteenth century, which my extensive research supports, it is necessary to discuss some essential stitches, particularly those that are most frequently seen in the surviving examples of dress. These embroidery techniques when applied to a basic garment help to transform its wearer to convey courtly ideals of elegance, finery and luxury. Only those belonging to the upper classes, specifically those within the court of Louis XV or other European courts, could afford to purchase such luxurious garments. No expense was spared by the elite; they purchased the best silks, velvets and brocades, adorned with gold and silver thread and occasionally gemstones or *pailettes* and *frisures*. Not only did these embroidered garments visibly elevate the status of the wearer, but also called for an increased appreciation for embroidery and its desire as an art form.

The first type of embroidery I examine is the satin stitch, one of the most utilized and versatile stitches used throughout the eighteenth-century. For example, represented in (fig. 25) is a waistcoat in which the embroiderer only used the satin stitch to depict an array of floral motifs. To ensure stability for the satin stitch, thread must cover the underside of the fabric as well as the surface of the whole design. Additional trimmings can be utilized with the satin stitch technique,

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89 Ibid., 16.
in which paillettes and crimped gold wire (*frisures*) are attached. Charles-Germain provides advice for which fabrics work best with this technique and those that require an additional step. Simple fabrics such as cotton or linen are best for the satin stitch, as they do not compete with the thread. However, these fabrics were not commonly utilized under the reign of Louis XV; typically men’s suits were made from velvet or brocade and therefore required either vellum or paper to rest between the fabric and stitches. The use of vellum or paper gives an evenness and smoothness to the stitch, while preventing the stitches from almost sinking into the fabric.

As to be discussed in the following section, another popular type of embroidery was *rapport*. *Rapport* embroidery refers to all types of embroidery that is made in separate parts on small embroidery frames. Typically, this type of embroidery refers exclusively to the borders of men’s suits, such as the petals at the top of the page in (fig. 23), hems of skirts, or other smaller pieces of embroidery. Workshops and embroiderers would keep this type of embroidery on hand in their shops, ready to be applied to any background or suit a customer has. When the embroidery is complete, it is cut away from its excess base material, such as taffeta or toile, and weighed to determine its worth and retail value. Charles-Germain states this type of embroidery can sell for eighteen to thirty-six livres per ounce, depending on the materials used. With this type of embroidery, what would take a month to be custom made can be done in approximately two working days and can be applied to any fabric.

One of the most popular stitches both professionally and domestically in the eighteenth century is the chain stitch. Much like the satin stitch, the chain stitch was incredibly versatile,

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90 Ibid.
91 Simple fabrics such as cotton and linen were obtainable during the middle of the eighteenth century, however they were not commonly used by the elite. Fabrics such as these grew in popularity towards the end of the century under the reign of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, when there was a preference for simple “day” wear so to speak, that is, clothing to be worn when not attending court functions and performing courtly duties.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., 38.
making up every stitch of the dress panel represented in (fig. 26). During the 1700s, this stitch was also often referred to as tambour embroidery due to the type of embroidery frame used for this type of stitch. Charles-Germain explains circa 1759 a new method for the chain stitch was imported from China, which was just as accurate and six times faster than traditional European methods. However, recent scholarship has discovered that Charles-Germain was indeed mistaken; this tool and technique are from India, in which it has a very long history.\(^5\) What now best resembles a modern-day crochet or latch hook was used in this new method of chain stitching, with an added tip on the edge to better pierce the fabric.\(^6\) This technique, even with the aid of this tool, is tricky and requires mastery to not strip your thread of gold or luster.

Each of these different types of stitches has their own unique techniques, tools and materials. These three types of stitches were widely utilized on court dress, as reflected in the many garments for discussion. In the following section, the extraordinary cost of these court garments was in part due to the materials (textiles, gold thread, gems) as well as the immense amount of time and mastery required by the embroiderer to stitch popular designs of the period. To be a successful embroiderer or designer, the skill required a finesse that took years to develop, much like that of an artist. Charles-Germain’s efforts in *L’art du Brodeur* was a call for an increased appreciation for embroidery and its desire to be regarded on equal terms with painting, sculpture and the other fine arts. One way in which this was done, is by the extreme technicality of the stitches and understanding of the materials, much like a fine artist would need to have technical skill (painting or chiseling technique) and knowledge of their materials (oil paint, buon fresco, marble). Most importantly, to be a successful fine artist or embroiderer, one

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\(^5\) Ibid. The chain stitch itself dates back between the 5\(^{th}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) centuries BCE, with the earliest archaeological evidence dating from 1100 BCE in China. This new technique, Nikki Scheuer and Edward Maeder have found, is actually imported from India. Other scholarship that supports this claim can be found in *Art of Embroidery: History of Style and Technique* by Lanto Synge; and, the exhibition catalogue *Art of the Embroiderer.*

\(^6\) Ibid.
would need to show mastery in both color and design. Skill in draftsmanship would have been required, as well as a thorough understanding of three-dimensional forms. Both artists and embroiderers would need to be competent in color theory, to depict color gradations adequately to assist in modeling figures and motifs. This discussion of the technicalities of stitches helps to prove that the same mastery of fundamentals are necessary for both artists and embroiderers, showing their close relationship as fine art practices.

While the audience for *L’art du Brodeur* would have certainly been targeted towards aspiring embroiderers and perhaps even masters, this treatise was a project that was meant to situate embroidery amongst the higher arts. Charles-Germain goes into a significant amount of detail in *L’art du Brodeur*, especially when explaining the different stitches being widely utilized in the eighteenth century, new innovations, materials and tools. The basis of his treatise was to persuade the Academy to elevate the status of embroidery and in turn, elevate the status of embroiderers and designers. By paying such close attention to these fine details and technicalities of each stitch, Charles-Germain was demonstrating the immense amount of skill, and above all, the artistry that goes into these stitches. In addition to these new stitches and methods were new influences and innovations embroiderers embraced when designing court dress.

**Influence, Innovation + Court Dress**

The raised and padded work seen in men’s dress in the seventeenth century fell out of favor under Louis XV’s reign, and was replaced by a preference instead for gold thread and stitches

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97 While no other court embroiderer or master has gone to such lengths as Charles-Germain to prove the artistry of their trade, there was another established designer who worked under the reign of Louis XV. Phillippe de Lasalle (1723-1804) primarily embroidered upholstery and other household goods or wall hangings. De Lasalle has extensive as a painter, first entering into an apprenticeship with Daniel Sarrabat (1666-1748). He completed his training in various Parisian workshops with two academic painters, François Boucher (1703-1770) and Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724-1806), followed by the Gobelins manufactory, a well-established tapestry factory. Due to his background and extensive training, it can be assumed de Lasalle shares Charles-Germain’s desire to elevate the embroidery trade.
that lightened the weight of the garment, as seen in (fig. 27). In the first half of the eighteenth century embroiderers heavily borrowed compositions or elements from the decorative panels of artists, such as Claude Audran III (1658-1734), Claude Gillot (1673-1722), Nicolas Pineau (1684-1752), Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and François Boucher (1703-1770). These plant and floral motifs influenced by these artists provided inexhaustible sources of inspiration throughout the century. Equally influential to embroiderers, designers and fashion trends was a new movement in art and style, commonly referred to as Rococo, but in its time referred to as the *goût moderne*. How the Rococo was expressed in France differs from how it was expressed in other European countries such as England or Germany; therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, I am referring exclusively to French ideals and expressions of the period. Recent scholarship by Melissa Lee Hyde and Katie Scott argue the history of the Rococo throughout the eighteenth century is a complex “mode of expression that encompassed and assimilated styles, and which functioned as a surprisingly effective means of resisting both authority—whether political, religious or artistic—and cultural norms of gender and class.”

As a reaction against the more formal, grandiose style from Louis XIV’s court, the Rococo is a style of art, architecture and decoration that originated in France in approximately 1720 under the regency period before Louis XV became of age. The regency consisted of a political repression, which, under the youthful reign of Louis XV was lifted, and was translated into the freedom and joy of the rococo form. Lightness, refinement and artifice are recurring characteristics and themes of rococo discourse, Scott claims “notions of rococo style were based

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98 Kosourova, *Art of the Embroiderer: Western European Embroidery*, 25. Raised and padded work as discussed above required many layers of stitches and gilt, making a garment weigh a considerable amount. By turning to flat, small stitches in gold, this helped in making the garments weigh less and provided more physical mobility.


100 Ibid., v.

101 Ibid., 8.
less on specific form and syntax and more on historical and social causes: the aristocratic wit and absolute pleasure it was said to embody.”

The French Rococo was ornamental and imagined, best distinguished by its elegant refinement and delicacy, the use of soft pastel colors and graceful curves.

In France, popular themes include scenes of love, nature, amorous encounters, light-hearted entertainment and fêtes galantes. Embroiderers adopted floral motifs and arabesques typically seen in French interior decoration and furniture for men’s dress, covering garments in bundles of flowers along jackets and scattering small flowers along waistcoats.

Embroidery trends were becoming increasingly ornamental, by which designers created combinations of floral designs and austere-shaped medallions, demonstrated in this court suit (fig. 28). This three-piece suit illustrates the grand and luxurious embellishments on garments that were worn in the first half of the century. Embroidery designs were a combination of ornamental and neatly arranged flowers, utilizing large amounts of gold and silver thread. This style however, was deemed as reminiscent of trends under Louis XVI’s reign and quickly fell out of favor in the last half of the century.

Heavily influencing the Rococo period and the next major movement, the neoclassical period, were French enlightenment principles and ideals. While both the rococo and neoclassicism movements are distinct from the enlightenment, both are absolutely related to it and its influence. Beginning in the late seventeenth and lasting until the early nineteenth century, this movement was made up of a group of philosophers, scientists and thinkers who advocated new ideas based on reason.

Recent scholarship argues that there have been many

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102 Ibid., 10.
103 Ibid., 17 & 20. For more information on the history of the rococo, recent criticisms and reconstruction of the period, refer to Rococo Echo, especially the work by Colin B. Bailey, Brigid von Preussen and Michael Yonan.
104 The fêtes galantes was a new genre invented by Jean Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). This genre depicted scenes of courtship and social gatherings, filled with elegantly dressed figures gathered in outdoor spaces, exchanging pleasantries.
105 Kosourova, Art of the Embroiderer: Western European Embroidery, 26.
enlightenments throughout the course of these three centuries; therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, my discussion relies solely on ideals from eighteenth-century France. Enlightenment principles greatly influenced eighteenth-century France, in which the period saw a decline in power of the absolute monarchies, the separation of church and state, and a rise in individualism and skepticism—which the French Revolution served as the inevitable consequence.\footnote{Darrin M. McMahon. *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12.}

Additionally, these enlightenment contributors debated issues such as the categorical differences between men and women, labor division between the sexes, what were deemed as acceptable female qualities and a general distaste for the guild corporations, which is reviewed in the following chapter.\footnote{Melissa Lee Hyde. *Making Up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 146-147.} With this rising movement came new ideas about art and style, replacing the old Rococo ideals of frivolity and elegant eroticism for an art that depicted enlightenment aesthetics and cultural values. Denis Diderot sought for a “nobler” art, calling for a return to order, and philosopher Voltaire criticized its frivolity.\footnote{Nadège Langbour. “Diderot as the Critique of Art and the Translation of Time and Place: From the Pictural Composition to the Literary Decomposition / Recomposition,” (*Studia Litterarum*3, 2018), 27.} Contributors of the Enlightenment often looked to Greece and Rome for models of morality and virtue, which this new style of neoclassicism—which was not given the term until the nineteenth century, as influenced by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768)—followed suit.\footnote{Albert Biome. *Art in an Age of Revolution, 1750-1800*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 60.} This new style developed approximately around 1760, with many of its leaders living in Rome.\footnote{Ibid., 61.} Amongst these leaders was a common interest in collecting antique objects, in which Rome was the prime location for antiquities, especially since the excavations of Herculaneum (beginning in 1737) and at Pompeii (beginning in 1748).\footnote{Ibid.} One of the firsts to encourage a revival of classical history painting was La Font de Saint-Yenne (1688-1771), an aristocratic French art critic. Saint-Yenne

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111 Ibid., 61.
112 Ibid.
encouraged artists to embrace the qualities associated with antiquity: simplicity, elegance, order and patriotic virtue. As reflected in art, architecture, and decoration of the eighteenth century, the neoclassical period is best characterized by a clarity of forms, sober colors, shallow space, strong horizontals and verticals and timelessness.

This new style was reflected not only in art and architecture from the last half of the century, but in fashion trends and embroidery designs. In the middle-to-late eighteenth century was a shift in men’s garments; Neoclassicist ideals softened male silhouettes to be more form-fitting and sleek, balanced the whimsical rhythm of the Rococo, making embroidery designs more restrained. Instead of an ostentatious display of gold thread, the elite preferred small plant and floral designs, as seen in this *habitat à la disposition* (fig. 29). This change in embellishment was in direct response from Enlightenment philosophers, particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who encouraged returning to nature to further explore its inexhaustible opportunities. Both the Rococo and Neoclassicism relied heavily on floral and botanical motifs, especially in embroidery and court dress, but embroiderers and designers used them in different ways. For instance, late eighteenth-century embroiderers and designers discovered the charming delicacy of forget-me-nots, cornflowers and daisies, amongst many other wild flowers, though on a much smaller scale compared to earlier centuries. These petite buds were mostly stitched on silk with silk thread performed in the satin and chain stitch, meant to imitate woven patterns. Due to this appeal for simplicity and refinement, embroidery for men’s waistcoats was typically arranged in borders near the edge and on pockets, like in the waistcoat in (fig. 30); while embroidery on women’s skirts was arranged freely, composed of

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113 Ibid.
114 Kosourova, *Art of the Embroiderer: Western European Embroidery*, 26..
115 Ibid., 28.
116 Kosourova, *Art of the Embroiderer: Western European Embroidery*, 25. This was at a time when Lyons’ silk production boomed, and woven fabrics began to be preferred over costly embroidered silks. Lyons silks started being designed by talented ornamentalists, making their fabrics exceptionally high in artistic and technical quality.
flowers, crop plants, leaves and herbs. Preference in fabrics changed as well, opting for lighter colored fabrics with rich textures, such as alternating dull and satin stripes, instead of the previously favored velvet and brocade. Typical of a man’s jacket was a ground of thin, lustrous stripes with embroidery along the front edges, skirt of the jacket, pocket flaps and even buttons. Skilled embroiderers were masters in their craft, applying satin and gold thread in a way to enhance its iridescent effects, as well as play with reflections and colors, as enhanced by motion. Both the Rococo and Neoclassical periods had a preference for floral motifs, however designers used them in drastically different ways. In the Rococo, floral embroidery was often depicted in a statuesque manner—stiff, neatly assembled and completed in metallic thread. Floral motifs and designs differed in the Neoclassical period due to a focus on depicting these buds as if they were seen in nature—colorful, and a large range of different flowers and sizes.

While the Rococo and Neoclassicism periods transformed style and trends throughout the eighteenth century, one thing that remained constant were the designers and embroiderers’ quest for innovation. One of the most notable innovations in embroidery during the period was the establishment of fashion shops offering samples of embroidered trimmings for men’s jackets. This practice gave the customer the ability to not only select his preferred ground fabric and embroidery materials (such as real or fake gold and silver thread), but also the motifs to be embellished on the entire garment. The ability to shop and hand select fabric and embroidery allowed for an endless array of jackets and waistcoats to be designed; velvet and tulle embroidered with metal thread and sequins, or smooth satin embroidered with fluffy chenille or

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117 Ibid.  
118 Ibid.  
119 Ibid. Embroiderers have been working with iridescent effects before Neoclassical design utilized these techniques, however its popularity was revived in the mid-eighteenth century. The simplicity found in Neoclassical design challenged embroidery designers to use materials in different ways to make ordinary silk thread appear more luxurious and eye-catching.  
120 Ibid., 29.
polychrome silks being the most common.\textsuperscript{121} Another popular trend seen in these customized jackets was the appeal for satin stitches. Satin stitches, if done well, can mimic the look of watercolor, creating subtle transitions of color, as illustrated in the pink roses and greenery on a waistcoat in (fig. 31). Other innovations that occurred were a range of new materials employed. These materials include colored glass gems of various size (transparent or opaque), sequins in many different sizes, and variegated foil.\textsuperscript{122} These materials were more affordable, unlike gold thread or authentic gem stones, and were equally adept at creating an illusion of luxury and prestige, making embroidered dress more attainable for those of lesser rank and status. Moreover, these new materials provided designers and embroiderers alike with new types and motifs for embellishment. All of these innovations and changes have been discussed in Charles-Germain’s treatise, and were included as a separate chapter in Denis Diderot’s (1713-1784) \textit{Encyclopédie}.\textsuperscript{123}

Although Diderot’s motivations behind his section on embroidery are not quite the same as Charles-Germain’s—Diderot’s section on the trade was simply informational—the \textit{Encyclopédie} offers support in elevating the status of embroidery. Similar to \textit{L’art du Brodeur}, the excerpt on embroidery from the \textit{Encyclopédie} discusses how to stretch fabric to prepare it for stitching, materials often used (frisures, paillettes in different sizes and shapes); as well as information on the tambour hoop, how to prep your fabric and how to perform the chain stitch, making no claim on the origins of the chain stitch.\textsuperscript{124} Accompanying this information about these new innovations are two engravings that illustrate stretching fabric, materials and the chain stitch.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 30. Diderot’s Encyclopedia was thought to be perfectly emblematic of the spirit of the enlightenment. Volume 29 had a whole chapter completely dedicated to embroidery and needlework and was repeatedly published in the eighteenth century as a major source of information.
\textsuperscript{124} Encyclopédie, vol. 2. The excerpt on embroidery serves as a sort of how-to guide on embroidery preparations and new innovations introduced to the trade in the eighteenth century.
technique. First published in 1763, the first plate (fig. 32) shows the tools of the professional embroiderer, including two rectangular embroidery frames, three wooden slats for the frames and a pin for fastening the slats, a needle, a thimble, a reel of thread, a tool for winding thread, various sequin shapes and samples of embroidery. The second plate (fig. 33) depicts the tools of the leisurely embroiderer, referred to as the tambour embroiderer, including the tambour hoops, the table-frame for the hoop, tambour hooks and a diagram for this “new” method of completing the chain stitch. Diderot’s information is not nearly as comprehensive as Charles-Germain’s treatise; however it plays a significant role in this discussion of greater professionalization of embroidery in eighteenth-century France. The elevation of embroidery is emphasized in the *Encyclopédie* by means of Diderot’s focus on the extraordinary skill required—from stretching fabric to knowing a wide range of stitches and materials—in this trade, but he does not promote ideas similar to those of Charles-Germain. Throughout the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot evaluates many trades and methods of art making, but he does not make a class distinction for where embroidery belongs.

With the elevation of embroidery came a new focus on dress, more specifically the appearance of the elite. Maeder argues that people believed that mere physical proximity to the monarch, whose power and supremacy was established through divine right, would elevate them to a higher social level. This idea was especially so in the turn of the century, lasting throughout the reign of Louis XV and into Louis XVI’s reign. Dress, more than ever before, became a symbol of social position and the premiere symbol of wealth, being a major concern for the middle and upper classes. The court of Louis XV was always expected to wear fancy court dress, including visitors to court, as expressed by the recent exhibition *Visitors to*

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125 For more in-depth information on materials and stitches, such as the chain stitch, please refer back to chapter one.
Versailles, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Palace of Versailles.\textsuperscript{127}

Wearing court dress was not only a symbol of respect to the king but was also how the elite fashioned themselves to show their place in society in relationship to the monarchy. Self-fashioning became a crucial aspect of courtly life, in which the luxury trades reaped the benefits. Understanding the meaning of particular elements in dress is vital in order to understand the way in which eighteenth-century people wished to see themselves and to be seen by others.\textsuperscript{128}

All over Europe in established courts, such as those in England and Italy, the elite purchased and adorned the fashionable French dress found at Louis XV’s court of Versailles. Those wealthy enough would even pay the extraordinary fees to import these fashions from Paris or would hire established Parisian designers to create something custom-made. But the extreme costliness of court dress led to the introduction of the court “uniform” for both men and women in England, under the reign of George III (1738-1820, r. 1760-1820).\textsuperscript{129} The introduction of the court uniform served as an attempt by the monarchy to significantly reduce the monthly allowances on dress for the court. Although other courts followed suit with this idea of the uniform, which was still adorned, such as in the portrait by Alexander Roslin in (fig. 34), though had the ability to be lightly embellished with less expensive materials, the court of Versailles remained opposed to the uniform. Established during Louis XIV’s reign, he required new court dress at every formal function, forcing many less-wealthy courtiers into bankruptcy, which remained the case under Louis XV’s rule.\textsuperscript{130} Embroidery designs and materials became so costly, new court dress even strained the wallets of the royal family.\textsuperscript{131} French court dress was so encrusted with heavy gold and silver embroidery, that, “it was described by one contemporary as

\textsuperscript{127} For more information on this exhibition, please refer to the catalogue, *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution.*
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
resembling a state bed on casters” such as the embroidered jacket covered in silver thread and metal *paillettes* and *frisures* in the court suit in (fig. 35), or the sample for a man’s jacket that utilized only gold *paillettes*, beads and thread.\(^{132}\)

It goes without saying that in the eighteenth century there were many people who could not afford such lavish every day goods, but there was certainly a large lower class and a middle class. Servants were often given clothing as part of their annual wage, consisting mostly of hand-me-downs stripped of any gold, silver, or otherwise pricy embellishments. Poor and middle-class people often thought that common sense and morality ought to be reflected in one’s dress rather than luxury and material splendor.\(^{133}\) Very few examples of middle-to-lower class dress from this period have survived. The absence of middle-to-lower class dress is because these garments were worn until they were mere scraps of fabric. The material was then cut up and repurposed, or in some cases, were handed down to friends and family that were even less fortunate.\(^{134}\)

During the eighteenth century, there were many ways to embellish garments and establish status. Lower-class people who worked for wealthy households wore hand-me-downs of old trends, stripped bare of any embellishment, while others less fortunate were stuck wearing worn out scraps of fabric. A wealthy person’s status was obvious, due to the richly brocaded silks and embroideries that adorned their garments. Added elements of richly brocaded fabric, silks from Lyon or delicate lace were used to elevate one’s dress. Although all upper-class individuals used these luxurious materials, those who were truly wealthy wore accessories and precious gems and jewels.\(^{135}\) These additional embellishments helped to separate those who were considered *most* wealthy, to those who were less wealthy, or perhaps wealthy only by association by friends and family. In short, it distinguished those who had money and the pretenders. Sumptuary laws

\(^{132}\) Ibid.
\(^{133}\) Ibid., 22.
\(^{134}\) Ibid.
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
dictated behaviors and codes dress. Due to these laws, embellishments worn by certain classes were dictated by these rules, although they were sometimes ignored.

In spite of the multitude of options to embellish and adorn one’s garment, the most utilized, and costly, was embroidery. Embroiderers’ samples were often well-known and plentiful within the century, many designs being made up for professional tailors or merciers.136 There were several ways to purchase embroidered clothing in eighteenth-century France, which I thoroughly explain in the next chapter. However, as a precursor to discussing the evolution of men’s costume and its luxuriousness, it is crucial to provide a brief overview. Elite customers had the option to order many pre-made embroidery designs, which was a fraction of the cost of custom embroidery, or to purchase a waistcoat already embroidered in the form of a length of fabric, which could then be taken to a tailor for their proper specifications.137 Another common practice in eighteenth-century fashion was the use of miniature garments on a reduced scale, to fit the specifications of a doll. These dolls, pictured in (fig. 36) are like a modern day mannequin, and were used as samples by merchants. They could be easily shipped to different capital cities throughout Europe.138 Such dolls have been used by the court tailors and dressmakers, as well as those catering to a wealthy upper-and-middle class clientele.139 This practice allowed potential customers first-hand experience in touching the textiles and looking at the overall quality in production. They also helped to spread French fashions, helping to further establish the country’s reputation as the premier site in the fashion industry.

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid. One such example of these mini mannequins was found a few decades ago in Lyon in 1976. An art historian who was working on the LACMA’s exhibition that would open seven years later, The Elegant Art, found this example while during research at Le Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon. Many textiles, garments and accessories were offered to this museum for purchase, including the doll. However, at the time it was in such poor condition it could not, and still cannot be photographed.
Embroidery techniques were applied to many objects of daily use throughout the eighteenth century. It was through dress that embroidery became the major showcase for the embroiderer’s skill. Both designers and embroiderers had to have an extraordinary understanding and mastery in all embroidery techniques, materials and fabrics—only the best would be awarded with having their garments glide through the halls of Versailles. Although these embroidery techniques were refined and complex, the actual construction of garments was quite simple. One of the most important aspects in embroidered dress was the foundation, which was typically a luxury textile such as silk or velvet, as seen in the sample in (fig. 37). There is often a general misconception by scholars that the construction of a garment was quite laborious, but structing the waistcoat or jacket was actually rather straightforward. It was relatively simple for a weaver to translate the customer’s vision of rich brocades, damasks and brocatelle’s.

In France, embroidery designers were often people of great renown. Typically, one large established group of embroiderers and designers worked for the king and his court, while another worked for the great textile and embroidery manufactories. There were of course other workshops under the guild orders who regularly completed commissions for the noblemen and courtiers from the Palace of Versailles, though never of such regality. The great textile industry in France was huge. In 1778, just four years after Louis XV died, there were approximated twenty-thousand people employed in the textile industries, over six-thousands of them being professional embroiderers. This number decreased significantly at the start of the French Revolution in 1789 and continued in a downward spiral until its end. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) brought back a small revival in embroidery, though it did not last for long and the quality of work was not the same.

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140 Maeder, *An Elegant Art*, 27
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 89.
143 Ibid.
Men’s Dress

Eighteenth-century men’s dress has not been subjected to as much modern scholarly scrutiny as opposed to women’s dress of the period, leaving much room for debate and discussion. Before the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, men’s dress has typically been described as dark and drab, even for those with the resources to obtain a spectacular wardrobe. One key individual who placed a new focus on the importance of dress is Louis XIV, whose rules and regulations for the court’s state of dress remained stable throughout the reign of grandson Louis XV and until the French Revolution. Louis XIV helped to revive men’s court dress by embracing new materials, colors and luxurious patterns. As demonstrated in Hyacinthe Rigaud’s portrait (fig. 38), Louis XIV had a preference for using rich brocades, velvet and of course, embroidery, which the court adapted to elevate their appearance and declare their social rank. By 1700, men’s dress was best characterized as “colorful examples that showcase how eighteenth-century aristocratic men rivaled their female counterparts in the desire to impress with dress.” The death of Louis XIV in 1715 prompted a new revolution in taste, opting to make some slight refinements, shifting the focus from the structure of the garment to embellishment on its surface.

The court of Louis XIV was highly formal and ritualistic, requiring the highest-ranking nobleman to assist the king in his daily dress and undress, respectively known as the lever and coucher. The court of Louis XV was much more informal, doing away with the lever and coucher ceremonies, yet still required luxuriously embroidered court dress throughout his entire reign. Court dress or fancy dress, which is often also referred to as “formal wear,” such as the waistcoat in (fig. 39), is what would typically be worn at high court during Louis XV’s reign.

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144 Takeda, Fashioning Fashion: European Dress, 12.
145 To “lever” means to rise or get up, while “coucher” means to sleep or go to bed. In the lever ceremony, members of the king’s high court enjoyed morning moments of intimacy, where they either assisted or watched the king as he was washed, combed, shaved, dressed and drank soup for breakfast. In the coucher ceremony, these same members of high court either watched or assisted the king in undressing and preparing for bed.
Court dress was meant provide a function and distinguish courtiers based on rank. That is, it helped announce to the general public one’s attained proximity to the monarch, as well as to confirm a legitimate place in the aristocratic elite.\textsuperscript{146} Louis XIV still reigned in the very early eighteenth century, so his taste continued; requiring heavy coats with embroidery in abundance, puffy skirts on the backs of jackets and cuffs so large it made it challenging to move one’s own arm. For court events such as grand balls or entertainment, people were expected to wear court dress, that is the \textit{habit à la française} (or \textit{habit habillé}), or if coming from a lower class, something neat and respectable, such as a simple unembellished coat and pants made from affordable materials.

Fundamental to elite men’s dress was the three-piece suit, or the \textit{habit habillé}, which essentially remained the same in silhouette from the early to late eighteenth century but faced many changes and gradual adjustments in cut and construction.\textsuperscript{147} Getting dressed required many separate garments, accessories and ornaments that could be taken apart, rearranged, or mixed and matched according to the wearer’s specifications or functions.\textsuperscript{148} It was a person’s trimmings and accessories that superficially determined whether a person was in style or was of a sufficient status. These trimmings and accessories often were costlier than the actual fabric they were placed upon—although textiles were already astronomically priced. Popular trimmings include lace, which was worn by both men and women, jewels and metallic trimmings such as gold braid or embroidered appliqués. Lace and jewels were worn by the wealthiest of nobility; both were often just as costly as one another and were typically passed down in the family. Most clothing belonging to the least-wealthy of the elite was embroidered, however, it was usually embroidered with satin or silk thread, very rarely were the garments embroidered with gold or silver. Due to

\textsuperscript{146} Sharon Sadako Takeda, \textit{Reigning Men Fashion in Menswear}, 359. The term \textit{sans-culottes} translates to “without breeches.”
\textsuperscript{147} Takeda, \textit{Fashioning Fashion: European Dress}, 17.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
the cost of the clothing, especially when utilizing gold materials, those in the middle-to-lower upper classes had to invest in removable trimmings and accessories, adding them to the varied embroidered suits they owned. When it came to court dress of the king, queen and the royal court, trimmings and appliques were not suitable. Court dress was heavily embroidered with real gold and silver thread on the textile itself. Throughout the century, new designs and trends for fabrics changed with every season, making textiles easily the second most expensive aspect. If a fabric or style went out of favor, the silver and gold could be trimmed off, sold and reused, it however was not transferable as a trimming. Many such examples of court dress from the eighteenth century did not survive, since they were burned to salvage the precious metals, or were destroyed in retaliation during the French Revolution.

Clothing was a major financial investment. All clothing was expensive, but fashionable clothing was considered to be an extraordinary luxury. Almost every aspect was costly: trimmings, woven textiles on man-powered looms, sewing and tailoring all done by hand. Ready-to-wear garments were rather inexpensive, all things considered, but otherwise there were no textile knock-offs.\footnote{Takeda, \textit{Fashioning Fashion: European Dress}, 28.} While textiles and materials were expensive, labor was not. As such, the cost of a garment was determined by the quality of its textiles more than by the skill or fame of its worker, perhaps yet another reason why Charles-Germain wanted to change the attitude about professional embroiderers, who he thought should be treated and paid more like a court painter. In light of the process of recycling, it is a true testament to the dress of the eighteenth-century’s beauty and artistry that so many examples still exist today.

According to Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, the process of creating a garment in the eighteenth century can be broken down into four key stages.\footnote{Ibid.} First, the designer plays an active
role in the stylistic development of current trends, drawing inspiration from tastes, fashions and art movements of his era. Next, a textile is selected, typically a brocade, velvet or striped silk. The textile then has to be tailored—measurements of the client are taken, the fabric is then cut and sewn. Finally, the tailored garment is then embellished with trimmings, such as simple fastenings or intricate, costly gold embroidery and jewels. Historically, the textiles, tailoring and trimming techniques throughout this period (and length of this thesis) “were regarded as art forms, passed down through professional guilds and generations of skilled artisans.”

Although the cut and style of the habit habillé frequently changed in the course of the eighteenth century, its function did not. These changes in the male silhouette were not nearly as frequent or dramatic as seen in women’s dress, but they were far from dull. The typical, wealthy eighteenth-century man dressed just as colorfully and ornately as women of the century until the end of the 1700s when men’s style changed to incorporate a darker color palette. In fact, lace, embroidery, sequins, fur, ribbons, muffls and high heels were considered as unisex accessories. This trend in men’s clothing began to come to an end as the dawn of the French Revolution drew near, opting instead for leisure wear, sportswear and military uniform. Men then began to display their taste and wealth through innovative tailoring and accessories.

The classic three-piece suit emerged in the late seventeenth century and quickly established itself as the typical male “garb,” continuing well into the early nineteenth century. It was commonly seen as business or everyday wear for French aristocrats and wealthy merchants. Traditionally, as represented in (fig. 40), the suit consisted of a collarless coat with a full pleated skirt, long-sleeved waistcoat and knee-length breeches. These early-period suits were often uncomfortable, prioritizing the flared coats over arms and shoulders, relating to the style of

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151 Ibid.
152 Ibid., 27.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid., 41.
vest Charles II (1630-1685), king of England, introduced in 1666. However, by 1740, the sleeveless waistcoat came into favor, saving the customer added costs for sleeves and improving the already difficult movement of the arms. Long-sleeved waistcoats, though rarely used past 1760, gave an added sense of luxury protruding from the coats, giving the illusion that more costly velvet, brocade or silk was used.

By the mid-eighteenth century, as exemplified in (fig. 41), the fronts of men’s coats began to be cut shorter while exposing more of the waistcoat. Also by the mid-century came a change in buttons. Used as highly decorative accents, typically none of buttons on the coat were functional, using instead sets of hook-and-eye fasteners at mid chest and higher. As the eighteenth century progressed, the sleeves and skirts of coats became narrower, waistcoats shorter and breeches cut loose and fitted over stockings, creating a more streamlined silhouette. In the late 1760s and into the 1770s, a new coat appeared putting all previous clothing from the decade appear out-of-date. Referred to as the frock coat, the riding coat (or redingote in French), or frac anglaise; demonstrated in (fig. 42) this jacket has a cut fitted through the waist and very long cutaway skirts, making the wearer appear taller and thinner. Generally made from black wool, but in some occasions—also depending on just whom the jacket was being made for—was also made from solid-colored silks, or stripe and chevron patterned silks and cottons. The frac became a new standard in formal wear for wealthy individuals in the palace of Versailles and in and around Paris. Even though it sometimes varied in style, cut and color, it always remained plain and simple. Due to its popularity and affordability by many, it even became acceptable to wear on a casual visit with the king. In spite of the apparent popularity of the frac, many aristocrats were displeased with the new trend.

155 Takeda, Reigning Men Fashion in Menswear, 237.
156 Takeda, Fashioning Fashion: European Dress, 41.
157 Ibid.
158 Takeda, Reigning Men Fashion in Menswear, 239.
Because of its inherent simplicity, it was difficult to distinguish between classes, or even between masters and servants. The \textit{frac} could only distinguish between those who could afford it and those who could not. However, for any court engagements or balls, such as the royal wedding of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette — for which people bled their pockets dry, the \textit{habit habillé} was expected for court dress, and would remain to be for all royal engagements until the French Revolution.

Within the last few years of Louis XV’s reign, in approximately 1770, English court dress, i.e. the uniform, became a popular source of inspiration. Because of this influence Louis XV and his court believed the military service was thought to have “joined birth, loyalty and wealth as one of the defining elements in court society” and was manifested in court dress. Most monarchs and nobles were beginning to abandon traditional, embroidered and bejeweled dress that projected grandeur and wealth, in favor of military uniforms that embodied a rival philosophy of service and simplicity. Uniforms were relatively cheap and had to be purchased only after promotion, rather than as with the \textit{habit habillé}, that had to be purchased, restructured or re-embellished with every change in fashion or to celebrate every royal event, birthdays included. Uniforms, as shown in Vigée Le Bruns portraits entitled the \textit{Prince de Nassau-Siegen} and the \textit{Comte Charles Alexandre de Calonne} (fig. 43 and 44), had the opportunity to become embellished by embroidery, but was often kept quite minimal for those of extreme wealth. As a comparison, judging solely by the presence of embroidery and other embellishments on their uniforms, the Prince de Nassau-Siegen (fig. 43) was most likely from a wealthier or more established family than the Comte Charles Alexandre de Calonne (fig. 44).

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161 Ibid.
162 Philip Mansel, “Monarchy, Uniform and The Rise of The Frac” 111.
Above all, what appealed to the majority was that uniforms indicated not social class but rank in the service of the state of the monarch.\textsuperscript{163} For Louis XV, uniforms were a living symbol of his authority and of the social order of the official or military hierarchy.\textsuperscript{164} Though the French court was still expected to wear traditional formal dress of a \textit{habit habille} around the palace of Versailles for special events, these uniforms were slowly accepted and considered suitable dress for visiting the king in an informal manner. In spite of the king’s appeasement with uniforms to be worn casually, there is no certainty that Louis XV himself wore a military style uniform, but rather still opted for an embroidered \textit{habit habille}.\textsuperscript{165}

As Louis XV’s reign came to an end and a new king, Louis XVI, took control, the traditional three-piece suit continued to be utilized, though by 1785 demonstrated a clear influence from English sportswear on a French silhouette. With the adoption of a new silhouette came the end of knee-length breeches, and the preference for trousers instead. Historically, trousers were considered a working garment and therefore the dress of the laboring class, referred to as \textit{sans-culottes}.\textsuperscript{166} Solid-colored, wool or satin fabric with un-adorned buttons and simple-to-no embroidery became the norm. Colored embroidery (that is, anything other than white or black embroidery) and other embellishments appeared only on court and military dress. Adopting simplicity in dress meant that, “skilled tailoring and quietly luxurious textiles, rather than ostentatious trimmings, distinguished the man of substance and taste.”\textsuperscript{167} As an aristocrat,

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} To be discussed in a larger capacity in the next chapter, although the military uniform was becoming more and more popular throughout Europe, Louis XV continued to sport the \textit{habit habille} in spite of astronomical prices of garments. Throughout the late seventeenth and about three-quarters of the eighteenth century, embroidered clothing was such a large industry throughout Paris and Lyon, that a large part of the garment-centered working class worked as embroiderers. With Europe losing interest in embroidered dress, as well as a large part of the French aristocracy, many people were losing their jobs and were forced to dress. By continuing with tradition and established rules of dress for the court, that is, to wear the embroidered \textit{habit}, it kept some embroiderers employed temporarily.
\textsuperscript{166} Takeda, \textit{Fashioning Fashion: European Dress}, 27. The falling of the monarchy and the introduction of \textit{sans-culottes} as a new standard in dress are hand-in-hand. When the monarchy began to lose respect, following tradition and dressing as such was being challenged, opting for a more sensible mode of dress.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 29.
noblemen or courtier, their best, of course, was still expected at the court of Versailles. As fashion trends changed to cleaner, simpler and less costly silhouettes, materials and trimmings, men’s dress throughout the end of the eighteenth century continued to pay homage to the styles under the reign of Louis XV, albeit in a much more subtle manner.

**Etiquette + Louis XV’s Court**

Dress in the eighteenth century served the primary function of displaying the monarchy’s wealth, status and identity. While owning the most elaborately embroidered *habit habillé*, made from the finest silks from Lyon would surely serve this primary purpose, having the proper court etiquette and movement were essential to fit the elite mold, as well as the expectations of the court of Versailles. Etiquette manuals on courtier dress, comportment, and behavior can be traced back to the thirteenth century but the most influential text was established by Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), who published *The Book of the Courtier* in 1528. While this specific text’s ideas may have died out in popularity by the eighteenth century, the rules and etiquette of courtiers at the Palace of Versailles were still very much enforced, by the use of manuals on decorous bodies, such as the series *Recueil des modes de la court de France*. This popular series is a collection of fashion plates that has been attributed to eight artists, drafted in the late seventeenth century, circa 1670-1683, and bound in 17033-1704. These hand-colored engravings depict the attire of men and women in Paris in the final decades of Louis XIV’s reign, from 1678 to the early 1700s; and how dress and etiquette were dictated by different ideals put forth by the French

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168 The artists who have been attributed to this collection of plates are as follows: Henri Bonnart (1642-1711), Robert Bonnart (1652-unknown), Jean Dieu de Saint-Jean (flourished 1675-1695), Jacques Lepautre (1653-1684), Jean Berain (1637/1640-1711), Nicolas Arnoult (circa 1671-1700), Nicolas Bonnart (1637-1717) and Jean Baptiste Bonnart (1654-1726).
In addition to these fashion plates were many etiquette books available in the eighteenth century, targeting all social classes and a wide variety of categories, such as books for apprentices that teach proper conduct towards masters; rules for children’s behaviors; and the duties and behaviors of women through all ages and circumstances. There were rules for every conceivable type of movement, from entering a room to passing someone on the street, or even removing one’s hat, as depicted in Pierre Rameau’s (1674-1748) *Maître à danser* in (fig. 45). The most common ways these rules were gleaned were dancing masters, etiquette books and dress. Proper etiquette was considered to be so essential to the role as courtier and noblemen, that it could easily get one removed from court. During a period when the middleclass attained greater numbers and authority, etiquette and movement were a convincing way in which a person’s class and wealth could be determined.

Eighteenth-century etiquette, as explained by sociologist Jorge Arditi, “is associated with ceremony, and more precisely with ‘the prescribed ceremonial of a court and the formalities required by usage in diplomatic intercourse.’” During the first half of the eighteenth century, the most influential etiquette book of the century was Nicolas Faret’s *L’honneste-Homme ou, l’Art de plaire à la Cour* published in 1630. This book tackles themes, such as the disposition of

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169 For more information on these plates and more, please refer to Sarah Cohen’s *Art, Dance, and the Body in the French Culture of the Ancien Régime* and Kathryn Norberg and Sandra Rosenbaum’s *Fashion Prints in the Age of Louis XV: Interpreting the Art of Elegance*.

170 While some etiquette books were aimed at the middle-to-lower classes, it is important to note that the majority of people in the lower classes would not have been able to afford books. While the Enlightenment would have been well under-way during the reign of Louis XV, allowing better opportunities for education and a proper education for young women (throughout the eighteenth century a decent education for a young girl would have consisted of a skilled needlework, a good part of the lower classes still would have been illiterate. The mentioned etiquette books are as follows: *A Present for an Apprentice: Or, a Sure Guide to Esteem and Wealth With Rules for His Conduct to His Master and in the World* by John Joseph Stockdale, 1807; *The School of Manners, or Rules for Children’s Behaviour: at Church, at Home, at Table, in Company, in Discourse, at School, Broad and Among Boys* by John Garretson, 1701; and, *The Whole Duty of a Woman: Or, an Infallible Guide to the Fair Sex Containing Rules, Directions and Observations for their Conduct and Behavior through all Ages and Circumstances of Life as Virgins, Wives, or Widows* by Sarah Stack, 1737.

one’s body, appropriate conversation to have amongst the varying classes and women, and inter-court relations with fellow courtiers, nobles and the king, amongst many more. Faret’s text claims this concept of the honnête homme (honest man) was expected for men or women of high civility.¹⁷² However, it was not just civility or grace that those who belonged to the court—or those who pretended to belong to the court—sought out. For the elite, the concept of perfection consisted of achieving honnêteté and their deepest aspirations were grounded in becoming an honnête homme, or une honnête femme.¹⁷³ Faret’s concept of the honnête homme derives from Castiglione’s courtier. Like the ideal courtier, “the honnête homme is to be of noble origins and, above all, a man of arms, strong and nimble yet not too big or corpulent….He must honor women and serve his prince. And he must always act gracefully, avoiding affection, leaving no trace of effort whatsoever. Grace…is the greatest human attribute.”¹⁷⁴

Taking its cue from Faret is aristocrat Antoine Gombaud (1607-1684), better known as Chevalier de Méré. Although he was not a born nobleman, Méré in 1677 introduces a new concept of honnête, in his essay entitled “De la vraïe honnêteté” (“On True Honesty”). In this essay, Méré explains genuine honnêtes gens,

are those who possess a gentle Spirit and a sensitive Heart; they are dignified and civil; bold and unassuming, neither miserly not ambitious, and are not eager to command, or to occupy the first place alongside the king: They have no other goal than to inspire happiness everywhere, and their main worry consists in no other thing than to deserve the respect of all, and to be loved by all.¹⁷⁵

In a sense, Méré’s honnêtes gens are those who have achieved perfect stability and coherence, merging fully with the surrounding society.

There was a variety of influential texts on etiquette readily available in the eighteenth century. Arditi comments on the usefulness of etiquette books, claiming they are not written for

¹⁷² Ibid., 125.
¹⁷³ Ibid.
¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 125-126.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 142.
the dominant (noble) classes, for whom this knowledge of *honnête* and civility come naturally, in the sense that is has been instilled in them since birth.\(^{176}\) Instead, these etiquette books are for the most part written by and for members belonging to the social groups immediately below the dominant class, and are by and for the people who aspire to belong to and succeed in the upper class.\(^{177}\) Etiquette books would have been obtained and followed by those who were new to the positions of noblemen and courtiers. Not all courtiers were nobles, as they included roles such as the clergy, soldiers, clerks, secretaries and middlemen with business at court. In eighteenth-century France, there were two distinct types of nobles: those of the Sword and those of the Robe. Nobles of the robe were French aristocrats whose rank came from holding a certain judicial or administrative pose. These positions did not come with the titles of duke or count, but each individual served a specific function. They were distinct from Nobles of the Sword, the oldest class of nobility, whose status was based off of their families military service, having titles based on an antiquated system of feudalism. Together, both distinctions of nobles made up the second estate in eighteenth-century France. Those who were noblemen lived in or on the lands of the palace, staying close to the king to ensure their loyalty and devotion.\(^{178}\) To earn the king’s favor, it was necessary to spend time in the royal residences and stick to proper etiquette. Serving this role as a courtier was a great accomplishment but demanded much in return. Proper dress was required at all times, as well as proper etiquette and movement, except when in their own private apartments.

Upper-class standards of movement originated in seventeenth-century France under the reign of Louis XIV. At the turn of the century, elegant movement was considered as the hallmark of the aristocracy. Although in the eighteenth century these rules became somewhat replaced and

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 35.

\(^{177}\) Ibid.

\(^{178}\) Research has shown that the king could not arbitrarily dominate his subjects. Louis XIV moved his court to the Palace of Versailles to keep eyes on everything and everyone, controlling them to his greatest ability.
refined, they were continually regarded as the epitome of courteous behavior and elegant movement until the French Revolution.\textsuperscript{179} Courtiers had to follow strict etiquette. There were many meticulous rules that established the order of precedence and who could approach the most important figures at Court, as well as where and when.\textsuperscript{180} Simple things such as body language and manners of speech were also ruled by strict codes that varied depending on circumstances. Etiquette and correct corporeal display were an essential aspect of court life, expectations and self-fashioning. In other words, a noble or courtier of Louis XV’s court not only had to wear luxurious dress to best represent themselves and the king, but also they had to act and display themselves in the correct manner.

Nobles and courtiers considered it their right and privilege to be at court, earning both social and material rewards for ensuring loyalty and obedience. Out of the many roles and positions of noblemen and courtiers within the court came with higher titles and greater importance than others. For instance, one basic ceremony, as previously mentioned, is the daily lever and coucher, which all were male members of court were expected to attend (but was not exclusively for men). The most prestigious of noblemen, however, had the privilege of performing the acts of bathing and dressing the king. Those who performed these ceremonies were nobles who would have ranked directly under the king and were therefore held to even higher expectations of dress. These nobles would have had the funds or monthly allowances to commission clothing from designers like Charles-Germain, and at the very least would have had additional embellishments such as lace and gems, to assert their high social standing. The court of Versailles enforced a hierarchical chain of respect. Though the highest-ranking officials held

\textsuperscript{179} Maeder, An Elegant Art, 37.
\textsuperscript{180} Unknown, Courtiers, Palace of Versailles. The Palace of Versailles website has proven to be an educational resource for general information about happenings within the court of Versailles throughout the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.
less official forms of power or control, they were treated with the utmost respect by those lower than them.  

A large part of having the proper etiquette and appearance was proper movement and gesticulation. Sarah Cohen argues that while this strategy of movement in aristocratic society has been observed, the complexity in which this performance is carried out has not—in other words, what it means to be aristocratic in a culture obsessed with appearance. In the eighteenth century there was a certain *agrément* of distinction about a person whose appearance, gestures, carriage and voice were graceful. Appearance, Cohen argues, was virtually everything for those who aimed to please, such as the elite. Dress in accordance with movement served as the most valuable accoutrements for those wishing to appease the court by creating this projection of aristocratic identity. Etiquette was a court performance, achieved with fancy dress and effortlessness. This idea of being effortless in everything, from dressing, conversing and moving, was considered to be the true mark of the elite—those who born into nobility were believed to have this intrinsic ability.

Aside from court dress, effortlessness in movement was thought to be the true marker of the elite. Sarah Cohen argues that movement can be compared to dance, such as the minuet or ballet, which were both seen as an intrinsic manifestation of aristocratic grace. Especially in

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181 Bows (or curtsies for women) were considered to be the formal court greeting. It was not proper etiquette to speak to someone of higher ranking, less they spoke to you first—and you certainly would never address the king. Showing your back to a nobleman higher than you, or anyone in the royal family for that matter, would be interpreted as a gesture of disrespect; therefore learning to walk backwards in court dress was of considerable importance. When entering a room knocking was deemed impolite, so a habit of scratching at the door was used instead to announce their presence. That is of course, if they were granted permission to enter. Lastly, when it became time to take their leave, courtiers must formally ask permission to do so, or if of a higher rank, announce their departure. Although this is not a complete list of all of the rules and instruction at the court of Versailles, it is a basic introduction of what was expected at court and what was deemed proper etiquette.

183 Ibid., 14.
184 Ibid., 15.
185 Sarah R. Cohen. “Un Bal Continuel: Watteau’s Cythera Paintings and Aristocratic Dancing in the 1710s,” *Art History* 17, 165. Sarah Cohen’s scholarship in recent years has been almost exclusively devoted to the artistic body and movement as depicted through the work of Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). Watteau was a Rococo painter...
the early eighteenth century when the upper class, “was swelling with newcomers who had purchased, earned or married into nobility, the assumption of an aristocratic demeanour through dance was a critical factor in announcing one’s status.”\textsuperscript{186} Even those without an aristocratic title could project a sense of inborn elegance by learning how to move in the appropriate style.\textsuperscript{187} To stand gracefully, one must push their shoulders back to display the chest, making the appearance of the body graceful; arms are held at the sides but not resting on their person; hands should be cupped—that is, neither opened nor closed; and lastly, legs should be slightly bent, with left foot in front and the right immediately behind, as demonstrated in (fig. 46). Standing in this position was thought to give more ability to start walking or to enter into another position.\textsuperscript{188}

Movement was seen as an integral part of daily living for the elite and was strongly influenced by how garments were cut and how they were worn.\textsuperscript{189} Appearance and the look of status always outweighed the desire for physical comfort. One of the most “unusual aspects of the era’s aesthetics was the conviction that if properly dressed and in sufficient command of movement, an individual could be transformed into a work of art.”\textsuperscript{190} The fashionable eighteenth-century individual would purposely choose garments that challenged the body to a level of control and performance, insuring that no matter how elaborate a garment is, one’s personality would always dominate it.\textsuperscript{191}

As demonstrated throughout the length of this chapter, appearances in eighteenth century France were of utmost importance. To belong to the court of Versailles and to become courtier to the king, one not only had to go bankrupt in efforts to keep up with styles and trends, spending a

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 165-166.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{188} Maeder, \textit{An Elegant Art}, 37.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
small fortune on embellishments and embroidery but also had to have proper etiquette, grace and elegance. In other words, not only did the courtier have to look the part but they must play the part effortlessly. Eighteenth-century movement was sophisticated and charming, reflecting both attitude and personality of the individual who performed it. In order to appear effortless, the performance of the courtier required intense concentration and bodily discipline. In the first chapter I reviewed Charles-Germain, his treatise and families’ legacy, as well as his impressive career as designer to the king. In this chapter I examined the materials and techniques of the embroiderer to situate their importance in the debate of embroidery as fine art; men’s dress, such as how the Rococo and Neoclassical periods impacted the styles and trends under the reign of Louis XV; as well as court etiquette that would have been expected of the elite the further enhance the concept of self-fashioning. The next chapter takes a further look into constructing these elaborate garments, the workshops that would have worked with elites and the extensive training required to develop the necessary skillset to create such artful embroidery. In addition, I examine the embroidery and luxury guilds, the relationships between workshops and high court, the individuals who make up the working class who labored on these garments and other embroidered objects, and how they help to shape broader discussions of the art of embroidery produced in eighteenth-century France.

192 Ibid., 55.
CHAPTER THREE

The Art of Production: Embroidery and the Luxury Guilds

“Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”

Joan W. Scott

Embroidered dress and household goods became thriving commodities throughout the eighteenth century until the French government was overthrown and guilds were abolished by the French Republic under the Jacobins. The previous two chapters have focused on one of the leading embroiderers from the eighteenth century, Charles-Germain, his family’s dynasty of embroiderers and his life work, including patronage from Louis XV and his court. Chapter two discussed the making of men’s dress, including embroidery techniques, designs, the finery and artistry behind men’s fashion and the significant evolutions in men’s dress under the reign of Louis XV. This final chapter considers guilds as a crucial institution of eighteenth-century French society that played a major role in the development of embroidery practices and techniques. Before the revolutionary period, guilds, especially the luxury guilds, were thriving, especially with active aristocratic patronage. The fashion trades, particularly the embroidery trades in France, were swelling with apprentices, masters and female workers. Steven Kaplan defines the role of the guilds as “communities or corporations of artisans and merchants

193 Daryl Haifer, Introduction: A Theoretical Framework for Women’s Work in Forming the Industrial Revolution in European Women and Preindustrial Craft (Bloomington and Indiana, IN: 1995), VIII.
associated for the purpose of commercial advantage, social prestige, mutual assistance, and more edification,” from which all social classes, and in most instances, all genders benefitted.\textsuperscript{194} While embroidered dress was a necessity at court, not everyone had the exuberant amount of money to hire a designer, embroiderer and tailor to construct their garments. Because of this, the elite utilized the skilled labor of the luxury guilds to purchase embroidered court dress and other accessories. Having said that, it is pertinent to add to the conversation at hand the relationship between guilds, Charles-Germain and the elite, as well as how this information on guilds helps shape the broader discussion of embroidery produced in eighteenth-century France. In so doing, I examine the operation, hierarchical structure and gender division within the luxury guilds, including the relationship between embroidered dress at Louis XV’s court and elite consumption of these objects. It is essential to my argument to discuss the daily upkeep and rules and regulations of the guilds, to help better construct how the greater part of clothing under the reign of Louis XV was made. Although Charles-Germain was not a member of the embroidery guild due to his position in the French court, as a designer to the king, the embroidery guilds looked to him for his experience and mastery within the trade and gleaned from his œuvre of work for popular styles and trends within the court.

A guild in simple terms is an association of artisans or merchants who oversee and regulate the practice of their craft or trade, by enforcing strict rules and guidelines for quality control and production. Beginning in the Middle Ages, guilds played a crucial role in the art of production for all arts and luxury goods, until their (to match “guilds” in the sentence) structure became abolished in the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Paris’ economy was well under control of the guilds as early as the thirteenth century, with no

\textsuperscript{194} Kaplan, “The Luxury Guilds in Paris in the Eighteenth Century,” 257.
less than one-hundred trades co-existing.\textsuperscript{195} Guilds helped to shape labor, production and trade; they had control over capital, as well as the progression of apprentice to craftsman and journeyman to master. Between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries the commercial success of the guilds often fluctuated. By the sixteenth century, they once again became the center of European production and distribution, maintaining this control until the French Revolution. In France in particular, during the second half of the seventeenth century under Louis XIV’s reign came a resurgence of the guilds. With this resurgence came more control from the monarchy, such as a concern to impose unity in production and quality, as well as to over-see all production and establish more efficient taxation on the consumption of luxury and imported goods. This is in part due to the guilds fabricating goods directly for the monarchy’s use; also for diplomatic gifts—a way to glorify France and the king through the riches and prestige of goods manufactured in his domain.

By the time Louis XV came to power, the rebirth of guilds his grandfather initiated was in full force, leaving France with a strong economy in the luxury and textile trades. France was a thriving country, though the majority of its people (the lower class and even some of those in the upper class) could not afford to wear its embroidered garments, in spite of there was an abundance of embroidery workshops. Designer to the king, Charles-Germain approximates there were over 260 embroidery guilds in Paris by 1769, providing a modest idea as to how richly popular this luxury trade was. While embroidery guilds have proven to be one of the most luxurious trades and arguably most important in the context of eighteenth-century dress, there were many trades involved in both preparing and making a habit habillé, as well as completing the overall appearance of a male member of the monarchy or aristocracy.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 287
There were three ways in which one could manufacture a *habit habillé* in eighteenth-century France. Louis XV, as well as other members of the monarchy, employed Charles-Germain to design their court dress. Unless otherwise specified, Charles-Germain would hand select the base fabrics for the garment and the silhouette and design the embroidery to perfectly complement the style of the garment and the client. After these selections were made, the court tailor would obtain the proper measurements for the wearer and cut the fabric based on the desired silhouette. The embroidery designs and cut fabric would then be sent to the court embroiderers to be embellished according to Charles-Germain’s specifications. When the embroidery was finished the fabric and design would return to the tailors to be assembled with the finishing touches, such as buttons, lace and metal clasps. The client would then try on the finished garment and the tailor would make any adjustments as necessary to make a perfect fit. While noblemen and courtiers belonging to court were quite wealthy, having an entourage of artisans and craftspeople at your disposable was an immense cost and could only be afforded by the wealthiest, such as the king of France.

Another way in which a client could purchase embroidered clothing was through an embroidery workshop. This option was much more cost efficient, being the primary way in which the elite class ordered court dress. Customers would go into established embroidery workshops and select already embroidered fabric as designed by masters or lesser-known designers. In some instances, this fabric could be purchased and brought home that same day and would then go to the tailor. The customer would be measured by the tailor, the pre-embroidered fabric would be cut and sewn to fit the wearer. This method of tailoring was called

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196 Although tailoring lost its prestige in the turn of the century, it was considered to be one of the most crucial steps in the manufacturing process. Not only are tailors responsible for the proper measurements but with a slip of the scissors in the wrong direction, the fabric was scraped and unsalvageable.

à la disposition and required much less back-and-forth between the guilds.198 These made-to-order garments most likely would not have had real silver or gold thread or gemstones, opting instead for cost-efficient substitutes, such as silk thread, metal frisures and paillettes. There were many options available for these made-to-order garments, ranging between all different fabrics, types of embellishments and amount of embroidery. One extraordinary example of à la disposition is the suit in (fig. 47). This particular ensemble lacks metal embellishments and focuses strictly on embroidered floral motifs, for which no expense was spared. To personalize this garment even further, the client added lace at the neck and wrists and a plethora of buttons on the jacket across the chest and wrists and down the waistcoat. This suit certainly would have been considered one of the finest examples of a pre-embroidered fabric a workshop had to offer.

Similar to embroidered fabric ready for purchase was another option, for those who wanted something a little more custom and did not have any restraints on time. At embroidery workshops or shops owned by marchands-merciers, were samplings of embroidery clients could pick from, such as (fig. 19) from chapter two. Clients were able to special order the embroidered motifs being offered, on occasion having the option to choose from different colored fabrics. After the custom-order arrived, the client would take the fabric to the tailor to be measured, cut and sewn like the à la disposition method. After the garment was sewn together, any other necessary tailoring to make it fit the customer perfectly would be completed, as illustrated in (fig. 48) from Diderot’s Encyclopédie.

The final way in which an individual could purchase an embroidered suit is the most cost-efficient method. For those who were expected to wear fancy court dress but could not afford custom embroideries or afford embroidered fabrics, the client would have a suit tailored to

198 Akiko Fukai and Dominic Cheetham. Fashion: The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute: A History from the 18th to the 20th Century, Taschen, 71.
their proper measurements, often made of a cheaper material such as felt. The client could then go a shop and purchase embroidered appliqués, made from rapport or taillure embroidery that could be sewn to a garment’s foundation.\textsuperscript{199} Purchasing embroidered appliqués, depending on the materials being used, were relatively inexpensive and could be reused or passed down in the family. These appliqués could be removed and reused, to be placed on new silhouettes and fabrics, making the only substantial cost the foundation of the garment.

During this process of constructing a garment in either of these three methods, other workshops were needed to produce goods necessary for the completed product and look. Guilds and workshops often essential to the construction of a garment were those such as button-makers who made buttons for the jackets, waistcoats and breeches; fabricants de draps d'or, that is, makers of sheets of gold, which would be used for embroidery and gilding; shoemakers, if necessary, to make new shoes for the wearer, or to repair old ones; hat makers, if a matching tricorn hat was to be made; lace-makers for added embellishments, particularly for the ends of sleeves or to be tucked under a waistcoat; plumassiers if feathers were required and a goldsmith to make shoe buckles and other jeweled embellishments; the passementerie who make gold braids and cords to adorn garments and military garb; ribbon makers, typically for decorating ribbons hats, dresses or undergarments; the furrier, who sold muff’s for both men and women; the wigmaker who not only made the wigs, but prepped their clients for wear; and the purse maker, who made accessories such as hats, handbags and parasols for both sexes. While creating a foundation of a suit is rather simple and straightforward—that is, one that lacked any sort of embellishment—there were many guilds, workshops and craftsmen whose combined efforts come together to create one finished, embellished garment.

\textsuperscript{199} The previous chapter provides a thorough explanation of both of these stitches, amongst several more. For more information, please see Charles-Germain’s \textit{L’art du Brodeur}, or Pamela Warner’s \textit{Embroidery: A History}. 
This process of manufacturing a suit recalls the scholarship of art historian Katie Scott’s work on eighteenth-century French interiors. Similar to the many craftsmen behind the construction of one ensemble is the volume of personnel essential to compose an eighteenth-century interior, not to mention the extreme cost. Not only did the structure of the house itself need to be built, requiring a designer, architect, joiners, brick-layers and painters, but other guildsmen were necessary to furnish, decorate and do the finishing touches. At the very least, craftsmen such as upholsterers, interior painters, gilders, sculptors, furniture makers, woodworkers, engravers, illuminators, glass makers and menuisiers, who prep, assemble and install paneling and wallpaper were vital to creating the foundation of the interior. Other goods that would have been expected in a traditional rococo interior are mirrors, service bells, porcelain, embroidered fire screens and tapestries. While the following section clarifies the roles of the guilds, the comparisons between embroidered dress and finished ensembles to the eighteenth-century interior shed light on the specialized skillset within each trade and the symbiotic partnership amongst the many guild corporations.

**Merchants + Guilds**

In Charles-Germain’s treatise, *L’art du Brodeur*, is a section entitled “The State of the Embroiderers in Paris.” Though he did not exclusively belong to a guild, Charles-Germain understood the great importance guilds and workshops held in the eighteenth-century Paris market.\(^{200}\) In this short section, Charles-Germain provides a very brief history of embroidery guilds, as well as major rules and regulations established in the late 1760s to 1770s, around the time his treatise was published. According to Charles-Germain, the *Corps des Brodeurs* (the

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\(^{200}\) While there were several licensed (freelance) embroiderer’s and designers, that is, those that who were fortunate to achieve steady noble and elite patrons. These embroiderer’s and designers, like Charles-Germain, did not have to follow the majority of the rules and regulations of the guilds, however, they had to obey some fundamental statutes, such as not mixing gold or silver thread with fake gold or silver thread.
Company of Embroiderers) joined together in a community in the year of 1272 by Étienne Boileau (1200 or 1210-1270), a provost of Paris. The embroidery guild’s patron saint was Saint Clare of Assisi, who was widely recognized as patron saint of needlework, embroidery and the goldsmiths. Members in the early formation of the guild were found under such titles as Brodeurs, Découpeurs (makers who specialize in guipure work), Egratigneurs (makers who incise lines) and Chasubliers (makers of ecclesiastical ornaments and sacred vestments).

Guild statutes for the embroidery trade depended in largely on fashion trends and circumstances. The final publications of these statutes before the dismantling of the guild system was in 1719, entitled Statuts des Brodeurs—Chasubliers en 46 Articles. While other statutes were continually being added, edited and revised, this original publication is what Charles-Germain bases his discussion of guilds on. While Charles-Germain does not explain even a fraction of these statutes, the statutes he discusses are fundamental, such as ones that applied to himself and his position to the king or were game-changers for the trade. For example, Charles-Germain offers his view on the rule which, “provides that an Embroiderer can only be assisted by the sons or daughters of Master Embroiderers.” This rule was devised to make the families of Embroiderers employed in the same practice and placed in a hierarchy of sorts. The statute not only ensures that family members are compensated for their labor, but also prevents the

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201 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, Art of the Embroiderer, (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983), 19. Charles-Germain was most certainly the authority on eighteenth-century embroidery, as proven throughout the course of his treatise and its original intent, some information he provides must be taken with a grain of salt and requires additional research. While Étienne Boileau is indeed credited with establishing the regulations on the police, industry and the trades of Paris in his text “Book of the Trades;” England at the time was a fierce competitor in embroidery, being recognized in the history of embroidery as the first nation to initiate a revival of the art form, as well as to establish the first embroidery workshops during the Middle Ages. England is best known for the opus angelicanum period, which is best defined as the fine embroidery, particularly that of church vestments, that were produced between ca. 1200 to ca. 1350; these works are best characterized by the rich materials used, especially the use of silver gilt thread. It is not perfectly distinguishable when or where guilds, especially embroidery guilds, begun and who they were established by. It is with great certainty, however, that Boileau did a considerable amount of work for statutes of the Parisian trade guilds.

202 Ibid. Various collections of these rules were printed and bound throughout the mid-to-late eighteenth century without pagination as “Statuts des Maîtres Brodeurs.” These statutes were confirmed by Louis XIV on August 14th, 1704 and were registered in parliament.

203 Ibid., 19-20.
employment of those outside of kinship, such as apprentices and journeymen. Additionally, Charles-Germain address statutes regulating the delicacies of picking up and delivering embroidered goods. For instance, it is necessary that the Master do the handling (picking up or delivering) of the embroidered object, otherwise the embroidered object could be seized by a juré or an opposing guild.\textsuperscript{204} It was also forbidden to mix pure gold or silver with fake gold or silver in the same embroidery. There are many other statutes and regulations embroidery guilds and licensed embroiderers had to follow, however, as Charles-Germain claims the rules he left out do “…not prevent, from time to time, the perpetration of a fraud that one could not foresee.”\textsuperscript{205}

In order to be a merchant or maker in the luxury guilds in the eighteenth century one had to either belong to the guild or be recognized as a licensed Embroiderer independent of the guild and under the jurisdiction of the City Provost.\textsuperscript{206} In 1769 when Charles-Germain wrote his treatise, there were eight licensed Embroiderers, one being himself with the title of “Embroiderer to the King with the Court;” a reference to the long tradition of court embroiderers.\textsuperscript{207} In addition, there are two “Embroiderers to the King, charged specifically with doing Works for the Crown.”\textsuperscript{208} These embroiderers, since they were under the City Provost, were expected to follow rules and regulations of the guilds as it they applied to the workers. Serving as “Embroiderers to the King”, however, gave them the right to disregard some of these statues. For instance, if their work was needed in haste, these embroiderers could employ the King’s guards to borrow workers from Guild Masters when extra hands were needed.\textsuperscript{209}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
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Although the regulations and statutes of the guilds were established in part to benefit workers and employers alike, by modern standards the professional embroiderer’s life was quite harsh. Charles-Germain wrote that the typical French embroiderer, both male and female, worked from six in the morning until eight in the evening—essentially from sun up to sun down, with some additional aid from candlelight. However, he does assure his readers, past and present, that female embroiderers earned better wages than women in other such guilds, though these wages were still significantly less than those paid to their male counterpart. On average, embroideresses (female embroiderers) ordinarily earned twenty-four sols or four francs a day for working embroidery that required a “passing” stitch, as demonstrated in the satin stitch. Embroiderers sometimes had options to earn a higher daily wage depending on the mastery and skill set mandatory for more advanced stitches, as seen in (fig. 49), an engraving depicting two female embroiderers stitching with paillettes (sequins). While wages were considerably high compared to other luxury guilds and workshops, comparing wages with the actual prices paid for embroidered dresses is quite telling. Art historian and translator of Charles-Germain’s treatise, Nikki Scheuer finds described in the Paris fashion journal, Galerie des Modes published from 1778 to 1787 that, “simply embroidered dresses cost between 150 and 600 livres, while a dress embroidered with precious metals, silk, and stones cost from 3000 to 3500 livres (the terms franc and livre were then used interchangeably).” It was, of course, the high cost of materials rather than labor that was responsible for the excessive prices of dresses, and was among the principal reasons why this luxury trade almost disappeared with the Revolution. In 1779, there were approximately 262 master embroiderers who were registered with the Paris guild; by 1789, after the Revolution had begun, only eleven remained.

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210 Ibid.
211 For a discussion on the satin stitch, as well as other types of stitches, please refer to chapter two.
212 Maeder, An Elegant Art, 93.
213 Ibid.
Most successful in eighteenth-century Paris were the luxury guilds, to which the art of embroidery would belong. Luxury guilds were workshops that specialized in what most Parisians and Europeans desired, such as embroidery. French historian Steven L. Kaplan explains that luxury must be perceived in socially differential terms; for example, new unadorned clothing were purchases considered to be of great self-indulgence for the lower class, while new embroidered clothing for the elite would have been deemed a necessity. Kaplan’s essay serves as a major point of departure for information on the luxury guilds and is fundamental in understanding how these trades in eighteenth-century France operated. Moreover, Kaplan addresses the luxury guilds that manufactured or procured merchandise aimed at the European elite, such as embroidered dress. These guilds added embellishments such as lace, buttons and gems. He also considers how they incorporated themselves in the world of the arts et méréciers. Kaplan’s scholarship has proven to be especially helpful in understanding the rules and regulations of luxury guilds, as well as crucial aspects about expected duties of the jurés, masters and apprentices. While this essay provides a more general overview of the luxury trades, it relates specifically to my argument by explaining in detail the amount of time spent to master these skills, thus further supporting the notion of embroidery as a high art form.

In his essay Kaplan highlights the different components that are part of a fully functioning luxury guild, such as its daily operations and standards of quality control. Explaining the various individuals that make up the embroidery guild and a few expected tasks is relevant to the study of embroidery practices and therefore the skill and artistry of the trade. One of the first major positions in a guild are the jurés, the stewards of the guild’s interests. Kaplan explains

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215 Ibid.
216 Ibid. The term mérécier is best translated to the contemporary term “haberdasher,” meaning, someone who deals or sells in men’s clothing, or goods for dressmaking and sewing. In the context of this chapter, mérécier will refer to simply as a seller of men’s clothing.
most jurés had at least ten years of mastership and must be of good conduct and have good morals, for their major preoccupation “was the protection and the enhancement of the guild’s privileges and prerogatives.” The number of jurés depended per corporation varied; for instance, the menuisiers-ébénistes had six, while both painters and embroiderers had four each. On average, each juré served a two-year term and retired after serving twice, if elected. According to Kaplan, jurés kept themselves busy: they constantly solicited violators of guild rules and royal arrêts to enhance their prestige and leverage. To protect the monopoly of their guild, jurés had to investigate not only corporations who were encroaching on their business but also individuals referred to as faux-ouvriers or ouvriers sans qualité, who were false journeymen or sellers not belonging to a corporation. Additionally, Kaplan notes jurés had the added role of “defend[ing] corporate interests against the micro-corporations of merchant-artisans of their own profession who enjoyed direct monarchical protection as ‘privileged’ dealers ‘following the royal court.” These so termed “merchant-artisans,” such as Charles-Germain, obtained important orders from Versailles, and, as such, aroused deep jealousy from the Paris-based Masters.

Other crucial tasks jurés were expected to do is over-see and maintain all in-house inspections, control reproduction, recruit workers and police work produced by the guild.

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217 Ibid., 259.
218 Ibid. The Corporation des Menuisiers-Ébénistes is a guild concerned with woodworking. The menuisiers principally do the work of a carpenter and joiner, cutting the materials and piecing them together, while the ébénistes apply the veneered or lacquer finish. Although it was the menuisier who designed and signed their names on the furniture, the end result was brought about by a collective effort of multiple craftsmen.
219 Ibid., 260.
220 Ibid. These italicized terms translate as “false workers” or “workers without quality.” Kaplan explains that whenever a juré found one of these faux-ouvriers, they either sought royal order to jail him to set an example, or they simply seized his tools and goods and had him arraigned by the police.
221 Ibid.
222 In addition, one of the most important duties of the jurés was to assure the continuity of the guild and exercise its privileges—or in other words, recruitment. Recruiting apprentices was fundamental to the economic and political power and success of the guild. Jurés often targeted sons and sons-in-law of masters, who they themselves were the sons of masters. This pattern of recruitment in guilds is reflected in the Saint-Aubin family dynamic, for which there are at least three accounted-for generations of embroiderers who carried on the family name and business. As expressed in the introduction and chapter one, very little information and scholarly research has been performed on
Guild statues required *jurés* to make a certain number of formal visits a year, typically two for the *brodeurs*, where they would be able to inspect quality, materials and ensure that rules and regulations were being maintained.\(^{223}\) In addition, *jurés* had the ability to make surprise inspections at any time for any reason.\(^{224}\) These surprise visits were to ensure standards of quality were being met at all times, which included checking for fraudulent or defective merchandise. *Jurés* play not only a crucial role in the daily operations, but also in the professional goals of embroidery guilds. By constantly overseeing the quality of these embroidered goods, creating statutes to uphold the same level of craftsmanship amongst all embroiderers and ensure the quality of the materials being used, *jurés* elevated the professional status of the trade. While the *jurés* were not practicing embroiderers, they serve as a sort of middle-man between embroiderers and clients to ensure flawless craftsmanship and artistry, creating dependable business relationships with the noblemen and courtiers of Louis XV’s court.

The first phase in corporate reproduction was an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships were an essential aspect to the basic operation of workshops; not only did apprentices secure the continuity of practice, tradition and professionalism for the embroidery guild, but also they contributed to a significant amount of the workshop’s product, such as custom-ordered suits, pre-embroidered fabric and appliqués.\(^{225}\) The duration of apprenticeships varied largely between

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223 Ibid., 262.
224 Under most guilds, sons of masters were typically not expected to become apprentices, for it was thought that they would be trained within the household and not the workshop setting, which was in all likelihood the case or Charles-Germain due to his father’s title. For other apprentices outside of the immediate family, they were obliged to sign a notarized contract that was registered by the guild bureau and the royal official in charge of corporate affairs.
225 Kaplan, “The Luxury Guilds in Paris in the Eighteenth Century,” 282. The content of most contracts varied very little from corporation to corporation. These contracts all typically stated the basic fundamentals, such as a masters promise “to show him and teach him his craft…without hiding anything from him, to provide him with food,
corporations. The longest apprenticeship lasted for eight years among the *horlogerie* and *orfèvrerie* corporations; professions which, according to Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, many years were necessary for art forms as difficult as these.\(^{226}\) For other corporations, such as the *merciers*, demanded as little as three years to complete an apprenticeship. According to Diderot, this was due to the idea that an apprentice either understood the skills being taught and learned quickly, or they would not grasp what was being taught easily and more time with a master would not change that.\(^{227}\) An apprenticeship for the *brodeurs* required six years to become experts in stitching, well-grounded in textiles and materials and learn how to properly stretch fabric (that is, without destroying the textile or crushing an extremity). In most instances, guilds kept masters restricted to only one apprentice at a time to control the amount of aspiring masters and workshops and the trends in the labor markets. However, by reason of the rising popularity and increasing demand of embroidered dress, embroidery masters were allowed to take on apprentices almost immediately.

The second phase in the process of corporate reproduction was a journeymanship. This was a second step for most apprentices, who made the transition to being called a journeyman, theoretically meaning “awaiting mastership.”\(^{228}\) Becoming a journeyman meant that the once-apprentice has mastered the rudiments of his trade but needed more experience in order to perfect his skill. Most corporations obligate a two or four-year long journeymanship as a

lodging, heat and light, and to wash his clothing...and to treat him gently and humanely.”\(^{225}\) Not only would the master teach him with patience and gentleness, but he would not employ the apprentice at jobs which in no way related to his profession. Should the apprentice need to be scolded, violent measures were deemed unacceptable, allowing the master to chaste and correct him in a verbal manner. In short, the masters were to treat each apprentice like a mother or father would treat their own child. In return, the apprentice pledged “to learn to the best of his ability, ‘to obey [the master] in all his legal and honest commands’ and to work to increase his profit and to avert his loss.” The apprentice was expected to submit passively, “to show ‘a perfect obedience without seeking to penetrate the reasons that he [the master] has to order him to do things.’”

\(^{226}\) Ibid., 283. The *horlogerie* was the corporation of the watchmakers and the *orfèvrerie* was the corporation of the goldsmiths.

\(^{227}\) Ibid.

\(^{228}\) Ibid.
precursor to becoming a master, in which they further develop their skill by gaining experience in other workshops, for which they were compensated. After completing his required work experience and earning his brevet (which can be best translated as patent), the journeyman consommé was ready to declare his candidacy for mastership, if he had the funds and ambition to pay the corporate fees and finance his own workshop.\textsuperscript{229} The last stage of a journeymanship is the making of the chef d’œuvre, or masterpiece. According to Kaplan, the horlogerie defined it as “the most difficult piece of work in each art or métier that must be assigned to the mastership candidates in order to have them prove their capacity.” \textsuperscript{230} Jurés would not accept incompetent journeymen as masters, sons of confrères or otherwise. An incompetent master would bring in very little money in income and therefore guild fees, as well as risking the corporation’s reputation and elevated status.

The very final step was the reception of the aspiring master. If the journeyman’s masterpiece was well-received, the candidate appeared before a panel with representatives from the modern masters, as well as the elders and jurés.\textsuperscript{231} If the candidates’ moral character appeared to be in good standing, he would pay the base fee for entry and any additional sums due for “confrérie, charity, jettons for the panel and meneur, etc.;” the candidate would then be allowed to take the oath before the elders and once more before a civil jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{232} Mastership was then achieved, leaving the individual to open their very own workshop. These steps to become a master and ultimately, to operate a workshop of their own, was a hierarchical way in which the jurés could ensure thorough mastery of the trade, including the skills of the required tools, materials and techniques. As indicated by the process of the final reception, the juré

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid. For the majority of these journeymen, they remained employed at others workshops all their lives.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 285.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 286-287. Translation: a meneur or conducteur was a senior guildsman that was assigned by the jurés to guide the aspiring master in his preparations for mastership.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., 287.
\end{flushright}
wanted to ensure the aspiring master had a good sense of moral character and financial responsibility to carry on the future of the trade. Those who achieved mastership would become court embroiderers or designers or own a workshop, serving as a leading representative of the trade, therefore their professionalism and artistry was essential to upholding the guilds reputation and dominance in the clothing industry.

**Guilds + Gender**

Western European guilds in the early modern period (1500-1800) were best classified as patriarchal institutions, where the vast majority of corporations restricted their membership to men. Guild statutes prohibited women from entering apprenticeships and even excluded taking employment with masters in their workshops. Widows had some privileges that were inherited by their husbands, however, they were always faced with strict limitations. As Charles-Germain explained in his treatise, women were traditionally understood to be the seamstresses and embroideresses while the embroidery guilds were fundamentally operated and owned by men. Women, starting in the late seventeenth century, were being shut out of apprenticeships, being forced to pick-up whatever task presented itself if they needed to help support their family and were often expected to switch jobs to better accommodate their husband’s trade. By the middle of the century, women were almost exclusively prohibited from all corporations, due to rising intellectual and philosophical concepts brought on by the French Enlightenment. The Enlightenment in France was a period that began in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, where a group of philosophers, scientists and thinkers advocated new ideas based on reason.

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233 Clare Crowston, “Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research,” (2008), 19. As noted by author Clare Crowston, these strict limitations were derived from an idealized vision of the preindustrial family economy in which the master was a male family head, who simultaneously directed the labor of his wives, children, journeymen and apprentices.

234 Daryl Hafter, *Introduction: A Theoretical Framework*, VII.
Two of the most outspoken critics on the guild system during the eighteenth century were Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Adam Smith (1723-1790). According to these two contributors, guilds prohibited free trade and hindered technological innovation, technology transfer and business development. Their writings influenced government regulations including the control over trades in favor of a *laissez-faire* free market system. One of Rousseau’s most influential books, *The Social Contract*, published in 1762 argues a new political structure could cure the ills of an unequal society. Rousseau warned the bourgeois that values of wealth, vanity and ostentation would impede the growth of equality, morality, dignity, freedom and compassion, and a society based on envy and power would impose debilitating change on its citizens. Additionally, Rousseau wrote about gender distinctions, best represented by his text *Emile*, published in 1762. Rousseau argues that families are hierarchical and based on “natural” sexual differences. For women, the demands of family take priority over a public role; her main duties are to please her husband and raise her family. Dismissing the fact that the embroidery and tailoring trades have been owned and run by men for centuries, Rousseau insisted these trades were emasculating occupations for men and believed embroidery was a form of embellishment only suitable for women.

Smith was another major leader of the opposition of guilds. His best known work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776 is considered to be a precursor to the modern academic discipline of economics. Smith laid the foundations of the free market economic theory, a system where the prices for goods and services are determined by the market and consumers and developed the concept of division labor. His views

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238 Commerce and Peace 3
on female labor were not like those of Rousseau. Smith greatly disliked guilds and the strong hand the monarchies had within these corporations. These new concepts introduced by Rousseau and Smith influenced the Revolutionary periods throughout Europe and the United States and assisted in dissolving guilds.

Significant changes within the guilds continued after the death of Louis XV, particularly in the 1790s under Jacobin control. Enlightenment thinkers and writers also wrote extensively on gender division in labor and the capabilities of women.239 Louis Sebastien Mercier (1740-1814) a French writer, whose indignation at the violation of what was perceived as the natural gender order illustrates the majority of male thought. “‘It is grotesque,’ he wrote, “to see male hairdressers, men pushing a needle, handling a shuttle, and usurping the sedentary life of women…It is immoral…for strong and robust persons to invade areas which nature has particularly designated for persons of the opposite sex.’”240 In light of the centuries’ old traditions of tailors, merciers, or fabricants de draps, this sudden change of thought that now encouraged women to work, specifically in the garment trades, while compelling men to find manlier pursuits in taking care of his family, was surprising.

In the early modern era, the typical low-to-middle class wife worked in the home or outside it to help support the family. By the late eighteenth century this standard had changed in which women served primarily domestic functions.241 The idea of the household as a work space for the family to produce consumable goods came to an end and was instead enforced as a space to raise a family, leaving the husband to earn the wages. These new concepts of a woman’s function were based on concepts from enlightenment contributors such as Rousseau and Mercier, leaving European society to redefine the attributes of males and females due to a new awareness

239 Ibid., 783
240 Ibid., 787.
241 Ibid., VIII.
of the effects of gender on economic life.\textsuperscript{242} The part in which Louis XV plays in upholding this new-found awareness is not exactly certain, however, the state and corporations had the ability to ban women from making, marketing and selling commerce.\textsuperscript{243} These new guidelines restricting labor based on gender in turn lead to a change in conceptions of womanhood. Desirable characteristics for a woman prior to the middle of the eighteenth century in France were industriousness, strength, commercially savvy and public assertiveness; these qualities changed to ones of dependence, domesticity, modesty and delicacy.\textsuperscript{244} As a result, guilds, specifically the embroidery guild, had to recruit male workers to make up for this major loss in female labor. Guilds were highly masculinized organizations that considered women’s work as inferior and outside of the corporate order. As guild work became increasing professional, they acquired more control over the economy and began to tighten control over the labor market, closing ranks to aspiring journeymen and restricting any existing privileges of wives, daughters, widows and other female workers.\textsuperscript{245} For instance, historians Merry Wiesner and Cynthia Truant argued “that concerns for masculinity pushed journeymen in particular—who were themselves experiencing a humiliating loss of status—to insist on the exclusion of women.”\textsuperscript{246}

In spite of the strict regulations that prohibited female workers from finding employment in male-owned guilds, women still played a crucial role in the garment trade corporations in eighteenth-century Paris. Judith G. Coffin offers a study of the clothing trades in eighteenth-century Paris “where the circle of female economic activity, formal and informal,

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\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Clare Crowston, “Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research,” (2008), 21.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 21. The 1980s witnessed a transition from women’s history, that is, seeking to recover the past activities and experiences of women, to what can be referred to as gender history, shifting the focus to relationships between the sexes as well as the impact of representations in both masculinity and femininity. This shift brought about a new interest in the masculine nature of guilds, in which Wiesner and Truant focused in particular perceptions of masculinity.
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craft and casual was expanding.”

Coffin reconsiders some historical commonplaces in the gender division of labor, such as the common idea that clothing was women’s “traditional” work. The skills required—sewing, mending, cutting, weaving—were nourished in the household and were prescriptive conceptions of femininity. Women were taught these skills at ages as young as five years old, making the recruitment of women into the garment trades, when authorized, therefore need no explanation. Moreover, as Coffin finds, the concept of sewing as an appropriately female activity seems to have only appeared in the early seventeenth century.

Towards the end of Louis XV’s reign in the early 1770s was a temporary revival of female workers. In larger cities such as Paris or Lyon, women were allowed once again to enter the workforce, specifically female-friendly guilds, such as textile manufactories and embroidery guilds. Considering the lack of female workers in other trades, luxury or otherwise, it is safe to assume for two reasons why women were starting to be accepted into the garment trades. As previously mentioned, the skills needed to manufacture clothing and accessories were considered to be basic training for any female in households of all social classes. Women already developed the basic skill set necessary for these jobs and therefore, according to guild statutes and regulations, did not need to work as apprentices. Women were considered cheap laborers; workshops and masters often saw women’s work as inferior and, thus, were not expected to pay female laborers as much as their male counterparts. Masters, journeymen and apprentices had a sense of job reassurance, as a result of female workers’ inability to rise up in ranks, as put in place by guild statutes. The other reason is explained by Daniel Roche, a French historian, who estimates that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the garment trades occupied more than forty percent of all Parisian employers and workers. Due to the popular styles of eighteenth-

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248 Ibid.
249 Ibid., 771.
century dress, embroidery guilds were booming. Male workers alone were not able to fulfill the increasing demand for these luxury goods, resulting in welcoming women back to the workforce.

As the tailoring trades consolidated in the eighteenth century and women were being recruited as embroiderers and sewers, the luxury clothing trades became more hierarchical, with wages differing drastically. Master tailors upheld this hierarchy, deeming the cutters the most important in the trade, and as proof they earned significantly more money. By contrast, embroiderers and sewers were considered to be “only a petty accessory,” inexpensive and semiskilled labor.\(^{250}\) The tailor’s guild in particular regularly reissued bans on women working in the trades, often bringing the matter to court. Court cases and regulations made clear that female workers were more common and plainly visible than guild statutes and regulations would lead one to believe.\(^{251}\) Widows of masters did not fair out much better. A widow was permitted to keep her husband’s workshop and any apprentices who had been training with him. However, the guild strictly limited widows’ rights, forbidding them to hire more than one journeyman at a time, which as a result effectively prevented any enterprises to be run by women and obliged women who wanted to keep the business running to remarry within that trade.\(^{252}\) By creating these policies, it allowed the widow to exercise limited patriarchal and guild authority under her husband’s name, but only temporarily.\(^{253}\)

There were of course the *maîtresses couturières* (mistress seamstresses), belonging to the seamstress guild, an organization within the city of Paris. This guild was active from approximately 1675 until 1791 but was much younger than the tailor or linen drapers’ guilds, who were both major sources of competition. The *couturières* had heavy restrictions, only having permission to sew and sell clothing and undergarments for women and children.

\(^{250}\) Ibid., 773.  
\(^{251}\) Ibid.  
\(^{252}\) Ibid.  
\(^{253}\) Ibid.
However, there was one major exception for women’s court dress, which was only to be made at a tailor’s workshop. New fashions and styles created more demanding, complex and distinctive work for those who designed women’s clothing, creating a sort of sub-specialty for couturières to make their own. Couturières were able to tap into a growing market and female costumers, including wealthy and powerful women of the aristocracy who had a vested interest in the couturières’ success and independence from master tailors. From Diderot’s Encyclopédie is (fig. 50), an engraving that depicts women working at a stretching table, preparing fabric to be cut either before or after embroidery. Below the workers is an engraving of a typical completed robe à la française, which can be determined by the hoop skirt, known as en paniers, alongside the different cuts of fabric that are sewn together to make a such a dress.

Before the turn of the eighteenth century, an edict was passed allowing couturières the right to make clothing for women and children. The edict goes as follows: “Women and girls of all social status have become accustomed to having seamstresses make skirts, bodices, robes de chambre, and other useful clothing.” This edict, however, was unable to deter the constant harassment couturières faced from their male competitors. On one hand, the formal establishment of a new guild was said to ratify a long-standing sexual division of labor. While on the other, the edict sought to justify this “new division of the commerce in clothing with reference to cultural conceptions of female nature and morality.” However, this edict made very few references to the couturières’ technical capacities, their mastery of the trade and other social conventions typical guilds were forced to obey. Similarly to other guilds, couturières developed their own strong public identity. For starters, in order to reach mastership (though they

254 Ibid., 777.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid. The translation has been provided by Judith G. Coffin from the Les métiers et corporations.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid., 777-778.
would be called mistresses, not masters) a female candidate needed to serve three years as an apprentice, two years as a worker and must be at least twenty-two years of age. Statues were waived for daughters of maitresses couturières. In a further effort to restrict couturière guilds, only one apprentice could be bound at a time, leaving all other workers in the shop to be poorly paid “shop girls.”

The battles between male and female guilds in the clothing trades peaked around the 1760s and 1770s, tipped off by the struggle over the future standing of guilds. Some believed that guild privileges were symptomatic of those of the regime: unjust, unnatural and burdensome; arguing that abolishing guilds would create an influx of technological advancement, would help to eliminate regional differences among organizations and the work produced, as well as do away with arbitrary conventions and rules. Guilds bitterly resisted this change, proposing new reforms to maintain social order and rationalize the economic world, which included putting all clothing guilds under the control of the tailors’ guild. Though there maintained workshops owned by maitresses, they were forced to comply with the rules and regulations of tailors, making it nearly impossible for women to ascend the social ladder in the last few decades of the eighteenth century. With this take over, women were allowed to work alongside their guild master husbands, children learned under their fathers’ guidance, and those who became widows were provided for by the guild.

In 1791 guilds were abolished in France due to Le Chapelier Law, a piece of legislation passed by the National Assembly ruled by the Jacobins. Men and women’s guilds came tête-a-tête.

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260 Ibid., 779
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid., 781.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid., 782.
265 Le Chapelier Law was advocated and drafted by Isaac René Guy le Chapelier (1754-1794), after whom it was named after. Chapelier was a jurist and politician during the Revolutionary period who fought to end feudalism (guilds were considered to be the last surviving aspect of a feudalist society) and higher working wages for the
tête, forcing the seamstresses to once again become completely controlled by their male counterparts. The guild corporation undeniably fell due to the serious criticism by authors like Rousseau and Smith, and the guilds increasing self-interests to monopolize trade and the pressures of the French Revolution. Enlightenment thinkers heavily criticized guilds for being exclusionary and stunting innovation. While Charles-Germain did not belong to a guild, he was instead held to their high expectations of quality, guilds are essential in understanding embroidery as art specifically in the context of eighteenth-century Paris. Guilds did not just regulate production; their privileges also governed the flow of goods onto the markets and established high standards of workmanship. Until the very end of the guilds’ existence, the insistence on maintaining rigorous quality control standards remained as the strongest argument in favor of the guild system.

people of Paris. For further information on the work of Chapelier, refer to Aux origins de la suppression des corporations par la Révolution française, by Thierry Hamon.

CONCLUSION

It is essential, when studying eighteenth-century embroidery or dress, to consider the legacy of the Saint-Aubin family. All three generations of embroiderers achieved the goal of every guild master and workshop owner—securing a position with the king at the royal court, which helped to ensure their family’s reputation and financial stability. Because of such close proximity to the royal family as designer for all embroidered goods (suits, dresses, accessories, furniture sets), it is safe to assume that Charles-Germain helped to influence trends in eighteenth-century French fashion and style, embroidery designers and embroiderers. Charles-Germain’s treatise, which originally began as a mere pamphlet, was recognized by the Royal Academy of Science, a major source of scholarly research, for which academicians backed his claims of high artistry in the trade.

*L’art du Brodeur* is a treatise which, in the eighteenth century helped to establish embroidery as an art form, while serving as a sort of “inside look” for non-embroiderers and a handbook for those working within the trade. It provides a brief history of embroidery, serves as a thoroughly executed dictionary of embroidery stitches and techniques, provides illustrations of designs, such as those for Louis XV, as well as advice from the *dessinateur du roi* himself, Charles-Germain, a title that has been passed on for three generations. In chapter two, “The Art of Appearances: Embellishments, Court Dress and Etiquette,” Charles-Germain’s embroidery stitches and techniques as discussed in his thesis come to life, as seen in the many examples of eighteenth-century men’s dress and engravings from his treatise. The evolution of dress from the onset of the century until right after the death of Louis XV demonstrates the wide varieties of techniques, materials and sources of influence (such as a return to nature before the Revolution) that, because of the immense amount of embroidery and other embellishments, transform the wearer themselves into an *objet d’art*. These embroidered garments, especially when paired with
proper etiquette, would have been expected at court and were essential aspects in elite self-fashioning. Lastly, in chapter three, “The Art of Production: Embroidery and the Luxury Guilds,” Charles-Germain discusses the luxury guilds and the gender and social class distinctions within those corporations. While Charles-Germain did not belong to the *brodeur* guild, as he was licensed instead, within his treatise he discusses the embroidery trade’s vital importance to the elite and court of Louis XV. Although Charles-Germain largely designed court dress and costume for the monarchy and royal embroiderers stitched these designs, the guilds were required to dress the remaining court, including subjects and ambassadors who visited Versailles.

Researching Charles-Germain and his treatise, examples of eighteenth-century clothing and the impact of luxury guilds in France is just a stepping stone to future avenues of study. With a new focus on eighteenth-century embroidery comes a considerable amount of resources yet to be studied, major figures in the luxury arts yet to be uncovered and objects yet to be found. One of the major areas to consider for future study is that of luxury guilds, more specifically, the *brodeur* guild. While Kaplan has provided a major stepping stone in our insight of luxury guilds, such as regulations, hours worked and tips of the trade, the *brodeur* guild is still lacking in scholarly material, with very few sources readily available. For example, who were the other court embroiderers Charles-Germain mentions in his treatise; what other prolific figures worked in these luxury trades? One reoccurring name throughout research for this project was Philippe de LaSalle (1723-1804), a French textile designer and manufacturer who exclusively worked with weaving silks and tapestries, while dabbling in the art of embroidery design. Similarly to Charles-Germain, little research has been done about LaSalle, leaving open ended questions of court patronage, competition with other designers and any involvement with Charles-Germain. One last avenue of study lies within the Saint-Aubin dynasty. As discussed in chapter one, Charles-Germain’s daughter Marie-Françoise married a *plumassier* while his son Germain-
Augustin became a notary and married into another well-connected embroidery family dynasty, which as we know for all intents and purposes vanished after the Revolution. This family dynamic prompts questions of the earlier generations of the Saint-Aubin family, that is, Charles-Germain’s great-grandfather and previous members of the clan; were there more generations of embroiderers, and if not, how did his grandfather Germain find himself associated with the guild? Although the majority of embroidered objects and garments belonging to Versailles and the people who resided within have been destroyed, there is bound to be more textual and textile evidence that has yet to be considered to further these studies.

The extreme popularity of embroidery throughout the eighteenth century helps to provide validation to Charles-Germain’s claims as it being a high art form. Embroidery’s popularity is best expressed in the dress of the period, as accompanied by a thorough explanation of the skills, techniques and knowledge of materials embroiderer’s were required to know. By examining all aspects that go into making men’s dress, such as the many different guilds that are involved, the trades provide valuable insight to the labor and artistry that convey courtly ideals of elegance, finery and luxury. Thus, eighteenth-century embroidery should not be considered simply as an embellishment worn by the elite to demonstrate social class, but as a luxury art form that required extreme mastery. Moreover, the recent exhibitions and new focus in scholarship in the last three decades are testimony in itself that there is interest and value in eighteenth-century embroidery today that will continue to endure for years to come.
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Image illustrates the inner workings of a tailors’ workshop
Figure 49: Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, excerpt from L’art du Brodeur, 1769. Print, The Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York
Figure 50: attributed to Robert Bénard, *Couturiere*, extract from Diderot’s *Encyclopédie: Recueil de planches, sur les sciences, les arts libéraux, et les arts mécaniques: avec leur explication*, ca. mid-eighteenth century. Print