Claude III Audran: Ornemaniste of the Rococo Style

Barbara Laux
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Claude III Audran: Ornemaniste of the Rococo Style

By

Barbara Marie Laux

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2017
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

Claude III Audran: Ornemaniste of the Rococo Style

By Barbara Marie Laux

Advisor: Professor Patricia Mainardi

The ornemaniste Claude III Audran worked over the course of some forty years to delight elite aristocrats, including Louis XIV, by creating cutting-edge arabesque designs with motifs drawn from popular culture. He became a maître in the Académie de Saint-Luc. He chose not to become a member of the Académie royale de peinture et sculpture, but he subcontracted work to Académie artists and achieved unparalleled status as a master of his craft. Despite the longevity of his successful career, previous scholarship has only examined a handful of individual projects and the arc of his career has never been fully examined. Differences in the assessment of Audran’s talent in contemporary accounts and subsequent scholarship have left Audran’s artistic status ambiguous. I argue that Claude III Audran, over the course of his career, acted as a connection between the Maîtrise and the Académie royale and earned renown for the creation of interiors he directed. This dissertation follows the arc of Audran’s career and includes consideration of contextual variables that impacted his work.

Chapter One relates the known biographical facts about his background and training. Noting that he achieved his acceptance as a member of the Maîtrise when the circumstances of the crown finances limited state patronage and impacted Audran’s choices as he established himself as a Maître ornemaniste. This situation and additional variables in the marketplace will be discussed in this and in the chapters that follow.
Chapter two provides a history of the arabesque from its roots in the ancient grotesque to the end of the seventeenth century. Tracing the characteristics of the grotesque and the evolution of the motifs provides an understanding of the utilization and of design precedents. The dissemination of the motifs through various media had brought the use of grotesque decoration to France; e.g., through the work of Italian émigré artists working for François I at Fontainebleau. Subsequent generations of artists modified the motifs to suit their decorative purposes, such as Charles LeBrun and Jean Berain, who were Audran’s immediate predecessors.

Chapters three, four and five present case studies of commissions following Audran’s career. Chapter Three discusses the application of arabesque motifs in venues used to escape the rigors of Louis XIV’s court for leisure pursuits, such as the hunt or the enjoyment of music in aristocratic interiors. Those projects lead to Audran’s commission to decorate the Menagerie at Versailles. Audran used motifs drawn from La Fontaine Fables for that commission and another at the Château de Réveillon, which are discussed in Chapter four. The chapter also considers the influences driving Audran’s choice of those motifs. Chapter five considers later commissions during the Régence for newly rich patrons who brought a different set of criteria to Audran for designing arabesques.

Finally, Chapter Six discusses Audran’s competition in the artistic marketplace and his influence as a mentor to other artists and their subsequent work. Living to the age of 76, Audran earned a reputation for excellence recognized by the crown and aristocratic elites. The examination of his career and his contributions to interior design adds to the historical narrative of the rococo period.
Acknowledgements

Over the course of researching and writing this dissertation, I have been fortunate to bring to fruition a personal accomplishment that would not have been possible without a number of family members, professors, friends and colleagues. First and foremost, my husband Ed has provided an immeasurable amount of love and support as my partner sharing the responsibilities of family and home. He has learned more about art history and eighteenth-century France than he ever imagined as he dealt with our sons as I went off to do research, kindly read drafts of chapters and listened patiently through the highs and lows of the project. My sons Conor and Eddie provided unmitigated support, welcome distractions and humor when I needed it. My sisters Carol and Martha were always willing to listen to my experiences and offered positive input throughout the process.

I am particularly grateful to a number of brilliant women who have encouraged my fascination and scholarship in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French fine and decorative arts. I am most fortunate to have my advisor Patricia Mainardi, who has been an on-going presence in my doctoral pursuits. From my initial interview in the Ph.D. program, through her engaging nineteenth-century courses, to walking me through the Parisian library system, and her unfailing support of my research and writing, she has made all the difference in my endeavors. We have shared intellectual conversations that have inspired my work and I am indebted to her for her honest critiques and generous support. I am grateful to Prof. Judy Sund, who encouraged my early research of Claude III Audran, which brought together my background in French decorative and fine arts. Anne-Marie Quette and Professor Maria-Anne Conelli sparked my interest in all things
French when they shared their knowledge and experience with me in undergraduate and graduate courses. They have both been invaluable and admirable mentors in my academic endeavors and in my dissertation research. Madame Quette was integral in facilitating my research and meeting with Bertrand Rondot, Curator at the Château de Versailles. Prof. Conelli has read drafts of chapters and offered positive feedback.

My research in Paris brought me in contact with Cristelle Inizen, who shared her knowledge of conservation regarding early eighteenth-century Parisian interiors and who enabled my site visits to see Audran’s work, which remains in situ. She has become both a colleague and friend. Monsieur and Madame Pierre Besançon graciously drove me to see their Château de Réveillon and shared their knowledge of their historic estate. I thank Wolfgang Nittnaus, Curator or Drawings and Prints, at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm for permitting full access to the Cronstedt collection of Audran’s drawings. I appreciated Prof. Karen Flint for allowing me to visit her private collection of early European instruments. And Sheridan Germann for sharing her expert knowledge regarding historical harpsichords. I am also grateful to the library staff in the Bibliothèque nationale de France for their efficient assistance with visiting researchers.

As a graduate student, I have come to know a number of fellow colleagues and professors who have shared their advice for the research and writing of a dissertation, including Prof. Claire Bishop and Katie Hanson, Ph.D. In addition, I am grateful to my friends, who have offered support, read drafts and provided encouraging advice along the way, in particular, Martha Crowley, Ph.D., Cynthia Schaffner and my study partners, Steffany Martz and Olga Karras.
In today’s political and cultural environment, it is a privilege to conduct and to complete the immersive task of dissertation research. My varied experiences and the knowledge garnered in the process have taught me more about human nature and generosity than I ever expected. I have appreciated learning from this process and I believe Claude III Audran has been an engaging subject for the culmination of my doctoral research.
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Introduction

In a small oval gallery at the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, as one proceeds through the museum, one might fail to notice the ornamental expertise of fanciful ceiling design by Claude III Audran preserved from a Parisian eighteenth-century hôtel particulier (Figure 1-A and B). Bordered with a gilded frieze of singerie figures against a blue background, the oval ceiling is an excellent example of Claude III Audran’s (1658-1734) ornamental work dating from 1705. The painted ceiling includes eight additional singerie or monkey figures symmetrically posed amidst garlands, swags, fans, flowers and birds. The ease with which the identification of this ceiling can be overlooked is characteristic of Audran’s work, which spanned the end of Louis XIV’s reign through the beginning of Louis XV’s ascension to the throne. During this transitional period, French decorative style changed from the severity of the baroque to the light, whimsical aesthetic of the rococo and Audran’s work in its entirety reflects this evolution of elite taste. The propagandistic themes of absolutism conveyed in design from Louis XIV’s early decades gradually gave way to topical themes, and Audran’s artistic and professional achievement was his ability to remain constantly on the cutting-edge of design with motifs drawn from popular culture. Claude III Audran played a critical, yet largely overlooked, role in the development of the rococo by inventing a new kind of ornamentation that updated antique grotesque designs to suit the elite tastes of the period.

Audran’s drive to satisfy some of the most discriminating patrons, including Louis XIV, led to the creation of ephemeral interiors, which were frequently changed to reflect the sophisticated taste of its occupant. The fleeting nature of design and his continued popularity prove his abilities, but leave few examples to attest to his involvement in each project. Previous scholars have investigated a handful of individual projects, but the arc of Audran’s career has
never been examined. This dissertation will reconstruct Audran’s career to understand fully his oeuvre and his role as an ornamentalist using surviving projects and reconstructing fragments of others, through contemporaneous documentary evidence where the project is completely lost. These works will be further illuminated when set within the historical context during which they were completed. From these commissions, I will explain how Audran responded to the ebb and flow of state patronage and his ability to cultivate noble patrons. Following Audran’s career, I will explain his ability to develop his ornamental style over time to satisfy those patrons, including the king, and to call on subordinate artists to complement his arabesque designs.

The prolific imagination of Claude III Audran created hundreds of ornamental designs in commissioned works at royal residences of Versailles, Meudon, Marly, as well as châteaux and Parisian hotels of the noblesse. Fiske Kimball documented the fact that Audran was received in the Academy of Saint-Luc as a “maîstre peintre, sculpteur, graveur et enjoliveur à Paris,” in 1692.\(^1\) He became a mentor of and collaborator with notable artists, such as Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743), among others. Audran also held the position of Concierge de palais du Luxembourg and was Peintre ordinaire du roi.\(^2\) As Concierge, Audran served as the custodian or curator of the monarchy’s art collection housed at the Luxembourg palace, including the Marie de Medici cycle of twenty-four allegorical paintings by Peter Paul Rubens. As Peintre ordinaire du roi, Audran received a stipend from the crown as a painter to the king, but without affiliation to the Académie royale.

Audran’s job title as an ornamentalist, as defined by Jennifer Milam, “refers to nonstructural forms of surface decoration used to embellish objects and interiors.”\(^3\) Historically,

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this title can also indicate engravers of ornamental motifs, as noted by Fiske Kimball. Audran, however, although raised in a family of engravers, did not publish any engraved designs. Art historians have perhaps overlooked his accomplishments in this decorative-art form because Audran was not a member of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. During his early years of apprenticeship, the Académie was in its infancy and Audran opted not to join, probably because membership did not promise greater opportunities even for trained academicians at the time. The Crown’s finances, deeply in debt because of Louis XIV’s expensive wars, severely limited the number of commissions available for painters and craftsmen. In addition, conflicts between the maîtrise of the Guild system and painters of the Académie royale occurred as the members of each vied for state commissions and artisanal status. Audran would have known these issues and chose to develop his role as a maîtrise designer directing the work of other artists to complete his decorative commissions. Over the course of his career, Audran acted as a connection between the maîtrise and the Académie because he subcontracted work to Academic artists, many of whom subsequently have been ranked “higher” than Audran because of the superior status gained by that institution. Those artists mentored by Audran carried his designs, but aesthetic changes in part due to the Enlightenment soon ended the use of the arabesque for interiors. Because of Audran’s status as a maîtrise ornementaliste, he has received little attention in art history, but his work presents an expression of a fertile imagination and creative skill adding to the rococo historical narrative. Extant drawings testify to Audran’s design talent and his consistent contemporary appeal.

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5 The evaluation of the status of fine art as “higher” versus “decorative art” is no longer valid, but many of the artists discussed in this dissertation have received more scholarly attention due in part to their association with the Académie royale de peinture and de sculpture.
In reviewing eighteenth-century French art-historical or decorative-art references, I found that scholars generally mentioned Claude III Audran in conjunction with Jean Berain the Elder (1640-1711), Dessinateur de la chambre et du cabinet du roi in the Département de l’argenterie et des menus-plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du roi whose decorative use of the grotesque motif served as a precedent for Audran’s endeavors. However, Audran worked with some of the most notable architects and sculptors of the Bâtiments du Roi and earned renown for the collaborative creation of interiors he directed. In these endeavors, Audran’s work became distinguished from Berain.6 The two worked in separate departments and catered to different needs of the Crown. Berain’s output covered a wide range of decorative media, including costume, while Audran worked solely for the Bâtiments du Roi, which was responsible for the construction and maintenance of royal buildings. Audran’s work was, then, in the architectural sphere, in collaboration with members of the Académie royale d’architecture.

Previous scholarship contributes to our understanding of Audran’s oeuvre. Primary sources, such as Audran’s will, list some of his most notable commissions at Versailles, the Ménagerie, Meudon, Sceaux, the château d’Anet, the hôtel de Bouillon, the hôtel d’Antin, and the hôtel de Verrue.7 Contemporaneous Parisian guidebooks by authors such as Antoine-Nicolas Dézaillier d’Argenville, Jean-Aimer Piganiol de la Force, and Germain Brice noted some of Audran works.8 These references, however, generally provide the reader with only a little information about commissions.

In 1876, Leon Charvet wrote *Les Audran*, an article detailing the Lyonnais family genealogy and including a list of works for each member. For Claude III, he included some of the remarks from the earlier Parisian guidebooks. Then, in 1892, Georges Duplessis published *Les Artistes célèbres: Les Audran*, a book that briefly describes each member of the Audran family for several generations. He confirms Claude III’s commissions at Meudon, Anet, the Ménagerie and at the château de La Muette. He also includes comments by Edme-François Gersaint (1694-1750) regarding Antoine Watteau’s experience working for Audran. Gersaint, a Watteau devotee, recounts an episode between the maître Audran and Watteau. The young Watteau showed Audran a painting, requesting a critique of the work. Gersaint states that Audran had cause for concern because the quality of Watteau’s work was obvious. So, instead of praising the painting, Audran advised the young Watteau not to pass his time on such work because it would ruin his taste for work provided by the maître.9 Audran may have been trying to rein in the ambitions of Watteau, but Gersaint considered this episode as the reason for Watteau’s leaving Audran’s employ. Duplessis went on to single out another, earlier writer, Pierre-Jean Mariette, who believed Audran was an artist of real value, perfectly capable of garnering fame on his own.10 These differences in the assessment of Audran’s talent, combined with his choice to abstain from membership in the Académie royale, have left Audran’s artistic status ambiguous for later generations.

For instance, Fiske Kimball’s *The Creation of the Rococo*, written in 1943, credited Audran with taking over Jean Berain’s role as the designer of arabesques when they both completed interior work at the château de Meudon.11 Louis XIV inspected the progress at

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Meudon and supposedly preferred Audran’s arabesques to Berain’s, though no written record substantiates Kimball’s assertion. After Meudon, Audran earned important projects including the first tapestry commission when the Gobelins manufactory reopened in 1699. Kimball also mentioned the works listed in Audran’s obituary and dated Audran’s work at the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras from 1730, speculating incorrectly that none of the decoration survives. While he noted a possible link between the Peyrenc de Moras hôtel and another on rue d’Assas, Kimball opined that Audran’s work there did not differ from earlier works and showed no development in style or technique. Such judgments, without the benefit of later scholarship examining the Peyrenc de Moras hôtel, compounded the ambiguity of Audran’s accomplishments. While Kimball did contribute to our overall understanding of the rococo style, he did not review Audran’s commissions, such as those listed in Audran’s obituary, to assess his artistic skill or the longevity, impact, and significance of his career.

Soon afterwards, Carl David Moselius wrote about the Audran drawings preserved in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm in an article published in 1945. He described the education and travels of the Swede Carl Johan Cronstedt (1709-79), who studied architecture with Carl Hårleman and became acquainted with Audran when visiting Paris. The two Swedes hoped to attract French artists and craftsmen to work in the construction of Stockholm’s royal palace. They consulted with Audran, who suggested two of his students. During his more than three years in Paris, Cronstedt became friendly with Audran and familiar with his collection of sketches and design drawings. After Audran’s death, the Swede negotiated successfully with the executor of Audran’s estate to purchase the artist’s collection of drawings along with the

working sketches he had executed for royal and private commissions.\textsuperscript{15} The Cronstedt collection of Audran’s drawings moved from private hands to the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, in 1938.\textsuperscript{16} The publication of this collection provided a wealth of visual examples of Audran’s oeuvre. Typically, in developing a décor, Audran began with sketches and then proceeded to produce large finished presentation drawings detailing motifs and colors with precision. Such drawings frequently show the design halved or quartered so that two or even four variations on the overarching design can be seen on a single sheet (Figure 2). Because Audran dated only one of these drawings and few were labeled, scholars must rely on written descriptions of Audran’s completed projects to connect preparatory drawings to specific commissions.

Moselius’s review of these drawings probably inspired his collaboration with J. Vallery-Radot and Roger-Armand Weigert to organize the only exhibition devoted to Audran’s work. The exhibition was presented at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1950.\textsuperscript{17} The exhibition’s slender catalogue includes a valuable chronology written by Weigert, delineating the dated Audran works, based on payments made to him by the Bâtiments du Roi whose records are preserved at the Archives nationales Paris.\textsuperscript{18} This chronology lists the sites for Audran’s commissions, a short description of the work, and the amount paid to the ornamentalist. In addition, Weigert includes the references made by contemporary guidebooks for individual commissions. Weigert also discussed Audran and his milieu, describing how the ornamentalist “must be considered as a foreman, a supervisor, the director of a disciplined team, consistent,

\textsuperscript{15} Moselius, “The Carl Johan Cronstedt Collection of Drawings by Claude Audran,” 240, 244.
\textsuperscript{18} The payment records were documented by Les Comptes des Bâtiments du Roi. Roger-Armand Weigert, “Liste chronologique des travaux datés de Claude III Audran,” in Dessins du Nationalmuseum de Stockholm, 59-68.
constituted wisely where each member has a role to fill.”19 This invaluable documentation lists Audran’s various works at Versailles over some thirty years as well as works for other crown properties, such as Fontainebleau, Marly, Meudon, the Tuileries, and the Louvre.

In each entry, Audran receives the total payment for completed work. When he painted the Ménagerie interiors, assisted by François Desportes (1661-1743), Audran first received the full amount for the project and then paid Desportes, his subcontractor, for his contribution. The same procedure continued when Audran subcontracted work to other assistants in subsequent projects. Although Weigert gives valuable information on the commissions, he analyzes Audran’s work only in broad terms without consideration or artistic appraisal of individual projects which varied widely.20

The Bibliothèque nationale de France exhibition catalogue does not mention the possibility that the Cronstedt collection may contain work by other artists whose drawings were owned by Audran. Reviewing that collection of drawings, there appear to be works by other artists’ hands or copies of other artists by Audran, as evidenced either in technique or style, especially when compared to the attributed drawings in the 1950 exhibition catalogue. For this reason, subsequent scholarship has carefully assigned attribution to Audran drawings, working backwards from known commission descriptions or based on a rare drawing notation. For instance, Audran’s completion of the Coronelli Globes documented by the Bâtiments du Roi payment dated from 1707 provided attributed work comparable to a previously uncredited drawing.21 My analysis of this little known commission will be discussed on chapter 1 as well as

19 Claude III Audran doit être considéré le plus souvent comme un chef d’atelier, un maître d’œuvre, le directeur d’une équipe disciplinée, cohérente, constituée avec discernement et dont chaque membre avait un rôle à remplir.” Roger-Armand Weigert, “Claude III Audran et son milieu,” in Dessins du Nationalmuseum de Stockholm, XXVIII-XXIX.
20 Weigert, “Claude III Audran et son Milieu,” in Dessins du Nationalmuseum de Stockholm, XXX.
my attribution of an Audran drawing to the Coronelli project. While listing this commission and others in the chronology, the exhibition scholars did not evaluate Audran’s technique or style.

Weigert continued to examine Audran’s work in subsequent published articles describing the patrons or circumstances of certain commissions and the international relations between France and Sweden in the eighteenth century. Other scholars followed, Pierre Verlet for example, described Audran’s designs for Savonnerie tapestry panels.22 Marianne Roland Michel made reference to Audran and provided contextual information when discussing Watteau and other painters who illustrated characters from the Italian theater or from La Fontaine’s Fables. She cited the influence of the Rubenistes, not only for the use of color but also for consideration of subjects from everyday life.23 In the early eighteenth-century, the increased publication of illustrated books gave artists inspirational fodder for their work. Michel noted that Gaspard Duchange (1662-1757), an engraver who also directed others in the completion of illustration work, occupied workspace in the Luxembourg.24 The crown also provided Audran with housing and workspace in the Luxembourg as part of his position there as concierge of the king’s paintings. There is no evidence to substantiate Audran’s exposure to Duchange’s output, but Audran lived in the same royal property and had a substantial collection of some 450 books documented in his posthumous inventory.25 Michel comments that the rocaille style appeared obvious when considering work by artists such as Lepautre, Oppenord, Pineau and Lajoue. But she found it hard to differentiate whether other artists, including Audran, Gillot, and Oudry, had

24 Michel, “Watteau and His Generation,” iii.
been influenced by the movement or, conversely, if they had exerted an influence on its development.26

A number of scholars reference Audran’s work when writing about Watteau because Audran acted as a mentor to the young painter.27 For instance, Martin Eidelberg completed exhaustive work on Watteau’s drawings. In his discussion of Watteau’s development as an artist, Eidelberg credited Watteau working with Audran, “the leading decorator of the moment.”28 An Eidelberg article described Audran’s La Muette commission and dates the project between 1709 and 1712 when Watteau worked for Audran. The commission is known through engravings of the figural characters contained within the arabesques, but the overall arabesque design is unknown, which was another factor leading Eidelberg to give credit to Watteau for the work as a whole and to reject Audran’s leading role in the design commission.

Katie Scott discussed the same Audran commission at La Muette and acknowledged the commission’s completion during the years 1708-12 when Audran employed Watteau.29 She believed that the lack of correspondence between an Audran drawing and the engraved Watteau figures reflected Audran’s practice of leaving areas of his designs open for subcontractors to complete. This assumption goes back to the statement made by Anne-Claude de Pestels, le comte de Caylus (1692-1765) in “La Vie d’Antoine Watteau: peintre de figures et de paysages sujets gallants et modernes.” According to Caylus, Audran allowed for others’ contributions by “the reservation of blank spaces, for the reception of figure[s] or other subjects in accordance with the

wishes of the various patrons [in] whom he had inspired a desire to have their walls and ceilings decorated in this manner, it was thus that artists in differing genres found employment in his studio.”  

This description has been interpreted by Scott and others as Audran’s method of giving assistants such as Watteau carte blanche for filling the blank areas. However, patrons contracted ornamental work with the maître Audran and he designed the overall arabesque design program discussing the project details and the cost of completion. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the subcontracted artists contributed to the overall design with their painted figures or motifs but Audran held the reins of the creative endeavor. The conclusion that Watteau or any of the subcontracted artists had free license in these projects takes the statements of the comte de Caylus further than what appears plausible.

Thomas E. Crow provided valuable scholarship regarding the tensions between the Maîtrise and Académie royale in his 1985 publication, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. In particular, Crow traced Watteau’s progression from a provincial artist arriving in Paris, to the development of his talent, to his induction into the Académie Royale. Watteau first worked in a maîtrise shop copying devotional images. Along with other outlets, retail sales of such images occurred at the Parisian fairs, where four or five theaters presented visitors with a variety of entertainments. Among the available shows was a popular version of the Italian commedia dell’arte whose characters inspired both Watteau and Audran. Images of such

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characters appeared at the hôtel de Nointel, an Audran commission dating from 1708. Crow doesn’t elaborate on Audran’s work, saying only that this mix of motifs became popular with elite patrons. The blending of motifs from popular theater as well as the grotesque tradition permitted the mixing of genres and allowed patrons to choose subjects to be used in the design of ceilings and wall panels. Crow includes two drawings from the Cronstedt drawing collection, but neither are Audran-attributed works. Both suggest an essentially elemental level of sophistication in the use of “the lower, bodily-oriented segment of the classical repertoire: heads of Bacchus, sileni, dolphins as messengers of love.” Crow’s overall view or perspective advances the superiority of academic artists over the Maître. However, this study does not adequately consider why Watteau sought to work under Audran instead of an academic mentor. Audran and his academic uncle, Gérard Audran did provide Watteau entry into a pool of noble patrons, and Audran’s work exposed the young Watteau to the use of popular culture in arabesques that would augment the latter’s fête galantes.

In 1995, Katie Scott took the analysis of Watteau’s work with Audran further in her seminal work The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-century Paris. In this publication, Scott describes Audran’s practices of subcontracting work and mentoring younger artists. Audran prospered as a result of his work at Meudon and later commissions. Scott confirmed his work with his drawings, extant ceilings and tapestry designs. She investigated how unified rococo interiors resulted from the coordinated efforts of craftsmen and the noble patrons who sponsored the commissions. In the process, Scott discussed the upper-

class salon culture that sought distinction from state-sponsored interior projects through commissioned arabesque interior schemes. However, that distinction became muddied over time when many of the newly rich emulated this noble style in their interiors. In her analysis, Scott viewed the role of architectural features and ornamentation as a fixed decorative detail and as a reflection of the social and political structures in elite society. Audran’s projects, in this dissertation, instead will show that the motifs chosen by patrons appear individually suited for each project. Even when the theme of La Fontaine’s *Fables* inspired motifs for two Audran commissions, the differences of each project and its patron from the other appear as unique interpretations of the theme. These interpretations will be discussed in chapter four. Scott suggests that Watteau’s role with Audran might have been “confining and supportive…” and Watteau’s patrons proved to be different from Audran’s “Who’s Who” list of noble patrons. Scott opined that the younger painter’s unsuccessful attempt to break into that elite list may have been the impetus for Watteau’s return to easel painting.

The decorative art historian Alain Gruber published an exhaustive study entitled, *The History of Decorative Arts: Classicism and the Baroque in Europe* in 1994. In it, he included essays by authors who studied various forms of ornament, noting the formal appearance and its execution over a period of one hundred and thirty years (1630-1760). The ornament types under analysis include such forms as the acanthus, arabesques, and chinoiserie among others. This perspective explains the historical use of the forms and their execution by various craftsmen. Gruber admits that the meaning of ornament can be confusing and relied on each author to define the significance of each ornamental motif during the period. In the chapter discussing

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arabesques, Bruno Pons focused on the evolution of motifs from the grotesque to what he described as the “new arabesque.” He briefly reviewed the ornament’s ancient roots, but concentrated on the craftsmen using the arabesque, such as Jean Berain and Claude III Audran in France. Their application of the ornamental form transformed its appearance through the addition of new motifs within the compositions. This overview provided insight to the ornament, but considered the form in isolation, extracted from the interior, metalwork, or decorative art and without the constraints of the taste of the patron or the immediate cultural context. Audran is discussed in a lineage of other craftsmen and the study was never meant to analyze his or any craftsman’s particular oeuvre.

Gérard Mabille brings another perspective to Audran because he focused on the Ménagerie at Versailles, a commission dating from 1699. Mabille first documented the project in 1974 when he recorded a chronology of the construction and later renovation of the small château on the zoo’s terrain. Using the available documentation, he also described the few known interior details and the renovation of the interiors for the duchesse de Bourgogne in 1699. In 2003, Jennifer Spinks analyzed what was known about the Ménagerie interiors, speculating from an Audran drawing with singerie (now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France) and two known paintings said to hang in one of the rooms (Figure 2). She linked the singerie monkeys in Audran’s drawing to La Fontaine’s Fables and believed that it reflected the pedagogical approach of Abbé Fénélon, who promoted the use of fables to teach with pleasure or wit. Spinks also noted the use of fables for the Labyrinth garden at Versailles and concluded that the

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interior decoration served as a light-hearted educational purpose for the benefit of the young Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy.\textsuperscript{44}

Then, in 2010, Gérard Mabille and Joan Pieragnoli published new research regarding the Ménagerie using a previously unknown 1764 interior inventory preserved at the Archives nationale de France.\textsuperscript{45} That inventory described Audran’s arabesques along with the illustrated characters for each room. One room, presided over by the personification of satire, Momus, featured eighty vignettes of La Fontaine \textit{Fables}. My analysis of the 1764 inventory in chapter four contributes to the discussion of the Ménagerie commission (1699) and Audran’s later use of the \textit{Fables} at the château Réveillon. The dominance of Audran’s designs in this installation at Versailles established a design precedent that influenced interiors during the early decades of the eighteenth century, when painted arabesque interiors became a hallmark of the Régence and the early years of Louis XV’s reign. John Whitehead’s \textit{The French Interior in the Eighteenth Century} included a Réveillon painted panel by Audran; Whitehead used that panel as an example to illustrate how colorful painted panels became the principal decorative scheme for reception rooms of the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{46} Whitehead cited Audran’s examples at the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras (c. 1724) in addition to the Réveillon illustration, but did not elaborate further on Audran’s work.

Rochelle Ziskin’s study of the Place Vendôme examined the buildings of this public square from the early aspirations of Louis XIV, when progress foundered, to the Régence when the urban environment became part of the Parisian building boom.\textsuperscript{47} Ziskin chronicled the

\textsuperscript{44} Spinks, “Education and Entertainment,” 31-32.
\textsuperscript{45} Gérard Mabille and Joan Pieragnoli, \textit{La Ménagerie de Versailles} (Arles, France: Éditions Honoré Clair, 2010), 4-96. The unpaginated inventory, “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” dated to about 1764, is in the collection of the Archives nationales de France (O°1 2080).
development of this urban hub near the Palais Royal, which housed the Regent Philippe, duc d’Orléans, and his government. Many of the status-seeking rich or nouveau riche built hôtels particuliers at the Place Vendôme and sought Audran’s expertise to demonstrate their taste and status, a phenomenon that will be discussed further in chapter five.

My first chapter relates the known biographical facts about Claude III Audran. Unfortunately, he left no letters or diaries, but information gleaned from previous scholarship and primary sources begins to tell the narrative of this artist’s life. From his early years of training, Audran experienced the competition for state commissions between the Maîtrise and the painters of the Académie royale. He lived with his uncle, an academic painter, and learned about the social, cultural and political factors impacting the artistic marketplace. He astutely chose to advance his career as a member of the Maîtrise, and subcontract work to younger artists, who would later become part of the Académie royale. This practice allowed Audran to cater to the whims of noble patrons driven to display their position following the concept of bienséance, which will be discussed in chapter four. Audran’s patrons include elite members of society from the reign of Louis XIV, through the Régence, and into the reign of Louis XV. The chronology of Audran’s commissions based on payments made by the Bâtiments du Roi, provides useful information for the period of the reign of Louis XIV. Subsequent Audran documentation comes from primary and secondary sources. A number of projects, the château de Petit-Bourg, for example, represent venues in which Audran completed work. But the château was demolished and the interior paneling sold without documentation that might enable the tracing of its whereabouts. The commissions discussed in this dissertation have varying amounts of documentation and represent Audran’s work through the forty years of his career.
The ceiling described briefly at the beginning of this introduction characterizes Audran’s arabesque designs and presents the greatest difficulty for art historical analysis. Unlike history painting, the arabesque is non-narrative, and its symbolic meaning must be discerned in conjunction with consideration of the individual patron and the historical context of the work. That ceiling will be discussed in detail in chapter five, although the development of the arabesque from the ancient grotesque so essential for an understanding of Audran’s oeuvre, will be discussed earlier, in chapter two. Italian immigrant artists brought the grotesque motif to France when they received a commission from François I (1494-1547) for Fontainebleau. As a consequence, the motif conveyed a sense of noble status when used subsequently. The *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture & gravure* (c. 1792), explained that the arabesque can be found in painted panels and in the interior décor of rooms and is composed of plant, branches, flower motifs and architectural framing devices that “can offer arrangements which please or inspire numerous ideas.” The description goes on to explain that arabesques present agreeable objects, but the union and arrangement are chimeric or fabulous. Described as moving away from simple ideas, arabesques were said to be viewed and understood as illustrating the “dreams of painting.” The definition notes further that “reason and taste dictate that they are not the dreams of a sick person but rather the musings comparable to those experienced by an eastern voluptuary under the influence of a skillfully measured dose of opium.”

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49 “Les arabesques présentent donc le plus souvent des objets agréables & partialement vrais; mais dont le réunion & l’agencement sont chimérique.” Watelet and Levesque, *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture, et gravure*, 90.
associate meaning as if in a dream.\textsuperscript{52} The picturesque dreams resembled those formed by the young, in happy, playful moments and all that is presented in nature. According to the definition, “the capable artist, whose imagination is as fertile as it is worldly, assembles and arranges various rich or light fabrics that he hangs, that he suspends gracefully as noted in the decoration of tents, pavilions…”\textsuperscript{53} Finally, “when arabesque have a comic nature, they are similar to a joke in a literary work, or in a conversation, and everyone knows that the joke in whatever form it appears, ought to be always light, gay, in good taste and witty and never over-emphasized.”\textsuperscript{54}

This contemporary definition appears to parallel the social behavior of the honnête gens, the elite court nobles, whose manners will be discussed in chapter five.

Audran’s chosen mode of expression, the arabesque, continued to have an association to the chimeric or fabulous that can be attributed originally to the hybridic elements of the grotesque, as when a scrolling acanthus leaf becomes the body for a monster’s head. This notion of the fabulous continued conceptually in arabesques with transitory elements, such as the progress of time in zodiac signs, as seen in Audran’s tapestry design for the months of the year, entitled \textit{Mois grotesques}.

The hybridic theme was also created when Audran, with François Desportes, combined the venerable arabesque framing devices with contemporary vignettes of La Fontaine’s \textit{Fables}. Later, the inclusion of characters made popular in the late-seventeenth century by the Italian theater, the commedia dell’arte, continued this theme and also came to suggest burlesque

\textsuperscript{52} Pons, “Arabesques, or New Grotesques,” 174.
\textsuperscript{53} “L’artiste instruit, dont l’imagination ne doit pas être moins féconde qu’aimable, assemble & dispose des étoffes riches ou légères qu’il suspend, qu’il rattache avec grace, comme on le fait en décorant des tentes, des pavillons…” Watelet and Levesque, \textit{Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture, et gravure}, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{54} “Lorsque les arabesques sont du genre comique, ils sont dans la peinture ce que la plaisanterie est dans les ouvrages littéraires, ou dans la conversation, & tout le monde sait que la plaisanterie, sous quelque forme qu’elle se montre, doit être de bon gout, légère, gaie, spirituelle, qu’il ne fait pas y insister trop.” Watelet and Levesque, \textit{Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture, et gravure}, 96.
mockery. Frequently accompanying those commedia dell’arte characters, the Greek god Momus personified mockery, satire and folly. These developments and amplifications of the arabesque by Audran followed a long tradition of the grotesque originating in ancient Rome. An explanation of the roots of the arabesque in the second chapter provides the background to understanding the fabulous nature and hybridic features in this art form. Over the course of his career, Audran produced hundreds of painted arabesques using a medley of motifs.

Each of the following case studies (chapters 3, 4, and 5) includes extant written accounts of the project in question, as well as information about the building and/or room for which the design was devised, the patron who commissioned it, and any other pertinent details situating Audran’s work in the economic and social context. These chapters follow his career, providing a sense of how his style developed over time. The first of my case studies, chapter 3, considers the noble courtiers need to escape the rigors of court life, to venues providing ready access for the pursuit of the hunt or the enjoyment of music. At the Château d’Anet, one of Audran’s earliest commissions (1689), he designed ornamentation complementing the country house in which the duc de Vendôme sought escape by hunting on the grounds of his ancestral home. Anet had been the Renaissance home of Diane de Poitiers, duchesse of Valentinois (1499-1566), a favorite at the court of François I and mistress to his son Henry II (1519-1559). During his reign, Henry II commissioned Philibert Delorme (1514-1570) to design and rebuild Anet. The crown shouldered the reconstruction costs of the château completed in the mid-sixteenth century which served as a gift from the king to his mistress Diane (though built on lands owned by her deceased husband). Together, Henry II and his consort used the château as a getaway for hunting and entertaining, as it would also be used by the duc de Vendôme in the late seventeenth century. Other escape venues, to be discussed in this chapter, include the château neuf at Meudon and the château at
Sceaux. The château neuf at Meudon brought Audran within the orbit of the Dauphin and his circle. At Sceaux, the duchesse du Maine played the quintessential hostess to a glittering court of cultivated nobles and she provided any number of musical entertainments. Audran’s commissions at the château are discussed as well as a painted harpsichord, now preserved at Versailles, attributed to Audran and similar in description to those owned by the duchesse du Maine. My analysis of Audran’s harpsichord ornament includes the contextual background leading to the need for new ornamentation, a factor that has received little scholarly attention. Harpsichord music, in particular, by François Couperin will be discussed because many of his compositions refer to specific nobles, many of whom also patronized Audran. The coincidence of similar patrons suggests the close-knit coterie of elite patrons.

The second case study (chapter 4) chronicles Audran’s work for Louis XIV at the Ménagerie, a building set in the zoological garden at Versailles. The Ménagerie, one of the first buildings erected in the extensive gardens surrounding the palace, was refurbished and expanded by Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646-1708) in 1698 at the behest of King Louis XIV. The King presented the structure and its renovated rooms as a gift to Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, the duchesse de Bourgogne (1685-1712) after her marriage (at age twelve) to the King’s grandson. Louis XIV was eager that the new interiors reflect the youthfulness of the intended occupant, and to that end Audran aimed for playful and engagingly didactic décors inspired by the *Fables* of Jean de La Fontaine (1621-95). The *Fables*, which drew upon those of Aesop, the ancient legendary figure who lived in Greece between 620 and 560 BCE, had been recently published in Paris (1668-1694). La Fontaine’s *Fables*, short stories in which animals take on human roles and
behaviors to illustrate moral precepts, have been characterized as “teaching through delight.”

Accompanied by illustrations, La Fontaine’s lessons relied on the reader’s ability to tease out the meaning of the picture by musing upon the text. The themes of Aesop’s *Fables* inspired Charles Perrault’s designs for thirty-nine sculptural fountains for the Labyrinth Garden at Versailles, dedicated to the Grand Dauphin. This installation and La Fontaine’s *Fable* collection dedicated to the same Dauphin elevated the fable theme, previously considered a low form of genre. Louis XIV’s renovation of the Ménagerie for Marie-Adélaïde asserted her noble status. My analysis will show that the renovation adhered to the dictates of convenence and bienséance, which I will discuss, through the use of the *Fables* theme as well as the elite caliber of decorative arts specifically made for the interiors.

My third case study (chapter 5) focuses on Audran’s work for three financiers, Louis Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel (1649-1718); Joseph-Jean-Baptiste Fleuriau d’Armenonville (1661-1728); and the Marquis, Abraham Peyrenc de Moras (1686-1732), who all rose to prominence in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Audran’s patron Louis Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel, conseiller d’État, and Intendant de la province de Bretagne followed in the footsteps of his father (who had been Conseiller du Roi and Surintendant des finances et des bâtiments du duc d’Orléans), and amassed a fortune that allowed him to buy his title in 1697. A relative parvenu, Béchameil sought to display his rise in status through the purchase of a luxurious hôtel in the fashionable Place Vendôme district, an area that became home to many of the financial elite who were either recently ennobled or had aspirations to that status.

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Armenonville and Peyrenc de Moras followed their own path to wealth and noble status that will be discussed. These nouveaux riches emulated the established nobility in their patterns of conspicuous consumption, which included luxurious clothing, jewelry, fine wines, silverware, and lavish interior decoration. Several turned to Audran, whose work had become synonymous with elite décors, to ornament their homes with his trademark arabesques. Rather than seeking private escape (as the duc de Vendôme did at Anet), Béchamel and his peers sought to broadcast their newfound wealth and status via high-end décors imitating those favored by nobles and royalty alike. Their pretention of noble status on par with the elite would provoke an eventual rejection of the arabesque as a distinct form of upper-class interior decoration by the more established representatives of the nobility.

The last case study (chapter 6), discusses both Audran’s influence on competitors, who took inspiration from his arabesques, and on his protégés and his impact on their careers. Audran’s work did not go unnoticed by contemporaries and some created interiors on a par with his work, such as Pierre Cailleteau, known as Lassurance (1655-1724) and Giles Marie Oppenord (1672-1742). Over the course of some forty years, Audran’s assistants included François Desportes, Jean Antoine Watteau, Nicolas Lancret, Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755), and Christophe Huet (1700-1759), among others. Desportes, an animalier, worked on Audran’s earliest commissions, adding fauna to Audran’s arabesques. Desportes later achieved independent success as a member of the Académie royale. Watteau can be credited with enlarging the figural elements within the arabesque framing devices, which, as Donald Posner

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writes, are “personalities” rather than mere “symbols or ornament.” Watteau, he notes, “pictorialized” the arabesque; the panels Audran produced in collaboration with him launched an eighteenth-century vogue for décors incorporating vignettes of painted figures. The panels they produced together blur the distinction between easel and ornamental painting. Lancret followed a similar path to Watteau, becoming a member of the Académie royale and specializing in the fête galante genre. Oudry’s talent for painted animal portraits and hunt scenes attracted the attention of Louis XIV and others, garnering many subsequent commissions as a member of the Académie royale. Finally, after assisting Audran at the château Réveillon, Christophe Huet parlayed his experience into other decorative commissions. He became a member of the Maîtrise and his subsequent work included two decorative ensembles for Louis Henri, prince de Condé, duc de Bourbon, at the château de Chantilly.

Each brought their specialty to the fore when working with the master, who designed and directed each commission. All of these assistants benefitted from their collaboration with Audran, not least of which was learning to satisfy their elite clientele effectively. Instead of taking on partners and dividing profits, Audran relied on subcontracting, which limited his own cost outlays and helped offset the cash flow difficulties that sometimes resulted from the crown’s habit of sporadic payment. Throughout these chapters, the career of Claude III Audran and his contributions to rococo design should become evident. He achieved success through his attentive responses to his patrons, creating distinctive arabesques, and remaining on the cutting-edge of design for decades through the addition of popular French motifs. His role as a maîtrise ornamentalist directing the work of other artists, many of whom became academicians,

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ingeniously combined the expertise of both classes of artists, the Maîtrise and the Academy, and demonstrated the two career paths that an artist could follow in this period. His arabesques revealed the priorities of his patrons in displaying elite taste and reflect, over the course of his long career, the events that shaped the economic, social and cultural milieu.

Claude III Audran had a long and successful career, but the very trendiness of his designs doomed most of the rooms brought to completion under his supervision to eventual renovation and replacement when styles changed. In his career, we see an artist existing between two worlds, one of which would disappear in the course of the next decades. The work of an ornamentalist, the director of the decorative ensembles that characterized the private dwellings and châteaux, would become obsolete, and the Academy soon would define all artistic careers.
Chapter 1-Biography of Claude III Audran

A red chalk drawing completed by Antoine Watteau dated 1709 may be the only known physical likeness of Claude III Audran. Although the identification of the sitter has been debated, Watteau is known to have worked as Audran’s assistant for several years, and the drawing shows the subject devising the sort of arabesque design for which Audran was known (Figure 3).\(^1\) Watteau’s subject is seen in profile, sitting on a cushioned stool, the luxuriousness of which, along with the sitter’s formal attire—coat, breeches, and a periwig—would indicate the level of prestige Audran had attained by this date.\(^2\)

The small size of this drawing (7-15/16 by 5-5/16 inches) and the fact that there are no known portraits of Audran to which it might be compared correspond to the paucity of biographical information available on this artist. Audran left no letters or memoirs of his life. In 1906, Pierre Marcel, in his *La Peinture française au début du dix-huitième siècle, 1690-1721*, noted that the absence of details regarding Audran was regrettable. Given these limitations, this chapter relates known facts drawn from previous scholarship and from primary sources. From these sources, it is possible to piece together Audran’s lifelong career and, for the first time, analyze how this artist acted as a link between the traditional role of the Maîtrise and the artists of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. Divided into three sections, the biography

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\(^2\) McCullagh, 37.
begins with Audran’s family background and training. The second section starts when Audran embarks on his independent career as a master craftsman, and the third part of the biography relates to Audran’s later career after the reign of Louis XIV. A chronology of commissioned projects (See Appendix) enriches the biographical outline by listing the various sites where Audran worked and the artists with whom he collaborated, illustrating Audran’s increasing success with noble patrons. A number of factors that seem relevant to the progress of Audran’s career—such as changes in monarchial regimes, economic upheavals, and developments in the design of interior spaces—will be cited.

Previous scholarship in the mid-twentieth century by Roger-Armand Weigert drew from the comptes des bâtiments to construct an Audran chronology. ³ Weigert’s timeline notes the sites of these commissions and specifies the nature of the work completed (e.g., painted ornament, ceiling design, restoration of gilding). The dates for these commissions and their locations situate the artist in time and place and begin to indicate the extent of his involvement with the Bâtiments du Roi (the King’s department of buildings). One of the earliest commissions noted by Weigert involved a painted ceiling made around 1695-1698 for the Princess de Carignan (1656-1722) at the hôtel de Soissons. ⁴ The type of room and the specific design details of the ceiling remain unknown, but Audran must have distinguished himself in this commission because an increased number of elite patrons subsequently sought his expertise in painted arabesque designs.

The Early Years

At the time of the Carignan commission’s completion in 1698, Audran was in his late 30s and living in Paris. He had come to the French capital from Lyon, where two generations of his family had worked as painters and/or engravers. He probably trained with family members, and it seems likely that his family’s reputation helped him win his first commissions. In 1875, L. Charvet outlined the genealogy of the Audran family as well as known works by Claude III’s predecessors. Charvet noted, for instance, that Claude III’s great uncle Charles (1594-1674), an engraver in Paris, completed four plates illustrating Charles LeBrun’s *Les Quatre Saisons*, a design intended for the ceiling of the grand salon at the chateau of Vaux-le-Vicomte.⁵ Charles’s brother Claude I (1592-1677), who was born in Paris and died in Lyon, was also an engraver. He and his wife, Hélie Fratelat, had four children: Germain, Claude II, Gérard, and Antoinette.⁶

Germain (1631-1710) remained in Lyon, where he worked as an engraver; his work is known through a catalogue of some 170 works, edited by Le Blanc. Germain, who became a deputy professor at the École de dessin et peinture in Lyon, was credited as master for the engraver Pierre Drevet (1663-1738). Germain and his wife, Jeanne Cizeron, had five children, including Claude III, who was born in 1658. Germain’s brother Claude II (1639-1684) was a painter, having studied first in Lyon with Antoine Wairix and later in Paris with Noël Coypel (1628-1707) and Charles Errard (1606-1689). Claude II was received in the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in 1675 (with a painting of the Last Supper as his morceau de réception) and was named a professor in 1684.⁷

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The youngest of Claude I’s sons, Gérard (1640-1703), also left Lyon for Paris, where he became Graveur ordinaire du Roy and a consultant in the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. Before settling in Paris, Gérard spent six years in Italy and studied in the atelier of Carle Maratte (dates unknown). Upon his return to France, he gained the attention of Charles Lebrun (1619-1690) and was recruited by Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) to work in the service of the King. In this capacity, he received lodgings at the Gobelins manufactury, where he rendered Lebrun’s *Batailles d’Alexandre* (The Battles of Alexander) as a five-part tapestry suite. Three years later, he established himself independently in a boutique on the rue Saint-Jacques named Aux deux piliers d’or. During his long career, Gérard completed over 300 works, mentored many students, and published a drawing manual, *Les proportions du corps humain, mesurée sur les plus belles figures de l’antiquité* (1683). During his apprenticeship in Lebrun’s atelier he married the sister of a fellow student, Louis Licherie.

Little is known about Antoinette Audran, Claude I’s only daughter. She evidently did not marry and lived in the house of her nephew, Claude III, after he became Concierge at the Luxembourg Palace. The Audran genealogy shows that most of its members married, although Claude II and his nephew Claude III did not. Failure to marry was unusual, since marriage was a means of improving one’s social position.

Regarding Claude III’s family, his brothers were also artists. Gabriel (1659-1740), a painter and sculptor, was admitted to the Académie, as was Benoît (1661-1721), an engraver. Jean (1667-1756) was also an engraver and earned the title of Graveur ordinaire du Roy, and the

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youngest, Louis (1670-1712), continued in the same professional path as his siblings, Benoit and Jean.11

Claude III, the oldest of five siblings, was born August 25, 1658 and baptized in the Lyon parish of Saint-Nizier, with his uncle Claude II as godfather and Dame Andrée-François as godmother.12 Nothing is known of his early training, but his father’s profession as an engraver and professor in the local art school and the creative endeavors of his extended family would seem to have fostered his artistic abilities. By January 1692, Claude III was received into the Académie de Saint-Luc in Paris as a “maîstre peintre, sculpteur, graveur et enjoliveur.”13 At the time, he lived on the rue Pavée (later known as the rue des Orties) with his brother, Gabriel, and his uncle, Claude II.14 The influence of his uncle/godfather on Claude III probably was significant. Working with LeBrun, first painter to Louis XIV, Claude II contributed to projects at the château de Sceaux, the château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and in the grand stairway at Versailles. Claude II also collaborated with René-Antoine Houasse (1645-1710) and Jean Jouvenet (1644-1717) at the châteaux of the Tuileries and of Versailles. Such a well-placed uncle could have easily drawn on his artisanal network to promote Claude III when tony commissions were handed out.

Like his uncle, Claude III found employment at the Bâtiments du Roi—not as a history painter but rather as a decorative painter. Moreover, instead of entering the Académie royale, Claude III joined the Académie de Saint-Luc, a community of Maîtres peintres or master painters that had been established during the reign of Charles VI in 1391 and whose supremacy was

13 Dacier and Vuaflart, Jean de Julienne et les Graveurs 19.
14 Dacier and Vuaflart, Jean de Julienne et les Graveurs, 19.
challenged in the late seventeenth century by the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture.\textsuperscript{15}

To qualify for membership and the designation of Maître, a candidate had to apprentice to an established master for five years and then serve as his assistant for an additional four. The candidate then worked as a Maître for ten years and then presented a chef-d’oeuvre before being elected to the full duties of a master. The training period of nineteen years after the initial admission to the Académie de Saint-Luc suggests that Claude III came to Paris before he was 15 years old because he was received at the age of 34.\textsuperscript{16}

The professional world of art was changing rapidly during these years with the growing rivalry between the Académie and the Maîtrise. It is important to understand the competing forces in order to contextualize Claude III Audran’s decision to align with the guild Maîtrise. Before the founding of the Académie royale, the Académie de Saint-Luc, known as the Maîtrise, held a monopoly on the production of art from the time of its founding (1391). Nonetheless, a separate royal provision allowed a select group of artists, the brevetaires, to work directly for the crown and outside guild restrictions, as well as without paying guild dues.\textsuperscript{17} Guild members’ animosity toward these chosen few affected relations between these groups for generations. By the seventeenth century, the Maîtrise had successfully fought to limit the number of the brevetaires and sought to further limit their activities.\textsuperscript{18} As a response, the brevetaire Charles LeBrun rallied the support of the royal councilor Martin de Charmois, who successfully petitioned for the founding of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture as an independent corporate entity. Its stated purpose was to elevate the practice of painting and sculpture to the

\textsuperscript{16} Dacier and Vuaflart, \textit{Jean de Julienne et les graveurs}, 19.
\textsuperscript{18} Crow, \textit{Painters and Public Life}, 24.
status of a liberal art. Claude III’s decision to join the Académie de Saint-Luc rather than the Académie royale should then be understood as his commitment to the ornamental art of the Maîtrise.

During his apprenticeship, Claude III became familiar with the competition within the ranks of painters and craftsmen of the Bâtiments du Roi, the king’s building department. Since Louis XIV’s assumption of his position as absolute ruler in 1661, his chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert served the monarch as a financial advisor and leading member of his Council of State and became Surintendant des bâtiments. Colbert reorganized the production and management of the arts as well as court activities, with the express purpose of promoting the powerful image of the King and to generate unquestioned monarchial hegemony.19 Overseeing all manner of building and construction, the First Architect to the King, Jules Hardouin-Mansart gained control of the Bâtiments du Roi after Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s death in 1683 and became responsible for the organization and timely execution of all state building projects.

Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646-1708) came to prominence after the Peace treaty of Nijmegen in 1678, when he was assigned to supervise the extensive expansion of the Versailles palace resulting in the addition of the massive north and south wings.20 On completion of the additions in 1682, Louis XIV took up official residence with his administration, and the accommodations provided housing for the entire court consisting of ten thousand inhabitants.21

Besides the change in surintendent of the Bâtiments, the Académie royale’s art production became distinctive under LeBrun’s direction through the art instruction modeled after the example of the Italian Accademia di San Luca in Rome. This program of education further

20 Burke, *Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 85.
intensified the breach between the Académie and the Maîtrise. The model of the Italian academia instruction focused attention on the imitation of antique art, the portrayal of noble themes, and the study of the human figure.\textsuperscript{22} Admiration of Italian art by the French dated back to the reign of François I, who sought to attract artists and men of letters to his court, which will be discussed in chapter 2.\textsuperscript{23} Louis XIII, whose Prime Minister, Cardinal Richelieu and the surintendant des arts, Sublet de Noyers, further promoted the imitative practice of Italian art by French artists.\textsuperscript{24} Taking inspiration from Italy, LeBrun believed that instruction of life-drawing classes from the male nude was invaluable for aspiring artists and fostered greater competence in history painting. The Académie royale adopted the Italian hierarchy of genres, with narrative history painting—multi-figured compositions illustrating noble virtues—at the pinnacle of the genre scale. This hierarchy defined the art production ideology of the French academy. This ideology and hierarchy elevated and set the product of the Académie royale apart as a distinctive art form compared to the “repetitious pattern-book designs the Academy accused the Maîtrise of using.”\textsuperscript{25}

Accepting the Italian humanist model of education, the French Academy sought to inspire the ideal development of the artist-theoretician, who was learned in the language arts and whose arts reflected that understanding.\textsuperscript{26} The Academy’s approach to art production was a dual one, both practical and theoretical.

In 1661, Colbert assumed the role of vice-protecteur of the Academy until 1672 and protecteur from 1672 to 1674. Colbert needed the institution and its artists to serve the ambitious

\textsuperscript{22} Duro, \textit{The Academy and the Limits of Painting in Seventeenth-Century France} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41.
\textsuperscript{24} Duro, \textit{The Academy and the Limits of Painting}, 45.
\textsuperscript{25} Duro, \textit{The Academy and the Limits of Painting}, 51.
objectives of Louis XIV with art production that illustrated the power of the monarchy. The king’s drive to secure absolute authority resulted from his formative experiences of the Fronde rebellion during his minority. The Fronde, a series of civil wars (1648-52), began in opposition to the policies decreasing the authority of nobles and the Parlements instituted under Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII’s Prime Minister. Experiencing this opposition during his minority left an unforgettable impression on Louis XIV. With the death of Cardinal Mazarin, who served as Prime Minister with Regent Anne of Austria, Louis XIV began his personal rule consolidating his position by declaring himself absolute ruler. When the king gained his majority in 1661 and assumed absolute control, the royal works and the Academy became entirely consumed with commissions for the crown. Initiating commissions for architecture and interior decorative projects in response to the desires and direction of the king became increasingly important, not only to the development of the Academy, but also to the numerous craftsmen and artisans of the Maîtrise. LeBrun, who designed everything from Gobelins tapestries to interior design, including complex historical painting schemes, assembled a team of assistants and delegated the various elements of commissions in order to complete them in a timely fashion. At this point, the Maîtrise and academic artists worked side by side on royal projects.

Complementing the architectural achievements, LeBrun’s revolutionary design, in the Louvre as well as at Versailles, featured narrative history painting. The narrative paintings dominated the interiors, and were surrounded by decorative friezes that contributed to the storytelling. Together these elements formed a consonant whole design scheme. In the narrative history paintings created by LeBrun and other academic painters, allegorized images conveyed this ideology, which was writ large in the architecture and the decorative scheme of the palace.

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A number of commissioned works had been completed in the Louvre when Louis XIV decided to move the court to Versailles. During his minority, Louis XIV’s experienced the Fronde rebellion when the nobility sought to regain governmental power and led to the king’s response to consolidate his monarchial power. In his effort to control the nobility, he brought them together under the roof of Versailles. The move coincided with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1668 and inaugurated a period of peace and prosperity, permitting the first phase of the palace’s expansion. Versailles became the perfect platform for the king’s demanding agenda. It both demonstrated the power of the king, through the deployment of the allegorized image, and the projection of his absolutism. The architect Louis LeVau (1612-1670) devised the palace’s expansion, which enveloped the original hunting lodge of Louis XIII and included the Grand Appartements, suites of rooms for the king and queen. It also featured a grand staircase known as the Escalier des Ambassadeurs. Claude II Audran, as part of a team of artists under LeBrun’s direction, contributed to the illusionistic, painted decoration of these spaces. In the king’s apartments, Claude II completed two tableaux of history subjects given by Claude Perrault, contrôleur des bâtiments. The first represented an episode from the life of the ancient Cyrus, from the biography by Xenophon, and the second depicted a scene with Caesar, taken from Plutarch.

Additional phases of building under the direction of Jules Hardouin-Mansart followed after 1678. Mansart designed the vast north and south wings, as well as the Hall of Mirrors, complemented by the Salon of War and the Salon of Peace on either end. Scores of artists and

craftsmen who were enlisted in the production of art, interior design and decorative arts achieved aesthetic outcomes that became the envy of Europe. The scale and opulence in these expansive activities projected the power and status of the king to all who visited the palace.

A newcomer to the French scene, Jean Berain came to know LeBrun’s work when he completed engravings of LeBrun’s allegorical paintings in the Gallery of Apollo of the Louvre about 1670. That initial experience of Berain working for the crown led to his appointment for a separate department, known as the Départment de l’argenterie et des menus-plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du Roi. This department was responsible for the person of his majesty, meaning the production of all the costumes and outfits for fêtes, balls, masquerades, and entertainments, as well as the linens, jewels, and other finery. Originally organized during the reign of François I, the menus-plaisirs was also responsible for the organization and planning of all the court entertainments as well as the renovation of royal chambers, the wardrobes of the royal children, and everything from furniture to the clothing of valets.

Claude III Audran and Berain both shared a family background in the business of engraving. Berain had completed an apprenticeship in the art of engraving and acquired a familiarity with decorative motifs, including the grotesque, through print media and by engraving the work of masters such as LeBrun. In 1670, the excellence of Berain’s work in the engravings of LeBrun’s Gallery of Apollo in the Louvre led to subsequent royal commissions, and Berain advanced quickly in the ranks. By 1674, he took a position within the menus-plaisirs, where his ability to delegate responsibilities to numerous subordinate artisans proved integral to his success.

Acting in coordination with the Bâtiments du Roi, Berain and the menus-plaisirs catered to the social life of Louis XIV, which provided a powerful magnet at court. Weigert noted that the work of the menus-plaisirs was not only quite varied, but also executed within a tight schedule. Berain’s position required a lively and fertile imagination; knowledge of design details, which included perspective and its effects; a working comprehension of architectural principles; and a clear sense of the king’s taste.35

In Berain’s prodigious output, he utilized different media and decorative motifs, including the grotesque, for costume designs, theater and stage sets, and the decorative arts to entice and delight his viewers. His design vocabulary predominantly featured ancient Classical and Renaissance motifs such as floral garlands, pergolas, baldachins, and putti. Berain can also be credited for creating grotesques, including singerie, figures in which monkeys assume comic attitudes like playfully swinging on garlands or teasing nearby dogs.36

When Jean Berain appropriated grotesque motifs for new applications such as costume design and interiors, those applications did not follow ancient precedent but still carried the lineage of noble status. Berain’s demonstrated freedom to appropriate motifs and to modify their treatment influenced Audran. This was especially evident in Audran’s arabesques devised with motifs of popular culture that expressed the status of his patron—not only for pedigreed nobles, but also for those whose noble position was relatively new. The lighthearted nature of the motifs such as playful monkey figures of the singerie, and commedia dell’arte figures contrasted with the express purpose of conveying the importance of a patron’s status to make Audran’s arabesques seriously whimsical.

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35 Weigert, Jean I Berain, 37.
36 Alessandra Zamperini, Ornament and the Grotesque (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 2008), 212.
Claude III as a young apprentice would have been familiar with Berain’s work and his creative design solutions. In addition, if Claude III Audran arrived in Paris as estimated in 1673, he would have witnessed the Crown’s peak in building activity stimulated by Louis XIV’s desire to expand the Louvre and Versailles palaces. Through Claude II, Claude III would have been familiar with the collaborations among academic artists and the Maîtrise working together on decorative ensembles, such as at Versailles.

During those formative years, he also saw first-hand the gradual change in state-sponsored projects following the death of Colbert in 1683. Reversals in previously successful military campaigns and economic endeavors, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which forced the emigration of numerous talented Protestant craftsmen, changed the course of Louis XIV’s reign. As the military expenditures grew (from 74,370,000 livres in 1680 to 116,900,000 livres in 1690), the budget of the Bâtiments du Roi shrank (from 7 million livres in 1688 to 3 million in 1689 and 1 million in 1690). The dismal economic situation led to higher taxes and the melting down of the solid silver furniture of Versailles’s Grande Galerie. Cutting the state subsidy to the Royal Academy forced many accomplished artists to seek commissions abroad or accept patronage from the private sector.

Claude III may once have considered applying for membership in the Academy—especially before the death of his uncle, when building at Versailles was at its height—but the reality of fewer state commissions for academicians and artisans in the 1690s may have dissuaded him. Audran was mute regarding his rationale for choosing the guild rather than the

Académie royale. However, after approximately nineteen years of apprenticeship, he earned full acceptance as a Maîtrise, which offered trade regulations, the right to train apprentices, and protection from competition by foreign and non-guild craftsmen in the marketplace. He focused his abilities to win commissions devising ornamental arabesques. By comparison, the Académie royale, by royal decree, separated its artists from trade work. According to the precepts of the Académie, the nature of commercial labor and its “vile artisans” included commissions covering the walls of churches and buildings with color and overloaded with grotesque and moresques ornament. The Académie pursued a noble form of art and students portrayed historical subjects. The disposition of the subject included consideration of the expression of each figure, the perspective with regard to the placement of figures and the illusion of light, the design and proportion of all parts and the distribution of color. The manner of such compositions was explained through presentations of esteemed art works in conferences recorded by André Félibien. Audran’s arabesque designs did not qualify as works of history painting. When Audran presented himself to be received, even though the nature of his chef d’oeuvre remains unknown, he accepted his position as Maître in the Académie de Saint-Luc.

Despite the efforts of LeBrun and other polemicists of the mid-to late seventeenth century to raise the status of academicians, artists still ranked third in the five categories of Parisian métiers, artists and craftsmen, that included butchers, millers, and clockmakers. The Académie

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41 M. Anatole de Montaiglon, Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture depuis 1648 jusqu’en 1664 (Paris : Chez P. Jannet, 1853), 5.
43 André Félibien, Conférences de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l’année 1667 (1668 ; repr., Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1973), 65
44 Dating from 1581, the first rank included 9 types of occupations and was considered the best, such as apothecary, grocer, refiner, draper, jeweler, or ironmonger. The second rank considered between the best and the mediocre included barbers, tailor of religious garments, boilermakers, fresh-water fishmongers, and dyers of silk or linen. The third rank considered average featured 49 different occupations, such as gunsmiths, sellers of glasses and bottles, the
royale’s goal to have painting recognized as a liberal art required time. Donald Posner described, “it was only at the turn of the century that the idea of painting and sculpture as a liberal art (or fine) art began to be accepted by the community at large.” Nonetheless, the collecting of art in the private sector signified a measure of culture, on a par with social skills such as conversation and letter writing. While the motivations of the private connoisseur usually differed from the propagandistic aims of the crown, both collected a variety of painting genres.

After Colbert’s death in 1683, François-Michel Le Tellier, marquis de Louvois (1641-1691), assumed the position of the Surintendent des bâtiments. Louvois did not support the arts as vigorously as Colbert had, and he posed a threat to LeBrun’s position because he favored Pierre Mignard (1612-1695), a well-known portraitist and history painter who had earned status and success outside the Académie royale. Beginning in 1663, Mignard led the Académie de Saint-Luc corporation of painters, the Maîtrise, and completed notable commissions such as the dome of Val-de-Grace and two portraits of Louis XIV (1674). He also decorated the galerie d’Apollon and the salon de Mars for the king’s brother, Philippe d’Orléans (1640-1701), at the château de Saint-Cloud, c. 1677. After Le Brun’s death in 1690, Mignard became a member of the Académie royale and was appointed the First Painter to the King.

occupations related to food—millers, pork butchers, confectioner, occupations related to building—carpenters, joiners, plumbers, locksmiths followed by artisans—watchmakers, masons, silversmiths, sculptors. The fourth rank fell between the average and the lowest minor trades and included 57 occupations—bakers, herring fishermen, different types of specialty tailors such as lace makers, weavers, as well as specialty building trades such as roofers, stone cutters, as well as transporters. The fifth rank, the minor trades counted some 32 occupations—carders, oystermen, gardeners, potters, glaziers, among others. René Pillorget, Paris sous les premiers Bourbons, 1594-1661 (Nouvelle Histoire de Paris) (Paris: Diffusion Hachette, 1988), 119-120.

Audran would have also noted that the rise of Mansart as First Architect to the King brought a new tenor to the delegation of state commissions. According to Fiske Kimball, Jean Berain remained as the head of the menus-plaisirs and even dedicated a suite of engravings entitled *Desseins de cheminées* to Mansart as a method to court his favor. However, for whatever reason, Berain was not favored by Mansart and received patronage only through the Dauphin.\(^{50}\)

Despite these setbacks, Berain completed an interior design commission in 1686 for Louis de Mailly, Marquis de Nesles, in his Parisian hôtel. Although he completed designs for four rooms, only one remains preserved and documents Berain’s use of the grotesque not only for the room’s paneling, known as boiseries, but also for the entire ceiling (Figure 4-A and 4-B).\(^{51}\) Arranged symmetrically along cardinal and diagonal axes, the ceiling motifs of C-scrolls and vegetal elements with wreathed lozenge designs combine to form the perimeter frame around an oval central medallion. The elegant, delicate details of each motif create a contrast with the overall densely packed composition.\(^{52}\) According to Scott, such robust design schemes had a strong and an innovative visual impact on the viewer instead of a narrative purpose.\(^{53}\) The novelty of that visual impact proved influential on Audran’s subsequent decorative ensembles, but he modified the type of motifs and the density of the compositions. (This will be discussed in chapter 3 regarding specific arabesque commissions.)

This period of financial and institutional transition coincided with Claude III’s formative years as a master artisan. Recognizing his talents in 1686, Louis-Joseph de Bourbon, the duc de Vendôme (1654-1712), commissioned Claude III to paint the ceilings of rooms of the rez-de-chaussée (ground floor) of the château d’Anet, which was located near Dreux in northern France.

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\(^{50}\) Kimball, *The Creation of the Rococo*, 62.  
\(^{52}\) Kimball, *The Creation of the Rococo*, 55.  
(Figure 5). For this project, Audran called on François Desportes to assist him, possibly due to time constraints on the work or out of necessity for the animalier to complete the decorative scheme. Regardless, this commission initiated Audran’s work pattern of directing assistants involved in his commissions.

The assistance of Desportes in this commission marks the beginning of the mature phase of Audran’s career. He often subcontracted portions of work, such as gilding, to associates Paul Chéron (n.d.), Claude Guignebault (n.d.), and Claude III Nivelon (n.d.), or delegated the known flower painter Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fortenay (1653-1715) to contribute his expertise. Audran also equally collaborated with Louis de Boulogne (1657-1733), among others. During his long career, he mentored a number of gifted artists serving as apprentices, such as the aforementioned François Desportes as well as Jean-Baptiste Oudry, Jean-Baptiste Pater (1695-1736), and Jean-Antoine Watteau. In Audran’s projects, he imagined and designed the overall compositions, and then delegated and supervised their execution.

According to Weigert, Claude III emerged from obscurity with this commission and attracted the attention of the Grand Dauphin and the director of the Bâtiments du Roi, leading to his commission to paint ceilings at Meudon. The opportunity for the Grand Dauphin (1661-1711) to see Audran’s work at the château d’Anet may have occurred when the duc de Vendôme


hosted a fête in honor of the Grand Dauphin in September 1686, in preparation for which Vendôme had ordered extensive renovations of the Renaissance château of Diane de Poitiers prior to the festivities. The celebration was noted for its lavish entertainments over the course of eight days, the highlight being the performance of a new opera by Lully. (This Audran commission will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3.)

The Mature Years

Changes in France’s arts administration occurred just as Audran entered the mature period of his career, when he was received in 1692 as “maître peintre, sculpteur, graveur et enjoliveur à Paris.” A continuing economic recession, the death of the Surintendant Louvois, in 1691, and debts incurred by war forced the closing of the Gobelins workshops in 1694. The royal manufactory of furnishings also was dormant in the 1690s, obliging Audran to look to private patrons for commissions. For instance, in 1695-98, he worked for the Princesse de Carignan, Angelique-Catherine d’Este-Modène (1656-1722), at the hôtel de Soissons.

Eighteenth-century remodeling of the hôtel erased all trace of Audran’s work there. In 1696, he received a commission from the duc and duchesse de Bouillon to paint the ceiling and gild a small Cabinet de glaces in their Parisian hôtel particulier; Weigert has identified a drawing related to this ceiling design (Figure 6). The drawing is typical of Audran in presenting half of the overall design and two alternative compositions in each quarter, beneath a central medallion.

59 Dacier and Vuaflart, Jean de Julienne et les Graveurs, 19.
Painted motifs of birds and squirrels complement delicate architectural structures centered on each side of the border and in each corner. These motifs, rendered in gold against a white ground, may have been coordinated with the paneling in the interior, since such integration was common in this period.

In 1697, another Vendôme commission came to Audran from the brother of Louis-Joseph, Philippe de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme, the Grand-Prieur (1655-1727), who hired Audran to work for his mistress, Françoise Moreau (1668-1743), known as Fanchon, a celebrated actress of the Académie royale de musique who lived extravagantly. In 1697, Fanchon purchased a residence in the country village Clichy-la-Garenne, and within the house Audran decorated the ceiling of a ground floor salon. The completed ceiling remains in situ and a full restoration was completed as recently as 2013 (Figure 7, 8-A and B). Audran’s commission illustrates an example in which the arabesque conferred an elevated status to the patroness Fanchon, whose status came purely by association to the duc de Vendôme. Weigert has identified Audran’s sketch for the ceiling’s design, which depicts motifs and attributes of the hunt—such as bows and arrows, huntresses, and animals including deer, fox, and wolves—reflecting the house’s rustic locale and the hunting sport associated with the residence (Figure 9). Overdoors executed by Desportes represented a variety of fruit, flowers and animals in a landscape. This commission will be discussed in Chapter three.

Fame came to both artists in 1699 when they collaborated on the painted décors for two suites of apartments in the small chateau at the Ménagerie (the private zoo at Versailles), which had recently been given to Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, a favorite granddaughter-in-law of Louis

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63 Trouilleux, “Fanchon et Louison Moreau de la troupe de Lully,” 155, 164.
XIV, on the occasion of her marriage to Louis, Dauphin of France, the Duke of Burgundy (1682-1712) (Figure 10). The king wanted the Ménagerie décors to be significantly different from those of his Versailles palace, and, in accord with his wishes, Mansard rethought the interiors of Marie-Adélaïde’s apartments with the young duchess specifically in mind. The allegories of the original scheme were replaced with allusions to “occupations champêtres,” “amusements de la jeunesse,” and “musique,” in addition to rooms dedicated to Diana, Minerva, Venus and Momus.65 Mansart probably collaborated with Audran in the decision to depict children at play, mythological figures, and episodes from La Fontaine’s *Fables*, for which Desportes provided all manner of animals.66 First published in 1668, La Fontaine translated the ancient fables of Aesop, which parodied human behavior by casting animals as protagonists.67 The resulting painted Ménagerie interiors by Audran suited the function of the site and conveyed the appropriate noble status of its young inhabitant. Prior to this commission, Audran designed arabesques to ornament ceilings. But the interiors of the Ménagerie demonstrate his ability to continue the tradition of using arabesques for an entire room’s décor. But in the late-seventeenth century and into the early decades of the eighteenth century, painted interiors or tapestries came to be used to create an all-over design, known as an integrated interior. Audran’s contribution must have been substantial, since he is known to have received 22,000 livres for his work.68 This commission will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In the same year that he worked at the Ménagerie, Audran received the first commission from the newly re-opened Gobelins manufactory and made the drawings for a set of tapestries

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65 The room descriptions were recorded in an unpaginated inventory, “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” dated to about 1764, and is in the collection of the National Archives of France (O^1 2080). The inventory is referenced in Gérard Mabille and Joan Pieragnoli, La Ménagerie de Versaille (Arles: Éditions Honoré Clair, 2010).
66 “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” c. 1764, Archives nationales de France (O^1 2080).
known as the Portières des dieux (Figure 11 and 12). The set consisted of eight panels, four representing the seasons and another four illustrating the elements. Audran’s design inaugurating the reopening of the Gobelins was an inventive combination of ancient deities set within the arabesques, creating an unprecedented tapestry composition. Each panel depicted the figure of a related deity as suggested by the title, set within a portico structure, along with garlands, flowers, fruit, and figures of children. A preliminary drawing for this set of tapestries provides an example of Audran’s original conceptual design (Figure 13). The tapestry design helped set the tone for the new era of the manufactory.

The Portières des dieux were rewoven numerous times with variant borders. Among the 250 extant examples—a testament to the design’s success—three types of borders complemented the designs. Audran’s human figures were designed with the assistance of Louis de Boullonge (1657-1733), and Desportes drew the animals and birds.69 Such collaborations among ornamentalists, figure painters, and animaliers were common in the Gobelins design process.70

Desportes maintained his relationship with Audran while pursuing his own career. He became an academician in the Académie royale in 1699, and his portraiture of animals sustained his success. In 1704, he received a yearly pension and accommodations at the Louvre from Louis XIV, and he continued to complete royal commissions for paintings and tapestry designs until his death in 1743.71

These projects solidified Audran’s reputation and led to more royal commissions. In 1699, Louis XIV purchased the château Meudon from Louvois’s widow and gave it to his son,

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Louis of France (1661-1711), the Grand Dauphin, called Monseigneur.\textsuperscript{72} The Grand Dauphin engaged the talents of Mansart for its renovation with the intention of making the château’s interiors more comfortable and intimate—in accord with turn-of-the-century trends.\textsuperscript{73} Lavishing great attention on every detail of the château’s design, Mansart followed the directives of the Grand Dauphin and enlarged the château to accommodate the growing size of the Grand Dauphin’s court. For instance, the interiors included chimneypieces inspired by Berain as well as ornamentation by Audran, who painted ceilings in a wardrobe chamber and bedroom.\textsuperscript{74}

Then, in 1705, the Grand Dauphin decided to construct an entirely new château on the site, and Mansart devised a new plan with an innovative distribution of rooms around a central corridor.\textsuperscript{75} Countless artists and artisans worked on the project. Noted artists, such as Noël Coypel (1628-1707), among others, created oil paintings inset into paneling and for overdoors.\textsuperscript{76} The château’s gallery included carved paneling that used the full height of the space and was decorated with an integration and combination of motifs not seen before.\textsuperscript{77}

Audran devised a set of tapestries hung on three walls of the sleeping alcove in the chambre de parade that complemented the room’s paneled borders (Figure 14). A preliminary drawing preserved at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum and others at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, depict Audran’s original design concept that was translated into tapestry (Figure 15). An extant example of these tapestries remains preserved in the \textit{Collections du Mobilier national} (Figure 16). Entitled \textit{Mois Grotesques}, they illustrated the months of the

\textsuperscript{74} Weigert, “Liste Chronologique des travaux datés de Claude III Audran,” in \textit{L’Art décoratif français}, 60.
\textsuperscript{75} Pons, “Le Décor de l’Appartement du Grand Dauphin,” 60.
\textsuperscript{76} Pons, “Le Décor de l’Appartement du Grand Dauphin,” 60.
year with astrological signs and appropriate deities, but the remarkable design feature was the attenuated arabesque form, which appeared different from the heavier, compact designs of Berain’s used at the hôtel de Mailly. Audran’s design, appearing in a variety of expressions, first seen at the Ménagerie and then at Meudon, marked Audran’s own style with an unprecedented élan. According to Scott, the chateau’s interiors “struck a note of unprecedented modernity,” and the integrated interiors of the new château “announced decorative novelties and innovations not found elsewhere at this date.” Jean Berain and Audran each contributed to this new style, which coincided with the high expectations associated with the anticipated reign of his patron and the heir to the French throne.

From costume design to room décor, Jean Berain and Claude III Audran understood the notion of bienséance, in which the degree of splendor used in a design and other visible accoutrements indicated an individual’s rank or station in life. As an example, clothes served as an important visible symbol of status, which complemented a person’s deportment and conversation. In architecture and interior design, bienséance related to the “suitability for the purpose for which it was built and, in particular, its appropriateness to the social status of the client.” The Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, c. 1694, defined bienséance with the limits of one’s power, jurisdiction or the bounds of reason and modesty. (Bienséance will be discussed further in Chapter 4) In Versailles, painters illustrated the absolute power of Louis XIV under the guise of the heroic Apollo, the mythological Sun King, by incorporating motifs with allegorical significance into the design of interiors that celebrated the king’s exalted status.

79 Scott, The Rococo Interior, 121.
81 Kalnein, Architecture in France, 3.
As a consequence, such heroic illusions and allegorical references became appropriate only for the monarch. By comparison, the history of using the ancient grotesque carried a noble pedigree without a narrative, which did not compete with Louis XIV’s singular style and which Berain and Audran could appropriately fashion to their individual noble patrons. Berain’s style drew from Italian precedents signaling a hallmark of the French Baroque. Audran inherited Berain’s legacy of flexible utilization of ancient motifs providing him the decorative license to distinguish himself from his creative competitors, even Jean Berain.

While Berain utilized the decorative vocabulary of arabesques from LeBrun and other artists, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, he also added singerie that contributed an element of humor to the design. The singerie tradition dates back to ancient Egypt, when monkeys were venerated as minor deities. In the Medieval and early Renaissance periods, simian figures denoted the devil and they often appeared in the margins of illuminated manuscripts. In Northern Europe, the monkey imagery started to assume new exotic connotations in the aftermath of the Crusades when these animals were imported from the East. Later, Renaissance artists such as Albrecht Dürer began to create images with greater fidelity to physical details. In Dürer’s etching The Madonna with the Monkey (Figure 81), the simian figure stood as the age-old emblem of “sin overcome.” Yet, in a drawing called The Monkey Dance, c. 1523, Dürer depicted monkeys with a feeling of playfulness and gaiety (Figure 82). By the seventeenth century, Flemish artists, such as Pieter Brueghel II (1564/65-1637/38) and David Teniers the

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84 Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, Anselm, The Monkeys of Christophe Huet, 44.
Younger (1610-90), depicted monkey figures in humorous satirical genre scenes in order to poke fun at human behavior.\textsuperscript{88}

That note of comedy added a whimsical quality to arabesques, which did not go unnoticed by Audran. Adding further to the design of arabesques, Audran probably also took note of a satirical influence stemming from a literary genre introduced into French verse in the 1620s and 1630s.\textsuperscript{89} This burlesque literary genre originated during the sixteen century in Italian verse and aimed to mock or ridicule revered material and served as a counterpoint to the serious genres proclaimed by the Academy. Audran could have seen an example manifested as early as 1676 when Charles and Claude Perrault collaborated on a commission of garden statue at Versailles. Perrault, Colbert’s chief deputy and an accomplished courtier, better known as the author of poetry and fairy tales, participated in the Petite Académie, which was “a committee of savants that advised the Bâtiments du Roi on matters of allegory and erudition.”\textsuperscript{90} In 1676, Charles and Claude Perrault designed the Grotte de Thétis at Versailles and took inspiration from Italian pattern books for the rocaille ornament of shells and rocks used for the stone surround and flooring.\textsuperscript{91} The Perrault brothers built the concept of the burlesque into the design of the grotto as well as the Allée d’Eau.\textsuperscript{92} The garden sculptures incorporated references to antique sculpture interpreted in a burlesque manner and also evidenced references to popular entertainments of the day, such as the commedia dell’arte and the theaters of the local fairs.\textsuperscript{93} The elite, who understood the irony aimed at their “rarefied tastes,” appreciated the element of amusement.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{88} Roscoe, “Mimic without Mind: Singerie in Northern Europe,” 97.
\textsuperscript{90} Hedin, “The Petite Commande of 1664,” 651.
\textsuperscript{92} Hedin, “The Petite Commande of 1664,” 669.
\textsuperscript{93} Hedin, “The Petite Commande of 1664,” 669, 671.
\textsuperscript{94} Hedin, “The Petite Commande of 1664,” 667.
Charles later noted in the third volume of his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde le poésie*, c. 1693,

> Burlesque, which is a type of ridicule, consists of the incongruity between the idea that one gives a thing and its true idea, just as the rational consists of the congruity of these two ideas. The incongruity is done in two ways, one by speaking falsely about the most elevated things, and the other by speaking magnificently about the basest things.”

Claude II Audran’s relation to Charles Perrault, both engaged in service to the king, probably brought such literary notions within earshot of the young Claude III. Exposure to the literary and visual conceits of burlesque created by Charles and Claude Perrault may well have contributed to Claude III’s later use of singerie and literary or theatrical subjects in his arabesque designs. The addition of such contemporary motifs combined with venerable ones brought the sophisticated taste of the nobles into interiors that had not been seen previously.

The use of allegory for the crown’s aggrandizement at Versailles has been well noted. In the early decades of Louis XIV’s absolutism, Mansart and LeBrun even incorporated this allegorical iconography into the architecture of the château at Marly built in 1679 where Louis XIV went to escape from the rigors of court life with accommodations for court favorites. It was composed of a main building, the pavillon du Roi, and twelve smaller pavilions for guests. The smaller pavilions sat perpendicular to the main building, six in a row on opposite sides of a garden parterre. The exterior of each pavilion received a frescoed finish with references to a

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planet or virtue, such as Minerva, Hercules, or Victory, Fame.98 This venue was a work in progress; the King continued to update the interiors. In 1699, the King sought to refurbish the space, and the resulting interiors were furnished with innovative chimneypieces designed by Pierre LePautre, with large mirrors above mantels.99 New interior paneling design offered larger expanses of open wall panels to receive paintings and provided Claude III Audran with an excellent opportunity to exhibit his expertise.100 The château’s interiors no longer exist and it is impossible to know the full extent of Audran’s contributions. However, Louis XIV enlisted his expertise, with the assistance of François Desportes, for this commission in 1703-04 and the project is not widely known in Audran scholarship. The analysis of the two globes provides evidence to suggest Audran’s work. I also propose two drawings from the Cronstedt collection that may have been used as preparatory drawings for the project.

The project entailed the completion of the decorative painting of two globes designed for the king by the Venetian cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli, a Franciscan monk (Figure 17-A and B). Coronelli, a learned geographer and cosmographer, had temporarily relocated to Paris to make a terrestrial and a celestial globe for Louis XIV (Figure 18-A and B). These two massive spheres, nearly 4 meters (15-1/2 feet) in diameter, are made of several layers of canvas stretched over curved wooden frames. The terrestrial globe shows the Earth’s seas and landmasses as they were known to exist in 1680 (with references to recent French explorations in North America) along with the flora and fauna of various regions. Louis XIV’s celestial globe depicts the night sky with constellations positioned as they were on the date of the king’s birth. 101 Eager to be as

100 Kimball, The Creation of the Rococo, 73.
accurate as possible, Coronelli remained in Paris for two years, collaborating with Jacques
Borelli (1623-1689), a member of the Académie des sciences; François Charpentier (1620-1702),
member of the Académie française; and Philippe Le Hire (1640-1718), a noted astronomer.102
However, the globes were not fully completed when Coronelli left Paris in 1683, and the project
languished for some time. In 1704-05, Audran and Desportes completed the decorative motifs of
the globes, which were slated for installation at Louis XIV’s private residence at Marly.103 The
iconography of the globes with motifs and themes referencing the monarch coincided with the
architecture and design coordinated by Mansart and LeBrun.

The globes are preserved in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and
were exhibited at the Grand Palais in 2005. A description of this commission follows because it
is a rare example of Audran completing a work of decorative art, rather than ornamenting an
interior design. The extent to which the globes were left unfinished by Coronelli is not known,
but the visual presentation of the terrestrial globe shows the cartographer’s talent depicting the
known continents and bodies of water. Allegories of the continents appear in figural forms
depicted in an academic style. Land masses include indigenous figures and animals. Gilded lines
indicate longitude and latitude, but there is no indication of land elevations. Boats appear to sail
on the oceans and waterways. Cartographical legends identify the known areas. The terrestrial
globe’s land masses are white with borders approximated by blue waters. These characteristics
seem to indicate Coronelli’s contribution to the project. By comparison, the celestial globe also
has longitude and latitude inscribed in gold on its surface. Larger land areas, such as the Arctic
Circle, are featured on this globe’s surface, but the overall design conveys a thematic approach

depicting the signs of the zodiac in figural forms illustrated with numerous birds, animals and fish. This globe appears more in keeping with Audran’s and Desportes’s strengths in illustration and ornament. The celestial globe appears more decorative in comparison to the terrestrial globe because the numerous animal and figural dominate the surface and blue tones illustrate the entire composition. Two drawings from the Cronstedt Collection of Audran drawings may have been used to compose or to inspire Audran’s Celestial globe illustration (Figure 19-A and B). The illustrations show fanciful animal figures comparable to those on the Coronelli Celestial Globe.

Recognition of Audran’s achievements came in his appointment as Concierge of the Luxembourg Palace – a post that brought an annual income of 1,000 livres.104 The Luxembourg Palace, built by Salomon de Brosse (1571-1626) for his patron Marie de Medici (1575-1626), housed the famous allegorical painting cycle by Rubens depicting Marie de Medici’s life. As Concierge, Audran oversaw the conservation of the Rubens gallery and received spacious lodgings in the palace located on the rez-de-chaussée and two additional floors (Figure 20).105 His appointment not only reflected official recognition of his status, but also ensured subsequent employment on royal properties and a number of diverse projects for the rest of his career. As has been noted, many of Audran’s commissions have been lost, but some are known through drawings. For instance, in 1709, Audran was commissioned to paint a bedchamber ceiling for the Princess de Conti at Versailles. The interior no longer exists, but a drawing bears a label for this design showing a central medallion surrounded by a variety of design elements, including female figures, birds, monkeys, and flowers against a white background (Figure 21). Audran received 800 livres for that project. In addition, he earned payment for unspecified works at Fontainebleau, Meudon, and Versailles, and was paid some 19,000 livres to design decorations

104 Dacier and Vuaflart, Jean de Julienne et les graveurs, 21.
105 Dacier and Vuaflart, Jean de Julienne et les graveurs, 19.
and fireworks celebrating the birth of the duc de Bretagne.\textsuperscript{106} Moreover, on the death of Michel Corneille in 1708, Audran took on the role of Peintre ordinaire du roi, which brought an additional 500 livres per year.

One of Audran’s probable collaborators for the Meudon \textit{Mois grotesques} tapestries was Jean-Antoine Watteau, who was born in Valenciennes and came to Paris in 1702.\textsuperscript{107} Watteau first found work copying Flemish paintings at a shop on the Pont Notre-Dame then spent a few years working with Claude Gillot (1673-1722) before moving to Audran’s shop. One of Watteau’s earliest biographers, Edme Gersaint, noted that, when Watteau began work there, Audran was very busy with arabesques—which Gersaint characterized as those ornaments completely lacking human figures to which Audran “gave a great deal of his time”—but also with what Gersaint called “cameos” or “paintings made up of just one color.” The partnership between Audran and Watteau suited them both, Gersaint wrote; Watteau’s life became “sweeter,” and Audran could rely on the younger man’s facility with the brush and prompt execution.\textsuperscript{108}

In the mid-nineteenth century, Antoine-Joseph Dezailler d’Argenville observed that some of Watteau’s best work consisted of the small figures that he added to the arabesque-ornamented ceilings of Audran.\textsuperscript{109} An example of their collaboration included panels made for the chinoiserie

\textsuperscript{108} “Watteau entra ensuite chez M. Audran du Luxembourg, qui se trouvoit fort occupé à des camayeux* & à des arabesques dans lesquels on donnnoit beaucoup en ce tems-là [sic.], & que l’on placoit tant dans les plafonds que sur la boiserie des grands cabinets. Il se procura chez lui une vie plus douce, & M. Audran qui trouvoit son compte sans la facilité & l’exécution prompte du pinceau de notre jeune peintre, lui rendit la vie plus aisée à proportion du bénéfice que ses ouvrages lui occasionnoient…” “On appelle camayeux les tableaux qui ne sont peints que d’une seule couleur, & les arabesques sont les peintures ou les ornements dans lesquels il ne se trouve peint de figures humaines.” Edme F. Gersaint, \textit{Catalogue raisonné des diverses curiosités du cabinet de feu M. Quentin de Lorangere} (Paris: Chez Jacques Barois, 1744), 176-177.
\textsuperscript{109} “Les premiers ouvrages de ce maître consistent en petites figures qu’il a faites dans les plafonds de Claude Audran et en plusieurs Chinois peints dans les lambris du château de la Muette…” Antoine-Nicolas Dézailler d’Argenville, \textit{Abrégé de la vie des fameux peintres, avec leurs portraits gravés en taille-douce, les indications de
salon at the Château de la Muette, which probably dated to around 1710, when la Muette was occupied by Joseph Jean Baptiste Fleuriu d’Armenonville, a collector of Chinese porcelains.\(^{110}\) (This commission will be discussed in Chapter 5.) The chateau’s décors upon which Audran and Watteau collaborated no longer exist, but they are known through engravings. Martin Eidelberg speculates that Audran attempted to simulate the look of Chinese lacquerware at la Muette, a theory that accords with a Conseil d’État decree of 1713, which granted Audran and two partners, Pierre de Neumaison and Jacques d’Agly, lettres patent for the Société de Vernis des Gobelins. The decree gave them a twenty-year monopoly for a pseudo-lacquer varnish appropriate “for application to all sorts of cloth and fabric . . . for the upholstery of furniture such as chairs, armchairs, stools, sofas, fire screens, folding screens, tapestries, beds, portieres, carpets, woodwork paneling, canvas ceilings, and other pliable materials.”\(^{112}\) D’Agly’s varnishing formula was at the heart of the enterprise, for which Audran and Neumaison provided start-up funds; as partners, the three shared equally in business responsibilities and in profits. After just two years, however, Audran withdrew, perhaps dissatisfied with the venture.\(^{113}\)

Audran and his partners were not alone in searching for a method of simulating lacquer. The craze for this Asian finish dated from the sixteenth century, when screens, cabinets, and other portable decorative arts began to be imported into Europe. European craftsmen refashioned

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Asian screens into decorative veneered panels, which were incorporated onto the surfaces of commodes, desks, and armoires. Decorative gilt-bronze furniture mounts helped to hold the veneers in place. The trend towards integrated interiors of the early eighteenth century inspired craftsmen, such as Audran and his partners, to create an imitation of Oriental lacquer to apply on a variety of surfaces. No extant examples of pseudo-lacquer by Neufmaison and d’Agly are known.

A portion of another project completed by Audran with the assistance of Watteau remains preserved at the hôtel de Nointel in Paris, located on the rue de Poitiers in the seventh arrondissement. The original hôtel, built in 1700-1703 by Jean Baptiste Prédot, was sold in 1705 to Louis de Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel. The Marquis rose to prominence as a wealthy financier, serving the state as Conseiller d’Etat and Intendant de la province de Bretagne, and he was granted the title of Marquis in 1697. Nointel’s fortune provided him the means to purchase the private hôtel. He hired Audran, who, with the assistance of Watteau, decorated the interior of a small reception room with arabesques, which served the patron’s desire to illustrate his noble stature. Audran’s unique designs conferred prestige and inspired respect for the patron because his work carried Louis XIV’s mark of approval for projects already completed for the crown. The decorative work, dating from 1708, consisted of a series of eight small painted panels and a painted ceiling in a small dining room. Despite the vicissitudes of time, the ceiling remains in situ (Figure 22). The painted panels, however, became separated when removed from the site and sold at auction in 1885. The Recueil Julienne documents the designs with engravings by

115 Cailleaux, “Decorations by Antoine Watteau for the Hôtel de Nointel,” i.
116 I am grateful to Christelle Inizen for providing access to this interior (May 23, 2012).
Aveline and Moyreau.\textsuperscript{117} Four designs entitled the *Buveur*, the *Folie*, the *Faune*, and *Momus* (the Drinker, Madness, the Faun, and Momus), share a similar perspective as if the viewer were looking up. The other four designs, entitled *Enjôleur*, the *Vendandeur*, *Bacchus*, and the *Frileux* (the Charmer, the Grape Picker, Bacchus, and the Cold One), appear to the viewer as if they were seen from above (Figure 23).\textsuperscript{118} The decorative work of wall panels and the ceiling, dating from 1708, create an integrated interior, which remains a rare extant example of Audran’s collaboration with Watteau.\textsuperscript{119} (This commission will be discussed further in Chapter 5)

The two artists may have also collaborated on an interior at the chateau de Marly, when called upon in 1709 by Louis XIV. The Coronelli Globes, previously mentioned, were installed there some five years earlier. The interior completed at this time can only be deduced by two drawings by Audran which depict designs for the chateau’s Berceau des singes, the nursery of the monkeys (Figures 24 and 25).\textsuperscript{120} According to Marianne Roland Michel, these two drawings appear to have been completed by different hands, one by Audran and the other possibly by Watteau, who left Audran’s employ sometime after 1709.\textsuperscript{121} Analysis by Michel and others note the differences in the arrangement, such as the use of scrolling forms and arabesques, and the variations in depicting the singerie. These differences indicate completion by distinctly different artists. Unfortunately, the absence of the final product makes a further comparison and conclusion impossible.

In 1714, Audran became involved in decorating the medieval royal residence, Fontainebleau. According to a contemporary, Abbé Pierre Guilbert, Audran painted the ceiling

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\textsuperscript{118} Cailleaux, “Decorations by Antoine Watteau for the Hôtel de Nointel,” iv.
\textsuperscript{119} Cailleaux, “Decorations by Antoine Watteau for the Hôtel de Nointel,” i.
\textsuperscript{120} Scott, *The Rococo Interior*, 140.
\end{flushleft}
of the antechamber in the King’s apartments: “…his masonry ceiling painted in cameos, is
decorated in the middle with an oval in perspective and mosaic, gold, and its surface and corners
were loaded with various gold ornaments and trophies of weaponry in grisailles…”122 Guilbert
also noted that Audran excelled principally in grotesques and other designs, which the
connoisseurs admired in the magnificent Gobelins tapestries.123

Pierre Marcel noted that, during this transitional phase from 1690 to 1715, the royal
accounts dispersed commissions to some 110 painters, but Audran received the lion’s share of
compensation, nearly 240,000 livres.124 Such expenditures were unusual because the
accumulation of debt from the protracted War of Spanish Succession at the end of Louis XIV’s
reign forced the crown to resort to extraordinary financial measures. In the same period that
Audran reaped his profits, the crown devalued the currency six times. The devaluation forced
the public to exchange its money, and the government charged an additional rate for these
transactions.125 Though Audran’s profits may appear sizable, the changing rate of exchange
certainly reduced his profit margin.

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122 “…sond plafond de maconnerie peint en camieux, est orné sans le milieu d’un ovale en perspective & mosaïque,
doré, chargé sur sa surface, & sans les angles de divers oremens en or, & de trophées d’armes en grisaille, par
Claude Audran…” L’Abbé Pierre Guilbert, Description historique des châteaux, bourg, et forêt de Fontainebleau
123 Guilbert, Description historique des châteaux, bourg, et forêt de Fontainebleau, 1:120.
124 Marcel, La Peinture au début du dix-huitième siècle, 1690-1721, 126.
125 Melinda Carolyn Rice, “A Fool and His Money: Culture and Financial Choice during the John Law Affair of
1720” (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), 9. Rice noted, “During the Ancien Régime there
was a distinction between the unit of accounting (livre tournois) and the physical coins (écus, sois, deniers) used
to discharge debts. A price could be expressed in livres or écus, but all contracts had to specify amounts in the unit of
accounting, the livre tournois. The livre tournois existed nowhere except on paper. Only the King had the power to
establish and change the relationship between the unit of accounting and the coinage.”

The Later Years

Claude III Audran’s work completed for the Bâtiments du Roi illustrates this artist’s creative capacity to devise unique arabesque interiors for each installation. The evolution of the arabesque from the Italian grotesque first used at Fontainebleau will be discussed in chapter 2, but Audran’s designs conveyed not only a noble precedence, but also his enviable imprint of the crown’s approval. He did not repeat designs but drew from a repertoire of motifs and devised designs to suit each patron and the interior. Patrons received a unique expression of their status to display in their homes.

During these years, life for a courtier at Versailles deteriorated under the melancholic atmosphere brought about when Louis XIV married Madame de Maintenon in 1684. She promoted a sense of greater religious piety, which only added to the ennui. The death of the king’s heir-apparent, the Grand Dauphin, followed by the next in line to the throne, Louis XIV’s grandson and his wife, the duc and duchesse de Bourgogne, coupled with dismal military campaigns and famine in 1709, further cast a pall over the court. The demise of Louis XIV in 1715 officially ended the required residence of courtiers at the palace, and many migrated to Paris, spurring an unprecedented period of building in that city.  

The newly constructed private home in the urban environment, the hôtel particulier, referred to a building type for the nobility that had existed since the Renaissance. The general plan included an entry or forecourt flanked by service buildings such as kitchens and stables. The main dwelling or corps de logis and the garden lay beyond the main body of the house. In the early eighteenth century, architects organized the interior spaces of these new dwellings with a greater concern for comfort compared to earlier hôtel architecture. The evolution of architectural

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plans away from the large multifunctional rooms began in the sixteenth century. By the early eighteenth century, architects included smaller rooms often meant to serve a single function within the interior spaces. Such spaces allowed privacy away from the public rooms and inhabitants enjoyed the informality and ease within these interiors. The formal enfilade, the most public rooms, included rooms for the most ceremonial activities of receiving guests and were not intended for personal privacy. Whereas, the appartement de société included smaller rooms where family and friends came to socialize, and also the appartement de commodité, a private area for intimate use by the family. The lighter character of the designs and the smaller, more intimate spaces with the innovative addition of semi-public suites of rooms afforded an overall new level of comfort in the interiors. The integration of the interior design and decorative arts with the room’s practical convenience, known as commodité, became hallmarks of the novel design.

The nobles commissioning the building of hôtel particuliers represented the top 1.5 percent in wealth of the total population. A strict hierarchy of rank divided this group into different categories. For instance, the most prestigious “sword nobility,” noblesse de l’épée, held a pedigree dating back to the medieval period. The lesser “robe nobility” had received their elite status from notable service, such as magisterial office of the sovereign courts. The robe nobility could be purchased, at great cost, and that opened its ranks to the wealthy financiers. Both groups enjoyed a number of privileges, such as exemptions from taxes, but neither forgot its place within the social hierarchy when it relocated to Paris from Versailles. The new hôtel

127 Kalnein, Architecture in France, 35.
128 Ziskin, The Place Vendôme, 94.
129 Kalnein, Architecture in France, 3.
131 Lewis, France, 1715-1804, 71.
132 Lewis, France, 1715-1804, 74.
particulier reflected the proprietor’s noble rank and status following accepted norms of sumptuary consumption in the production of interior décor, known as bienséance.

The return of various nobles to Paris brought new patrons to Audran. For instance, he completed a ceiling, c. 1720, for the comtesse de Verrue, Jeanne Baptiste d’Albert de Luynes (1670-1736) in her Parisian townhouse (Figure 1-A and B). The comtesse, born in Paris, married August Manfroy Joseph Hiérosme Ignace Scaglia, Count of Verrue, (16-- -1704) at age thirteen. Her husband’s diplomatic career took them to the court of Savoy, where she played an active role for some twenty years. Widowed in 1704, she returned to France and prospered. When her dowry was returned in 1711, she purchased a small house at Meudon. Her family’s noble lineage placed her within the ranks of the sword nobility. She moved in the same social circle as Audran’s patron, the duc de Vendôme, as well as the duc and duchesse du Maine. Thus, it is not surprising that she later commissioned Audran to complete arabesque designs in keeping with her rank as comtesse in her country house. In 1719, she realized a large profit from investments and bought several properties located on the Rue de Cherche-Midi. The street’s location within the Faubourg Saint-Honoré was an area developed as a result of the building the Pont-Royal and the Hôtel des Invalides. The comtesse developed her properties for rent as well as her own residence. In 1720, she commissioned Audran to paint a ceiling for an oval cabinet chinois. Two studies for this ceiling identified by art historian Rochelle Ziskin remain preserved in the Audran archive at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Figure 26). Each drawing presents alternative arabesque design schemes. Although the

134 Léris, *La Comtesse de Verrue*, 182.  
original hôtel was later demolished, the Audran ceiling, presently preserved at the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, depicts arabesque motifs with singerie and oval inset pastoral scenes against a white background. The ceiling is bordered by a gilded cove carved with additional singerie figures. The inclusion of the pastoral scenes, an element not seen in previous works, may have coordinated with landscape paintings by Claude Lorrain that were hung in the same room. She amassed books, paintings, and a wide array of objet d’arts. Audran returned in 1730 to repaint a ceiling in Verrue’s bedchamber with arabesques that was originally painted with a gold background and changed to a white ground. This patroness represented the nexus in a circle of nobles, including Jean-François Leriget (1674-1731), who subsequently commissioned works by Audran.

In 1717, Leriget bought a home in close proximity to the hôtel de Verrue and later expanded the site by investing in an adjacent property. He also collected avidly and shared similar inclinations to those of Verrue. He not only collected paintings, porcelain, bronzes, books and prints, but also commissioned Audran to decorate his ceilings with arabesques. Unfortunately, specifics of these commissions remain unknown.

Initially, the wealth garnered by entrepreneurs during the War of Spanish Secession and the return of courtiers to Paris brought new patrons to Audran. At the same time, many financiers sought to emulate the taste of the nobility, and Audran completed work in their townhouses as well. The Place Vendôme became a locus for such investors as a site of new construction during this period. The Crown had formally owned this area in the mid-1680s, with the intention of constructing a royal square. The original project languished until the site was sold to a group of

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139 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 51.
140 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 52.
141 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 96.
142 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 105.
investors in 1699, when building commenced in earnest under the direction of Mansart. This project prospered in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

With the death of Louis XIV, Philippe II, duc d’Orléans, son of Louis XIV’s younger brother Philippe I and his wife Elizabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, assumed control as Regent during Louis XV’s minority. Philippe II took up residence in Paris at the Palais Royal, and the Place Vendôme attracted courtiers and financiers as investors because of its proximity to the Regent’s seat of power. When the duc d’Orléans assumed the position as Regent, however, the French state treasury was essentially destitute.

In an effort to stem the tide of debt, the Regent’s government instituted several financial measures to prevent bankruptcy. The debt was restructured and spending cuts and a number of temporary tax increases were enacted. A government tribunal investigated the financiers, who had flourished under the regime of Louis XIV, in an effort to exact additional taxes from their profits. Many of those investigated had made fortunes when they advanced funds to support the war effort.

In addition to the efforts of the tribunal, the Regent accepted the financial theories proposed by economist John Law, who believed that he could devise a plan to avert the monetary and financial crisis. In these proposals, Law advocated the use of paper currency, partially backed by bullion, and an increase in the amount of circulating currency in order to stimulate the economy and re-establish economic stability. He also founded a trading company, the Compagnie d’Occident (later known as the Compagnie des Indes), and issued

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143 Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme*, 5.
144 Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme*, 95.
146 Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme*, 10, 94.
company shares for private investment, which were traded on an exchange. Many private
individuals and financiers invested in these shares, and some realized a rapid profit, which
fueled the luxury market. However, the system proved too difficult to regulate and was
unsustainable because of the rapid rise in inflation, which was brought about by easy credit and
the high volatility of currency.148 Before the bubble burst, many patrons believed in their
inflated wealth, and created great demand for luxury goods and services.

Those patrons flush with money invested in the latest developments in interior design. As
a result, their Place Vendôme townhouses with classical exterior facades contrasted with the new
rococo mode of the interiors. The rococo style, at the time known as the goût moderne, began at
Versailles in settings such as the Ménagerie and Marly. The lighter character of the designs and
the smaller, more intimate spaces with the innovative addition of semi-public suites of rooms,
afforded a new level of comfort in the interiors overall.149 The integration of interior design and
decorative arts with the rooms’s functional convenience, known as commodité, became
hallmarks of the innovative design.150

The architect Jacques V Gabriel completed several townhouses for patrons at the Place
Vendôme, including the hôtel Angran de Fonspertuis (c. 1719), and the hôtel de Peyrenc de
Moras (1723-24). Gabriel enlisted the talents of Audran for select interiors in these settings.151
The Fonspertuis and Peyrenc de Moras Audran commissions will be discussed further in Chapter
Five.

All of these patrons sought Audran’s expertise to illustrate their acquired status through
the presentation of arabesques in their personal interiors. The patron Louis-Augustin Angran de

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149 Ziskin, The Place Vendôme, 94.
150 Kalnein, Architecture in France, 3.
151 Rice, “A Fool and His Money,” 68.
Fonspertuis (1669-1747), the captain of the hunt and a close friend of the duc d’Orléans, used his substantial trading profits to build the hôtel Angran de Fonspertuis, c. 1719 on the Place Vendôme. He had his own private library within a suite of rooms overlooking the square, and Audran completed a painted arabesque ceiling in this library (Figure 27).¹⁵²

The other Gabriel-designed residence, the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras, belonged to the financier Abraham Peyrenc de Moras (1686-1732), who prospered from the speculation that developed out of Law’s policies. Construction of the townhouse, built during 1723-24, commenced after the death of the Regent in 1723 and the return of the French court to Versailles. Peyrenc de Moras’s choice of Audran to work in his townhouse may indicate his association with the elite taste of comtesse de Verrue’s circle and his desire to portray his comparable noble status. Gabriel’s commission to design the townhouse stipulated a sum of 11,846 livres in an estimate dated 28 February 1724.¹⁵³ This document also noted Audran’s participation along with Antoine Desauzières (n. d.), who was described as a Peintre du Roi and was living in Paris. Instead of a total estimate for their work, individual elements were projected by a charge per unit measure, e.g., a pied squared of burnished gold, which cost 5 livres per pied.¹⁵⁴ The total amount was not calculated in this estimate, but remuneration was expected as work was completed. With the assistance of Nicolas Lancret, Audran finished decorative panels for Peyrenc de Moras’s corner cabinet, which included a painted ceiling and arabesque panels lining the walls (Figure 28). This Audran commission will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Audran maintained his cachet during the 1720s because the crown continued to call on his expertise for small painting projects and for gilt restoration in royal residences such as the

¹⁵² Ziskin, The Place Vendôme, 107.
¹⁵³ Archives nationales de France, M.C. XCV, 74 (28-II-1724), devis 28 fevrier 1724.
¹⁵⁴ Rochelle Ziskin, Sheltering Art, xix. This author provided the equivalent of a pied equal to 12 pounces, which was slightly larger than 1 English foot (aprox. 32.5 cm).
Luxembourg Palace, Fontainebleau, Versailles, and Marly. He also completed decorative work for one of his earliest patrons, Philippe de Vendôme, the Grand Prieur du Temple after the duc’s 1719 purchase of the hôtel de Mazarin, 61 rue de Varenne. Jean Courtonne had built the original hôtel in 1703, but it had changed hands several times prior to its sale to the Grand Prieur, who hired Boffrand to remodel and expand the residence. The specifics of Audran’s decorative contribution are not known, but Audran’s commission showed his sustained relationship with his patron. The long-term benefits for Audran from the duc’s first commission were remembered later in Audran’s will, with an annuity paid to a goddaughter, the daughter of the duc’s advisor known only as Flambert.

Seldom idle, Audran invented a method for producing a type of tapestry originally composed of cut wool or pile glued onto oilcloth to simulate the look of the heavy woven fabric fabricated at the Luxembourg Palace. Germain Brice mentioned the invention in a 1727 Paris guidebook and added that the different color nuances of the cut wool followed the demands of the subject. He noted that the tapestries were well received, and that the beauty of the designs had done much to raise the merit of the invention. The extent of this production is not known and no examples representing this tapestry technique have been discovered.

The comtesse de Verrue tapped Audran’s talent again when she built a large country home at Meudon in 1729-31. In her bedchamber, he completed a suite of eighteen decorative paintings—“amusements champêtres and ornements grotesques.” The posthumous inventory noted that the amusements champêtres depict “a tightrope walker, a female sleeper, a young

157 Archives nationales de France, M.C. XLIX553.
158 Germain Brice, Description de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu’elle contient de plus remarquable (Paris: Chez les Libraires Associés, 1752), III: 405.
159 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 41.
woman weaving roses, a shepherd, and a shepherdess with a bird, a gardener, and monkeys."  

The bill for the commission noted that the grotesque designs for four large panels included figures, trees, garlands, and flowers. Another four panels in the similar manner included a border enclosing a vignette from Aesop’s *Fables*.  

Details and further specifics regarding this commission and the whereabouts of the painted panels remain unknown.

In 1731, the architect Jules-Robert de Cotte (1683-1767) employed Audran at his château de Réveillon. While the original château dated from the thirteenth century, Claude d’Ancienville, seigneur de Réveillon, constructed a new château on the site between 1607-17. Nearly a century later, in 1719, the nobleman René-Louis de Voyer, Marquise d’ Argenson (1694-1757), acquired the château with funds gained from astute investments. The Marquise’s father, Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy (1652-1721) was appointed by the Regent as the President of the Council of Finances and sought to rein in the crown’s deficits and prevent the collapse of the Law system. René Louis, warned in time to extricate himself from the risky market, managed to accrue profits and used those proceeds to purchase the estate. Enjoying the benefits of the country estate, he made changes that added to the comfort of the château. However, his ownership was short-lived. Because of overwhelming debts, he was forced to sell the estate in 1730 to Jules-Robert de Cotte, an architect and the son of Louis XIV’s Superintendent des Bâtiments du Roi.

Jules-Robert knew the early examples of Audran’s work in the Ménagerie and the château neuf at Muedon, completed under the direction of his father and Mansart. The younger

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Cotte and Audran had probably encountered each other during their years working for the crown. Jules-Robert turned to Audran when he sought to decorate the main salon on the château’s ground floor. For this commission, Audran enlisted the assistance of Jean-Baptiste Oudry, who had studied under portraitist Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746) and had become an academician of the Académie royale de la peinture et la sculpture in 1717. Together, Audran and Oudry created arabesque panels for Cotte with pastel-colored arabesques and scenes from La Fontaine’s _Fables_ (Figure 29). Some thirty years later, the inventory conducted after Cotte’s death noted the arabesques in the grand salon of Réveillon, “four canvases of grotesques representing the _Fables_” as well as four other canvases as overdoors, which also represented the _Fables_” (Figure 30-A and B).165

Oudry’s specialty included the illustration of animals, and he had collaborated with Audran earlier in the 1720s. They had worked together decorating the Place Dauphine townhouse of Jean-Baptiste Massé, an established engraver and miniaturist.166 In the _Mémoires inédits_ of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, the entry regarding Oudry mentions the ceiling for Massé stating:

> A small part of the arabesque ceiling on white ground, 9 pieds 4 pounces in length by 4 pieds 8 pounces in width, to be placed in the cabinet of M. Massé, painter of the Royal Academy, on the side of a beam, and serving as a pendant or, more precisely, the addition to the larger part of the ceiling by M. Audran and placed next to the same beam. M. Oudry, submitted in the part of the ceiling that he executed, to the same arrangement of the composition, which had been adopted by M. Audran. Ones sees, in the center of this one by M. Oudry, an oval basket, and on a plinth, four Chinese birds and artistically hairy monkeys, represented in comical actions. The completion and linking of the beam, which serves to separate the two part of the ceiling, which come to speak of three pieds

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circumference by 9 pieds 4 in length. It consists of arabesque ornaments, which are also by M. Oudry.167

Little more is known of the Massé Place Dauphine commission, but through this project, Oudry’s talent was recognized, and he became a much sought-after artist. His experience of executing arabesques with Audran provided a valuable experience when he subsequently designed arabesques for patrons close to Louis XV. Oudry and Audran’s later collaboration at Réveillon, completed in 1731, combined carved paneling with pastel-colored arabesques that remain in situ at the château. Each panel depicts a Fable episode, framed by arabesque designs suggestive of the four seasons: Summer with “The Fox and the Goat;” Fall with “The Fox and Grapes;” Winter with “The Stag who Sees Himself in Water;” and Spring with “The Wolf and the Lamb.” Miraculously, this interior survives at Réveillon and was later depicted by the nineteenth-century émigré painter Walter Gay (1856-1937) in his work entitled Salon du Chateau de Réveillon, c.1907-09 (Figure 31).

In his advancing years, Audran maintained his ability to create innovative designs, and, in 1733, he returned to the château d’Anet, where he had begun his career with the duc de Vendôme. In this period, the château’s occupants, the duc and duchesse du Maine, sought Audran’s assistance to refurbish his previous work. With the assistance of Christophe Huet as well as the sculptor le Tonnelier (n.d.), Audran worked on the restoration from 1733 until his death in 1734.

167 “…Une petite partie de plafond en arabesques sur fond blancs, de neuf pieds quatre pouces de longueur sur quatre pieds huit pouces de largeur pour être placé dans le cabinet de M. Massé, peintre de l’Académie royale, de l’autre côté d’une poutre, et servir de pendant ou, pour mieux dire, d’addition à une plus grande partie de plafond faite par Audran et placée de l’autre côté de la même poutre.

M. Oudry s’est assujetti, dans la partie du plafond qu’il a exécuté, au même ordre de composition que celui qui avait été adopté par M. Audran. On voit, au milieu de celle de M. Oudra, une corbeille ovale, et sur la plinthe, quatre oiseaux de la Chine et huit singes vélus artistement, représentant des actions comiques. Les revêtement et raccordement de la poutre que sert de séparation aux deux parties de plafond dont nous venons de parler à trois pieds de pour tout sur neuf pieds quatre pouces de longueur; il consiste en ornements arabesques que sont aussi de M. Oudry.” Dussieux, et.al. Mémoires inédits sur la vie et les ouvrages, 2:400-401.
At the time of his death, Audran left a will, dated 9 May 1734, noting that he possessed a sound mind but a sick body and was suffering from an unspecified malady to which he succumbed on May 28th. In his bequest, his brother Gabriel Audran received the majority of the estate, and a smaller lifetime annuity went to his other brother Benôit. Two nephews, Benoît and Jean also received life annuities. Separate amounts of money went to several servants in his household and, as previously mentioned, to the daughter of Flambert, the advisor to the house of the duc de Vendôme and Audran’s goddaughter, who received a lifetime annuity.\textsuperscript{168}

In addition, an inventory of Audran’s personal effects commenced on June 1 and was conducted over several days, with the oversight of Gabriel Audran. The inventory totaled twenty-four pages. The numerous rooms of Audran’s apartments in the Luxembourg Palace attest to his accrued wealth, and his collection of art included paintings, prints, and sculptural portrait busts. The quality of the collection can only be surmised because of the notaries’ cursory descriptions, but it included over one hundred large and small paintings, of which a handful received attributions. The subjects indicated a wide range of taste and included religious topics, landscapes, still-lifes, genre scenes, and even a portrait of the Monsieur [sic] de Vendôme. Artists included Antoine Watteau, Nicolas Lancret, Charles Parrocel, and Jacques Stella. There were also several portrait busts catalogued in Audran’s apartments, e.g., Monsieur Sebastien Prestre Vauban (1633-1707). In addition, Audran owned more than 470 books, of which the notaries included only a few author’s names such as Virgil, Corneille, Rabelais, and Homer along with titles such as the Bible, the Dictionnaire de la Bible, Histoire ancienne, Vie des peintres, and Fables héroïques.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{168} Archives nationales de France, M.C. XLIX/553.
\textsuperscript{169} Archives nationales de France, M.C. XLIX/553(IAD 1/vi/1734).
As Scott noted, Audran’s book collection speaks to his creative references in his arabesques.\footnote{Scott, \textit{The Rococo Interior}, 132.} However, such a diverse collection also reveals Audran’s business and intellectual acumen, which probably benefitted from having a family engaged in the print trade. This extensive collection, along with the inventory of his home, reflected Audran’s success and career achievements.

Without a doubt, Audran benefitted from his family connections in launching his career, but his first commission for the duc de Vendôme initiated his introduction to noble patrons who could survive the dramatic fluctuations in economic conditions. He rose above the competition in the ranks of the Bâtiments du Roi by adopting Berain’s design approach and creatively applied motifs from French popular culture for his arabesques. Using his astute judgment and an understanding of bienséance, he created interiors to complement his patrons’ desire to illustrate their rank and status in their private domains. His work for Louis XIV and members of his court, as part of the Bâtiments du Roi, placed Audran’s arabesques in the most up-to-date interiors created by the top architects of the time. Audran’s particular talent lay in his ability to present innovative designs for his sophisticated patrons over the course of some forty years. Using assistants and subcontractors, he completed commissions in a timely fashion and arranged for his arabesques to be enhanced by some of the leading figural artists of his day. He never retired, but at the time of his death, still had outstanding projects.

This brief summary of the career of Claude III Audran shows how he successfully navigated the turbulent political, economic and cultural events of his times. In subsequent chapters, I will examine more closely his major commissions to show how he participated simultaneously in the world of the waning grand siècle and the new rococo, which he helped to create.
Chapter 2- The History of the Grotesque and Arabesque from the First to the Eighteenth Centuries.

The death of Louis XIV in 1715 marked the end of the Sun King’s long reign, during which grand interiors of royal buildings came to signify the power of the absolute monarchy. Through much of Louis’s reign, Versailles’s interior design promoted the image of the monarch in total control, but during the last decades of his life, the interiors he commissioned -- for Versailles and his private residence – reflected a lighter aesthetic, and members of court followed suit in their own homes. These cultural omnivores loved the bawdy humor of the theater and the stimulating conversations of the salons. They demanded cutting-edge design, and their love of novelty meant that the designs of the interiors they occupied were quite ephemeral.

The renovated interior of the Ménagerie at Versailles, which Louis XIV gave to Marie-Adélàide on the occasion of her marriage to his grandson, the duc de Bourgogne, exemplified the aesthetic that was at the forefront of French interior design around 1700. Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the king’s chief architect, oversaw the Ménagerie’s renovation, which began in 1698, but it was Claude III Audran’s painted interiors that captivated visitors. Audran’s designs broke away from the moribund mood of court and introduced a breath of fresh air by illustrating figures of children playing as well as mythological subjects and characters from La Fontaine’s *Fables*. Audran became especially well known for the facility with which he revitalized the ornamental vocabulary of the antique grotesque. To elucidate Audran’s achievement, this chapter reviews the history of the mode he revamped with such success.

The term “grotesque” was first applied to the painted decorations that covered the walls and ceilings of the Domus Aurea, or “Golden House” (C.E. 64–68), a large villa built in ancient Rome for the emperor Nero (r. C.E. 54–68) (Figure 32). The house was filled in with earth after
Nero’s death, and when excavated some 1400 years later, in the late fifteenth century, its rooms were mistaken for underground chambers, or grottoes. As a result, the characteristic motifs with which the villa had been painted became known as “grotesques.”1 Over the centuries, the motifs drawn from the Domus Aurea’s décor were incorporated in decorative schemes of varied sorts.

This brief history seeks to characterize the grotesque, chronicle its permutations, and examine its French offshoot, the “arabesque” ornament that became Audran’s claim to fame. Already in 1717, Germain Brice, an contemporary author of Parisian guidebooks, noted that Audran, Concierge of the Luxembourg palace, “is considered as one of the leading designers who ever existed, and is known for arabesques and gold grotesque ornaments, in the taste of the famous Raphael.”2 I will compare Audran’s interpretations to the ancient Roman motifs that ultimately inspired them in order to establish the extent and nature of his innovations and to shed light on the preferences of his patrons. As I will show, Audran’s reinterpretations of the grotesque drew on literature and other manifestations of the French culture of his time.

The decoration known as the grotesque is typified by a symmetrical arrangement of ornamental motifs, such as scrolling foliage or flowers, mascarons (mask-like ornaments that feature human heads in frontal presentation), human and animal figures – or portions thereof in fanciful hybridic composites that lend an air of whimsy to the composition. In Roman wall painting, such ornamental arrangements are characteristic of the final phase of the classical

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1 Alessandra Zamperini, Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau (London/New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 2008), 9.
2 “Claude Audran, Concierge de ce palais, est considéré comme un des premiers dessinateurs qui aient jamais paru, sur tout pour les arabesques & pour les or, nèmens de grotesques, dans le goût du fameux Raphael.” Germain Brice, Nouvelle description de la ville de Paris; et de tout ce qu’elle contient de plus remarquable, 7th ed. (Paris: Chez Francois Fournier, 1717), III: 90. All translations are the author’s, unless otherwise noted.
period (14-68 C.E.) described by August Mau, the nineteenth-century scholar who first classified
Roman painting.3

In his *Geschichte der decorativen Wandmalerei in Pompeii* (1882), Mau defined four
successive styles in the Roman wall painting tradition. The first two styles developed during the
Roman Republic, beginning in the mid-first century B.C.E., and were inspired by Greek
predecessors. The first featured painted decoration that imitated the luxurious appearance of
marble, and the second -- an elaboration on the first, was marked by the addition of illusionistic,
three-dimensional faux marble columns and ledges, as well as naturalistic panoramas and garden
scenes framed with architectural devices.4 Extant examples include the murals from the Villa of
the Mysteries, near Pompeii, and the Villa Publius Fannius Synistor, at Boscoreale (Figure 33
and 34).5

Writing in the first century B.C.E., the Roman architect Vitruvius lauded the quality of
first and second style murals, praising their artists’ abilities to convincingly render architectonic
forms, landscape views, and deities enacting heroic scenes, and noting that chosen themes were
usually linked to the space and function of the rooms they adorned.6 Vitruvius praised those
who followed the Greek precedent of mimesis, in which artists sought to imitate nature in its
most perfect form. This practice required that the artist choose the most admirable characteristics
from a number of representative examples, then reconcile the differences among them by relying

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3 Anonymous, “Painting in Rome and Pompeii,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Winter
4 Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine* (New York: Harry N. Abrams,
6 Eleanor Winsor Leach, “Patrons, Painters, and Patterns: The Anonymity of Romano-Campanian Painting and the
Transition from the Second to the Third Style,” in *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*, ed. Eve D’Ambra
on memory and generalization. This classic notion of arts production informs the legend of Zeuxis selecting his models, which was nurtured and promoted by ancient Greek writers, including Cicero, Pliny, Xenophon, and Aristotle – all of whom commented on the process of mimesis. According to Cicero, Zeuxis – asked to depict Helen of Troy, the most beautiful of women – selected several models, each of which possessed a single outstanding physical feature. The artist constructed an ideal form by combining the best trait of each of his models. This legendary strategy became the paradigm for portraying ideal nature in the figurative arts, and played an important role in the first and second styles of Roman wall painting.

According to Mau, changes in wall painting style occurred during the Imperial period. The third style, inaugurated with the Augustan age (the late first century B.C.E.), was more ornamental and less illusionistic than the previous two. Instead of panoramic vistas, single-color fields of red, black, or white formed the backgrounds. Sections of fresco illustrated centralized attenuated architectural elements and small narrative vignettes, with additional figures, vegetal motifs, or statues. This third style moved toward a purely Roman mode, and away from the Greek mimetic tradition. An example of this style is the “Black Room” from the imperial villa at Boscotrecase, c. 11 B.C.E., now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where landscape vignettes appear against black backgrounds (Figure 35). These vignettes, however, are subordinated to the overall design scheme, which includes an entablature, geometric socle, columns, and candelabra. As Roman wall painting moved away from mimesis, artists added the innovative hybrids, which are hallmarks of the “grotesque.” These were antithetical to Greek

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9 Ramage and Ramage, *Roman Art*, 58.
10 Ramage and Ramage, *Roman Art*, 100.
11 Leach, “Patrons, Painters, and Patterns,” 137.
principles in both the unnaturalness of their forms and their lack of narrative content. Writing in 25 B.C.E., Vitruvius, an ardent fan of the first and second styles, condemned the contemporaneous fashion for bizarre ornament on the grounds that painting should imitate nature.

We now have fresco painting of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things. For instance, reeds are put in place of columns, fluted appendages with curly leaves and volutes instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures senselessly seated up them; sometimes stalks having only half-length figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of animals.

Such things do not exist and cannot exist and never have existed.12

Vitruvius’s contemporary, the poet and aesthetician Horace, likewise called for “truth” in painting. In his famed Ars Poetica, written in 18 B.C.E., Horace opined,

If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favored with a private view, refrain from laughing? . . . ‘Painters and poets,’ you say, ‘have always had an equal right in hazarding anything.’ We know it: this license we poets claim and in our turn we grant the like; but not so far that savage should mate with tame, or serpents couple with birds, lambs and tigers.13

Both Vitruvius and Horace judged the grotesque extreme, and their remarks fueled debates in the next century about the balance of artistic imagination and set the rules of design. Whereas Horace’s dictum “ut pictura poesis” encapsulated his belief that pictorial structures should conform to those of literature, the grotesque, as art historian Frances Connelly notes, “does not conform to the structures of language” and is primarily “imaginistic,” its properties hard to translate into words.14

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Ovid, an enthusiast of mutation, was drawn to the transformations suggested by the hybridic motifs of the third style. Italian art historian Alessandra Zamperini noted Ovid’s views in the prologue to his *Metamorphoses* (First Century C.E.), when he wrote, “Changes of shape, new forms, are the theme my spirit impels me now to recite. Inspire me, O gods (it is you who have even transformed my art), and spin me a thread from the world’s beginning down to my own lifetime, in one continuous poem.”

The motifs of the third style were supremely ornamental and not terribly three-dimensional. The trompe-l’œil effects of fictive vistas framed by volumetric architectural forms that were characteristic of the second style, now gave way to attenuated, even wispy columns and structures, which framed either small landscape vignettes or figures on unmodulated fields of color. Odd juxtapositions also occur: one design scheme from the Boscotrecase villa combines ornamental patterns with Egyptian motifs and mythological scenes from Ovid. The Boscotrecase’s so-called Mythological Room, which is believed to have been a bedchamber, features large narrative scenes, including one that shows cyclops Polyphemus gazing at the sea nymph Galatea (Figure 36). Narrative scenes bordered by ornamental motifs continued in the fourth style, which inspired artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries after the excavation of Nero’s Domus Aurea in the late fifteenth century. The Domus Aurea held examples of both the third and fourth Roman styles. As in the third style, the fourth style featured spindly architectural forms and flattened ornament, here combined with three-dimensional illusionism – a disconcerting combination that suggests irrationality.

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16 Ramage and Ramage, *Roman Art*, 100.
According to Eleanor Winsor Leach, author of *The Social Life of Painting in Ancient Rome and on the Bay of Naples*, the Domus Aurea surpassed all its predecessors in its concentration of luxury.\(^{19}\) The unprecedented extravagance of the rooms used for public receptions clearly spoke to Nero’s status and power.\(^{20}\) In one section, Homeric scenes framed by scrolling plant motifs are flanked by paintings of lions and sphinxes, a blend of real and invented animals with literary scenes that was revived in the Renaissance (Figure 37).\(^{21}\) In what probably was a banquet hall, the painted ceiling simulated the appearance of a tented interior, and included candelabra motifs, peltae (shield-like forms), and picture medallions set within a frieze of painted owls. The candelabras comprised various floral elements, such as acanthus leaves, combined with vase or vessel-shaped ornaments surrounding a vertical columnar shaft.\(^{22}\) The lower walls featured trompe-l’oeil draperies that, like the ceiling, were adorned with grotesques.\(^{23}\)

The exuberant interiors of Nero’s villa did not survive beyond the emperor’s death. Nero’s successor, Trajan, stripped the marble and other luxurious materials from the building, filled the interior precincts with dirt, and built an enormous bath complex over a portion of the site.\(^{24}\) The subsequent fall of the city of Rome and the demise of the empire served as a prelude to the Middle Ages, during which hybridic motifs and monstrous creatures would be used, though to somewhat different ends.

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\(^{19}\) “The Imperial Villa at Boscotrecase,” 158, 167.
\(^{20}\) “The Imperial Villa at Boscotrecase,” 158.
\(^{21}\) Zamperini, Ornament and the Grotesque, 29.
\(^{24}\) Ramage and Ramage, *Roman Art*, 153.
The Greco-Roman tradition of wall painting did not continue in the Middle Ages, but a number of its motifs did. Many depictions of hybrids and monsters created by the ancients reflected fear of wild animals and strangers from distant lands (portrayals of the latter as subhuman justified their subordination or subjugation). Although Western depictions of Muslims and Jews as physically unattractive became increasingly common as Christianity gained traction in Europe, the earliest Western descriptions of monster races predate Christ.  

For instance, Ctesias, a physician living in Greece during the fifth century B.C.E., wrote in his treatises *Persica* and *Indica* of ferocious people and beasts at the margins of the known world.  

Many Christian writers and artists drew upon Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* (ca. C.E. 77), and Solinus’s interpretation of Pliny, *De mirabilibus mundi* (third century C.E.), both of which characterized foreigners as monstrous.

Early Christian artists, especially manuscript illuminators, used physiognomic and physical deformities to connote immorality, and the hybridic creatures in the borders of illuminated manuscript were meant to suggest unthinkable dangers that lurked outside the world of Christianity. As Alixe Bovey has noted, the medieval mind embraced the existence of devils, demons, and dangerous monsters – inhabitants of dark forests, untamed wilderness, and distant, foreign lands. The early Saxon book entitled *The Wonders of the East* (early eleventh century), which shows foreigners whose gross physical abnormalities connoted God’s absence from their souls, is typical of its time and place. Artists drew on bestiaries -- compendia of

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28 Strickland, Saracens, Demons, and Jews, 52.
30 On *The Wonders of the East* regarding gross abnormalities see Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque*, 68; With regard to the publications time and place, see Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques*, 11.
animals, both real and fantastic, which assigned moral qualities on the basis of physical appearance or characteristic behaviors – to envision the insidious non-Christian foreigners of their minds’ eyes.31 Fantastic monsters and hybridic creatures suggested the Devil’s presence and power in heathen realms.

Western interest in the East burgeoned as maritime trade developed. Because of their proximity to ports in the Levant (as the lands of the eastern Mediterranean were known) Venetian merchants were the first to pursue relations with the Islamic world, beginning in the ninth century. By the late fifteenth century, relations between the Ottoman empire and Venice were such that the painter Gentile Bellini was invited to the court of Mehmet II (r. 1421–1481) to make a portrait of the Muslim leader.32 During this period Venetians traded extensively in luxury goods from the Levant and beyond; many of the imports carried exotic motifs that found their way into Venetian visual arts, and, later, those of Western Europe more broadly.

Although Venetian dominance in Eastern trade ended in the sixteenth century, Venetian glasswork, textiles, woodcarvings and metalwork had by then become rife with “exotic” motifs drawn from Islamic art.33 The term “arabesque,” coined in the sixteenth century, refers to flat and intertwined surface ornamentation inspired by Arabic calligraphy and decorative flourishes. The predominance of such designs in Muslim visual arts stemmed from the religious prohibition of figural representation. Instead, Islamic artists combined geometric motifs and interlaced bands to create intricate patterns known as “knotted style.” As it evolved, the knotted style incorporated

33 With the death of the Ottoman Empire emperor Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), diplomatic relations deteriorated, as did Venice’s hold on trade with the East. Moreover, once Portuguese navigators rounded the Cape of Good Hope, opening a sea route to the Indian Ocean, European traders bound for India and beyond were able to bypass the Mediterranean, ending Venice’s geographic advantage in the competitive world of mercantile commerce. Carboni, “Moments of Vision,” 30.
Chinese decorative motifs (including stylized, scrolling vines) that were introduced to the Arab world after the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. This variant melded vegetal motifs with geometric ones.

Objects decorated with such patterns had made their way to Venice in the later Middle Ages, and soon Venetian artists began to imitate them in their own wares, such as the exoticizing enameled and gilded glassware known as verre églomisé (Figure 38). Bookbindings featuring refined arabesque designs were an especially important source of Eastern pattern for Venetian craftsmen, and were reproduced in Venice from the mid-fifteenth century (Figure 39). Easily portable, such books traveled well beyond Venice and were instrumental in disseminating Eastern interlace motifs, as were pattern books for embroidery, such as that produced by Giovanni Antonio Taliente (c. 1527).

Islamic ornament was introduced to the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims who occupied that region from the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. There, it was called mauresque – a term drawn from “Moor,” the generic label by which Europeans designated Africans -- especially the North African denizens of Al-Andalus, the Muslim state that dominated the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance era.

The European ornament that most closely resembles the Islamic knotted style dates to the classical Roman period and is known as “rinceaux.” This ornament consists of “linear compositions organized in frieze configurations of vegetal garlands outlining curves and counter-

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34 Carboni, “Moments of Vision,” 341.
curves and adorned with foliage, roses and ornaments.” Rinceaux doubtless inflected European variants on Islamic ornament and intermixed with it.

The dissemination of “arabesque” ornament in France began as early as 1530, with the publication of Francisque Pelegrin’s *La Fleur de la science de poutraiture. patrons de broderie, façon arabique et ytalique* (The Flowering of the Science of Portraiture, Examples of Embroidery, Arabic and Italian Styles), a collection of woodcuts featuring both Islamic motifs and Italian adaptations thereof for use in embroidery and bookbinding. In 1563, Jacques I Androuet du Cerceau (1510-1584) produced a compendium of prints entitled *Livre contenant passement de moreques tres utile a toutes gens exerçant ledict art* (Book containing braiding of moresques very useful to all people exercising the aforementioned art). Subsequently, “Moorish” tracery and “arabesque” designs appeared in varied media -- from printed books to tapestry to armor -- the range of which demonstrates the mutable character of Islamic ornament (Figure 40). Various descriptors were applied to its derivatives; such ornament was labeled *rabesche* or *arabesche* in Italy, *moresques* and *damasquinures* in France, or *maurusias* in Latin. Despite this diversity of nomenclature, each term evoked two-dimensional interlace combining geometric designs and stylized vegetal motifs.

The European dissemination of Eastern-inspired motifs coincided with the discovery of Nero’s Domus Aurea, which initiated the revival of the ancient painted wall tradition. The ornament that dominated there, known since its late-fifteenth-century rediscovery as “grotesque,” was somewhat similar – in its two-dimensionality and interlacing effects – to the eastern style dubbed *arabesche*, and the two eventually melded in varied ornamental applications.

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According to Joscelyn Godwin, the painted mythical monsters, narrative scenes, floral motifs, and trompe-l’œil architectural forms of the Domus Aurea murals appealed to fifteenth-century humanists’ “ancestral memory of the Golden Age.” In that benevolent era, humans supposedly lived amidst gods, goddesses and hybrid creatures such as satyrs, fauns, and centaurs, and enjoyed a primordial innocence and a closeness to nature. In their nostalgia for the antique, humanists longingly imagined themselves part of the antique world and reveled in the design and decorative arts inspired by the classical aesthetic. They avidly read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which first appeared in print in 1484 in Italy (the first French version dates to 1493). Sixteenth-century editions began to include illustrations; one example, Bernard Salomon Salary’s of 1557, included 178 woodcuts and was distributed throughout Europe (Figure 41). Patrons infatuated by fantasies of the pagan world commissioned interiors with Ovidian scenes, often complemented by grotesque surrounds. The hybridic nature of grotesques aptly paralleled the mutating world described in the *Metamorphoses*.

According to Nicole Dacos, an art historian who has extensively studied the Domus Aurea, its decorative mural schemes were much richer than those at other ancient sites, and attracted Renaissance artists’ attention because of their monumental scale, radiant polychromy, and clarity of composition. The Renaissance artists first inspired by the Domus Aurea’s murals -- Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494), Pinturicchio (1454–1513), Pietro Perugino (1448–1523), Filippino Lippi (1456/57–1504), Luca Signorelli (1445–1523), and Raphael (1483–1520) --
tended to sketch and adapt isolated motifs that they removed from context rather than attempting to imitate the whole.

Pintoricchio’s work at the Piccolomini Library adjoining Siena Cathedral shows his early interest in the Domus Aurea (Figure 42). There, scenes from the life of Pope Pius III (whose surname Piccolomini commemorated the pontiff in the library by his nephew, the patron) are framed by grotesques -- an arrangement that followed medieval precedents in which such monstrosities decorated the margins of manuscript illuminations. Their revival in this early-sixteenth-century project (1502-03) probably can be linked to the vogue of the Domus Aurea murals among artists in Rome.

Around the same time, Signorelli included modern variants on ancient “grotesques” in his murals for the Capella Nuova at Orvieto Cathedral, c.1499-1504 (Figure 43). His scheme there incorporated all’antica ornaments that included masks, sphinxes, hybrids and monsters. In keeping with antique practice, Signorelli added literary allusions via perspectival tondi featuring Horace, Ovid, and others. He also updated the décor by including scenes from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the epic poem of the early fourteenth century.

In 1516, Raphael, a student of Pintoricchio, designed and painted a loggia and a bath room (the latter known as the *Stufetta*) in the Vatican palace for Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi (1470–1520), known as Bibbiena (Figure 44). Raphael’s designs there are considered trailblazing since, unlike Pintoricchio and Signorelli, he did not just incorporate aspects of ancient ornament in a modern scheme, but according to art historian S. J. Freedberg, devised “the first complete decoration *alla grottesca* since Antiquity.” Raphael’s Vatican decors not only

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demonstrate a thorough understanding of grotesque motifs, but also of classical architectural elements that define different registers and frame narrative scenes.

In the Stufetta, vivid red wall surfaces mimic those of ancient Pompeian murals and tripartite wall divisions reflect classical precedents. The central register features scenes from the myth of Venus. Baths were private spaces, devoted to the pursuits of health and pleasure, and the eroticism of the Venus saga complemented the room’s function as a site of personal delectation. Raphael and his assistant, Giovanni da Udine (1487-1564), took inspiration from the vault designs of the Domus Aurea, but exercised a degree of creative license in their designs. The Venus scenes, which convey the message that love conquers all, had no specific models, but may draw general inspiration from literary sources such as Virgil and Servius.

For the cardinal’s loggetta -- a long, narrow gallery then open to the air on one side -- Raphael developed a design program that took inspiration from the Domus Aurea’s cryptoporticus, or covered passageway (Figure 45). The loggetta occupied one story of the triple-tiered open-air porticos designed by Donato Bramante (1444-1514) to link the papal palace with Old Saint Peter’s Basilica. Bramante’s use of ancient orders -- Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian -- to distinguish the building’s three levels made reference to the same device at the ancient Roman Coliseum and Septizonium. Raphael’s painted ornament for the loggetta features a fictive open-work pergola that overarches square compartments in which real and imaginary plants are set against white grounds. The loggetta décor also includes candelabras, vases, baskets, masks, and small mythological scenes set within attenuated architectural structures. Such traditional

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50 Dacos, La Découverte de la Domus Aurea, 108.
motifs are adjoined by contemporary ones --books, an astrolabe, and a compass— that update the scheme and reference the patron’s proclivity toward humanistic pursuits.

Upon seeing Raphael’s designs for Cardinal Bibbiena, Pope Leo X commissioned the artist to ornament his own Vatican loggia, which functioned as a public reception space (Figure 46). Raphael divided the wall space by inserting marble aedicules, or architectural frames, beneath the arcades within the vaulted compartments. On the ceiling of each vault, Raphael painted four Biblical scenes that bordered a decorative central medallion. The arched bays and their pilasters are decorated with bas-relief as well as painted motifs, some of which are grotesques and others veristic (fish, foliage, masks, musical instruments). Within each bay, additional paired pilasters decorated with painted hybrids flank the aedicule. A trompe-l’œil garland of fruit and flowers festoons the lunette above each aedicule. Figural scenes – many drawn from Greco-Roman myth – are interspersed with ornament, as at the Domus Aurea, but Raphael’s inclusion of biblical scenes both updates the décor and customizes it for his papal patron.

Many of Raphael’s assistants would go on to emulate the Vatican scheme, disseminating its outlines throughout Italy, as well as in Spain and France. Moreover, many foreign artists in Rome studied the loggia as they would study the remains of Roman antiquities, and artists who never travelled to Rome were exposed to Raphael’s designs through engravings.

By the late fifteenth century, ideas from Italy were becoming influential in France; the French Renaissance flourished in France after François I (1494-1547) ascended the throne in 1515. A student of Latin literature, the young François had been groomed to become a patron of

51 Dacos, La Découverte de la Domus Aurea, 37.
53 Dacos, Loggia of Raphael, 313.
the arts.\textsuperscript{54} He was also an ambitious warrior who made several forays into Italy and, as a sworn enemy of Charles V, made several failed attempts to become the Holy Roman Emperor. Charles defeated and captured François at the Battle of Pavia in 1525. After his release, François sought to regain his footing by instituting a more centralized French government, and asserting French cultural greatness through promotion of the arts. François took up the role of philosopher-king, surrounding himself with humanist scholars, one of whom, Guillaume Budé (1467-1540) promoted the notion of absolutism.\textsuperscript{55}

Eager to appropriate Rome’s role as Europe’s cultural center, François invited several Italian artists to Paris, including Giovanni Battista di Jacopo, known as Rosso Fiorentino (1495–1540), who was familiar with Raphael’s loggia designs and was himself a practitioner of the extravagantly overwrought Michelangelesque mode that was later dubbed Mannerism.\textsuperscript{56} Rosso’s major project in France was the renovation of the royal hunting lodge at Fontainebleau, which dated to the twelfth century. He was aided there by another Italian, Francesco Primaticcio (1504/5–1570) of Bologna, who specialized in stucco decoration and had worked in the atelier of Raphael’s student Guiliano Romano (1499-1546).

Grotesques featured prominently in Fontainebleau’s redesign, with the adoption of this ancient mode intended to connect the French king to the Roman emperors for whom the style was originated.\textsuperscript{57} Their most spectacular usage occurs in the Gallery of François I, an expansive rectangular space that links the royal apartments to the adjacent convent (Figure 47). Designed by Fontainebleau’s architect and master-mason Giles Le Breton (d. 1553), the gallery was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} David O. McNeil, \textit{Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I} (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 1975), 32.
\item \textsuperscript{55} McNeil, Guillaume Budé and Humanism, 38-41.
\item \textsuperscript{56} On François’s invitation to artists, see Alain Gruber, “Grotesques,” in \textit{The Renaissance and Mannerism in Europe}, 208. On Rosso Fiorentino, see Dacos, \textit{Loggia of Raphael}, 308.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Gruber, “Grotesques,” 208.
\end{itemize}
ornamented by Rosso and Primaticcio, with dramatic, high-relief stucco figures (from putti and satyrs to priests and angels) and strapwork ornament framing painted mythological scenes. These mythological scenes, which take up Cleobis and Biton, Achilles and Chiron, and the battle of the Centaurs and the Lapiths, are believed to make emblematic references to significant episodes in François’s life.58 Below the dado, carved and gilded walnut panels feature intricate strapwork and rinceaux, along with the grotesque motifs and François’s device (a salamander amid flames).

Rosso’s and Primaticcio’s combination of narrative scenes with grotesque motifs marked the transmission of this antique Roman pairing to France, and following Rosso’s death in 1540, Primaticcio continued to work in this vein as he took up the decoration of another large hall, now known as the Gallery of Ulysses (1540–70)59 because of its frescoes depicting scenes from Homer’s narrative; its ceiling was decorated with mythological and astrological scenes framed by grotesques.

Russo’s and Primaticcio’s work at Fontainebleau became widely known through engraved reproductions, including Petites grotesques (ca. 1550) and Grandes grotesques (ca. 1565) published by the French architect and designer Jacques I Androuet du Cerceau (Figure 48 and 49). In addition to designs by Primaticcio, these volumes include the work of other Italian designers: Eneas Vico (1523–1567), Agostino Veneziano (1490–1540), and Nicoletto da Modena (fl. 1500–1520).60

59 On Primaticcio’s commission for the Gallery of Ulysses, see Sylvie Béguin, Jean Guillaume, and Alain Roy, La Galerie d’Ulysse à Fontainebleau, intro. André Chastel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 1; On the design description of Primaticcio’s work in the Gallery of Ulysses, see Béguin, Guillaume, and Roy, La Galerie d’Ulysse, 6.
Prima ticcio also worked for François I’s daughter-in-law, Catherine de Medici, who became regent of France after the death of her husband, François II, in 1559. Catherine commissioned the Italian artist to decorate a newly constructed building at her model dairy farm, Mi-Voie, a complex she had begun to develop in the early 1550s. In addition to the dairy building and cow stable, Catherine’s farm had a residential apartment, where Primaticcio ornamented a hallway linking a reception room to the dairy. He sought to reflect his patron’s Italian roots in a design that made the passageway resemble a grotto. The space – long since destroyed – is described in a royal account book as combining rustic stonework and painted ornament, astrological motifs, and narrative tableaux -- a juxtaposition of natural and man-made materials that reflected Primaticcio’s Mannerist inclinations.

Renaissance grotesques by Raphael and Primaticcio combined naturalistic motifs, hybridic figures along with modern elements, including heraldic devices or Biblical scenes. Their variants on the grotesque often were adapted to suit a particular patron and his/her “desire to perpetuate, in art, the glory of a family, or to underline prestigious family ties, ambitions of supremacy or dynastic claims.” In this period, the grotesque, if antique in origin was nonetheless considered, “as an expression of a liberating anti-classical spirit…a kind of contradiction in terms, since germs of opposition and heterodoxy were infiltrated into its all’antica matrix.” According to art historian Philippe Morel, Renaissance artists took inspiration from the antique assimilating its paradoxical form with contemporary burlesque literature, hybridic monster motifs and also the varied assemblage of objects and images.

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62 Martin, Dairy Queens, 42, 51.
63 Zamperini, Ornament and the Grotesque, 158.
64 Zamperini, Ornament and the Grotesque, 171.
associated with the cabinet of curiosities. The Counter-reformation Cardinal Gabrielle Paleotti commented on the Renaissance revival of the grotesque when he wrote a treatise, c. 1581, entitled *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (*Discourse on sacred and profane images*), which addressed the figurative arts as a means to explain sacred history in a rational manner. He found the motifs repugnant and believed that grotesques, “which were born amid shadows, lose their strength in open places, like nocturnal fowl disoriented by sunlight.” He characterized grotesques as “lying, vain, imperfect, nonverisimilar, disproportionate, obscure, and extravagant.”

In the later sixteenth century, the grotesque fell briefly from favor in France, and when it was revived in the seventeenth century, theoretical and design priorities associated with Classical rationality superseded some of its more paradoxical qualities. In the French Baroque, the subversive mythical creatures and monster motifs of Renaissance-era grotesques were not part of the revival. A change in terminology reflected this change in tenor; in the seventeenth century, design schemes that drew inspiration from ancient grotesques were increasingly termed, “arabesque.” Although they took up many of the motifs of ancient wall paintings –naturalistic and architectonic – such French “arabesques” were decidedly lacking in hybridic monsters. This resurgence of popularity in the seventeenth century was owed to the advocacy of a French painter, Simon Vouet (1590-1649), who spent more than a decade in Italy (ca. 1613-27). Back in Paris, Vouet adopted the grotesque mode when Anne of Austria, the regent of France, commissioned him to ornament a bathroom and its adjoining chamber at the Palais-Royal in

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67 Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, 274.
1643. Although Vouet’s work there no longer exists, key components of the design are preserved in fifteen etchings by Michel Dorigny, published as *Diverses grotesques peintes dans le cabinet et bains de la reyne régente au Palais-Royal* (Diverse Grotesques in the chamber and bath of the Queen Regent of the Palais Royal), when the project was completed around 1647 (Figure 50). Vouet’s design scheme also is described in a text by Henri Saval, who noted that various aspects of the décor were assigned to specialists, including Louis Van der Bruggen, Jean-Michel Picard, and François Belin.

Among the many beautiful rooms for the use of the Queen in this apartment -- as lovely as they are comfortable -- the principal ones are a bath, an oratory, and a gallery. The bath is truly small, but very cheery; on all sides are nothing but flowers, ornaments, figures, landscapes, layered on a gold background and intertwined with each other, with great skill and caprice: as for that which is within, the bath and all the rest of the apartment has been given over to Vouet, who distributed the ornaments to many: the flowers to Louis, and the landscapes to Belin.70

Within the panel designs, Vouet placed winged figures (river gods, nymphs, satyrs, putti) supporting garlands and stepping lightly on architectural supports flanking a central candelabra form composed of classical ornaments and two-dimensional garlands, flowers, wreaths, and shells.71 The weighty figures challenged gravity, and the juxtaposition of motifs threw logic to the wind, continuing this design tradition of antique grotesques. Vouet’s designs, however, marked a significant transition away from the archeological flavor of Renaissance-era, Italianate grotesques, as the artist infused his variant with robust naturalistic forms, but without the

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70 “Entre plusieurs belles parties, dont la Reine accompagna cet appartement, non moins gentilles que commodes, les principales sont un Bain, un Oratoire et un Gallerie. Le Bain véritable est petit, mais fort enjoué; de toutes parts ce ne sont que fleurs, ornemens, chiffres, paysages, couchés sur un fond d’or, et enlassés les uns dans les autres avec beaucoup d’art et de caprice: pour ce qui est du dedans, la conduite ce Bain, ainsi que tout le reste de cet appartement, fut abandonné à Vouet, qui en distribua les ornemens à plusieurs: les fleurs à Louis, et les paysages à Belin.” Henri Sauval, *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris* (Paris: Chez Charles Moette and Jacques Chardin, 1724), 2: 169.

71 Mérot, *Simon Vouet*, 566.
monstrous transmutations. At the Palais-Royal, tall ornamental panels of varying widths held superimposed cartouches, several of which framed small landscape paintings.

Subsequently, Charles Errard -- who executed numerous works at the Louvre for Anne of Austria, Cardinal Mazarin (Anne’s chief advisor), and, later, for Louis XIV -- designed arabesques that reflected his love of Raphael’s designs –but not Raphael’s hybridic creatures. For example, a series of panels Errard created for Anne’s apartment at the Louvre (ca. 1657; currently preserved in the Chambre du livre d’or at the Luxembourg Palace) recall the candelabra ornamental style of the ancient and Renaissance grotesques in their rectilinearity and symmetry, and include classical herms, putti, vases, and scrolling acanthus leaves, but no monstrosities (Figure 51).72

The best known of seventeenth-century French painters, Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), set a precedent for ornamental luxury at Vaux-le-Vicomte, the Baroque chateau built by Louis XIV’s finance minister, Nicolas Fouquet (1658-61). In several of its rooms (e.g. the Chambre des muses and the Cabinet des jeux) Le Brun painted ornamental panels that offset large-scale mythological scenes (Figures 52 and 53). Le Brun’s arabesques incorporate flat bandwork scrolls and flowing acanthus leaves in rich, jewel-toned colors. Stucco caryatids and elaborate gilt borders frame inset paintings. Le Brun’s patron is personally referenced by a squirrel (Fouquet’s emblem) within the painted coving of the ceiling.73

In 1666, Louis XIV, who had been taken aback by the extravagance of Vaux-le-Vicomte, commissioned Le Brun to decorate the Gallery of Apollo in the Louvre with stucco figures, gilded moldings, and mythological paintings. Its ceiling paintings show the sun god Apollo,

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Louis’s chosen alter-ego, who regulated the seasons, brought the earth to fruition, and enlightened it – much as Louis claimed to beneficently rule France.

Le Brun’s designs for the Gallery of Apollo were subsequently engraved by Jean Berain (1637-1711), who would emerge as a major proponent of the arabesque mode in late-seventeenth-century France (Figure 54). Berain had grown up in a family of arquebusiers – artisans who fabricated and embellished munitions – and learned the art of engraving in his youth. He became familiar with the grotesque and other decorative motifs through prints. In 1674, Berain joined the Département de l’argenterie et des menus-plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du Roi, a royal department dating to the reign of François I. Menus-plaisirs organized and planned all the fêtes, balls, ballets, masquerades, and entertainments of the court, and Berain created a wide range of material in this role: fabrics, jewelry, costume designs, theater and stage sets, designs for interiors and for decorative objects. His prodigious output incorporated both grotesque and arabesque motifs, yet Berain repeatedly broke from precedent and created innovative uses to satisfy new applications.

Again, the slight difference in nomenclature--grotesque versus arabesque--in this period can be confusing. For example, the word grotesque, in addition to painted ornament, could be used to indicate a type of costume, as when Daniel Cronström wrote to Nicodemus Tessin in 1700, “Since my last, I have been to see Mr. Berain to pay him. I came away with two grotesques . . . in my possession. . . . Last year these grotesques were used by M. the Dauphin, and are all the more excellent for disguising both hands and feet.” The *Dictionnaire de*
l’académie française, c. 1694, defined the term grotesque noting, “it is said [to be made up] of figures imagined by the caprice of the painter, one part of which represents something natural, and the other part something chimerical.”

An early commission of about 1687–88, at the hôtel de Mailly-Nesle for his patron André Camot, illustrates Berain’s innovative application of his decorative mode (Figure 3). Using elements like those employed by Le Brun at Vaux-le-Vicomte and the Louvre, Berain mixed scrolling forms, masks, shells, acanthus leaves, interlacing bandwork, and figures. But rather than subordinating these motifs to inset figural paintings as Le Brun had done at Vaux, Berain deployed decorative motifs all across the ceiling where a central ceiling medallion decorated with strapwork patterns is encircled by a wreath of acanthus.

In the French arabesque, geometric motifs of the East intermingle with naturalistic ones of the West as well as with the irrationalities of the third style that Vitruvius criticized, such as attenuated architectural elements supporting seemingly heavy baldachins. Improbable combinations like these added a note of whimsy, as is seen in a late seventeenth-century engraving by Jean Le Pautre, after Berain (Figure 55). In this scene, three operatic performers stand on a central platform that flanks an architectural framework implausibly supported by small vases and the heads of seated female figures. The framework itself is bedecked with cavorting musicians, monkeys, and dancers. As noted in the previous chapter, Berain’s use of monkeys to satirize the human behaviors promoted the vogue of *singerie* in early eighteenth-century French painting.

At the close of the seventeenth century, Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1636-1699) and Guy Louis Vernansal (1648-1729) collaborated on a set of tapestries after Berain cartoons, which

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were woven at the royal manufactory at Beauvais. The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a set of five, including *The Camel*, c. 1700 (Figure 56). Borders of architectural elements festooned with garlands and trophies of musical instruments frame a scene in which a troupe of entertainers, including several musicians and a tightrope walker, perform for a seated monarch and an assortment of animals.

As can be seen in this brief overview, the ancient motifs known as the grotesques served as ornament with many applications over the centuries. Jean Berain followed a long line of artists who took inspiration from Classical sources in his creation of grotesques and arabesques. The Domus Aurea designs, especially the characteristics of the third style, had set the precedent that inspired generations of artists. Later, in the Renaissance, the antique mural designs and motifs provided a design catalyst when rediscovered by artists such as Raphael and Primaticcio. In the later sixteenth century, a significant transformation occurred when French artists took inspiration from the antique. The arabesques of Vouet, Errard, and Le Brun mark the evolution of the arabesque away from Italian Mannerist tendencies of Primaticcio and toward an academic approach favoring Raphael. The absence of the subversive monsters in the French designs established the arabesque tradition in France for subsequent artists such as Jean Berain and Claude III Audran.

Claude III Audran continued this legacy of the French arabesque into the eighteenth century, but made his mark by revitalizing the formal elements of the antique— in particular, the classical use of architectural framing elements to complement figures or narrative scenes. His design innovation was the inclusion of figures and motifs from popular culture, such as references to

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theater or to La Fontaine’s *Fables*. His ability to customize the motifs of the arabesque for his patrons is one example of Audran’s skill at satisfying the nobility’s desire for novelty. The power to delight the eye with the visual play of innovative arabesque elements was the secret to his success. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how he succeeded in creating programs of interior décor for a variety of patrons that made him the most sought-after designer of his period.
Chapter 3 - The Château d'Anet and Other Country Châteaux as Escape Venues

The Need to Escape

In the last decades of Louis XIV’s reign, the Grand Dauphin frequently decamped from the Versailles court for his château at Meudon or for Paris, and members of his circle did the same. In these venues, they could freely participate in activities such as the hunt or the enjoyment of music. They followed the example set by Louis XIV, who found a respite from the demands of governing at the château of Marly. The King had purchased the property near Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Versailles in 1679 to pursue his passion for hunting.1 Together, Charles LeBrun and Jules Hardouin-Mansart designed and built the retreat to house the King and a small number of favorites.2 The retreat to Marly provided Louis XIV with a break from Versailles where he observed a rigorous daily routine and expected the nobility to do likewise. Timothy C.W. Blanning observes that the King required constant affirmation of his absolutism and this “found expression in [his court’s] meticulous attention to detail.”3 According to Daniel Gordon, Louis XIV’s absolutism depended on the “observance of difference,” and distinctions between the various ranks remained carefully regulated by court etiquette. Status and precedent governed every event, great or small, from births to funerals, and even dictated which nobles could sit in the presence of others who had to remain standing.4 Even the type of seat one claimed (armchair, seat sans arms, or lowly stool) was determined by one’s rank.5

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The courtly manners that dictated every nobleman’s behavior were learned by observing others and through guide books that celebrated the honnête homme. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the notion of the honnête homme had its basis in Christian morals and qualities of sincerity and humility. By 1660, however, honnêteté had come to refer to suave and mannerly conduct in fashionable society.\(^6\) According to the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, honneteté signified civility, chastity, and a sense of propriety.\(^7\) French notions of propriety in high society drew inspiration from Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier*, originally published in 1528 and disseminated in translations into the major European languages. That work promoted civilized conduct or “the systematic refinement of a personal worldly manner,” and comportment as tools for social advancement.\(^8\) The deference, moderation, and courtesy Castiglione promoted affirmed the superiority of the Renaissance courtier’s breeding and at the same time indicated his dependence on the ruling princes for his status and privilege.\(^9\) Castiglione’s guide inspired Nicolas Faret’s *Honnête homme ou l’art de plaire à la cour*, which was published around 1630, and which encouraged an informed sociability in which “civility, politeness, and propriety” were punctuated by “a studied and witty gallantry.”\(^10\) The expectation that one should project subtle ease, while adhering to strict protocols associated with the King’s relentless schedule of activities, created a tense atmosphere at court. Blanning writes, “There was always a strong undertow of anxiety beneath the smooth

\(^9\) Albury, “The Book of the Courtier by Baldassare Castiglione.”
surface of courtly confidence.”11 Not a moment or gesture of a nobleman’s behavior at court went unnoticed, which led many to seek refuge elsewhere for a respite from this routine. For Louis-Joseph, duc de Vendôme (1654-1712), a retired military commander and nobleman, escape to his ancestral château d’Anet and following the hounds of the hunt provided a welcome break from court. In the late 1680s, Vendôme commissioned Audran to work at this château, which became a pivotal event in Audran’s career. This elite commission provided Audran with his first major project to demonstrate his talent, even before his reception as a maître ornamentalist. Hunting was an exclusive aristocratic activity and became a recurring theme for country interior décor. In addition, I will also discuss the importance of music in the life of the nobility and in the tight circle of Audran’s patrons, all of whom owned properties where they escaped the social strictures of court to indulge private predilections including their love of music.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of Audran’s work first completed at the château d’Anet in 1689. That commission proved to be not only instrumental for the young ornamentalist’s entry into patronage by nobility, but also significant because of what Audran encountered in the existing Renaissance interior. After that early commission, Audran subsequently worked for Louis-Joseph’s brother, Philippe de Bourbon, the Grand Prieur, and then for Louis de Bourbon, Grand Dauphin at his château de Meudon. More important (and the focus of this chapter) is the work he did for Anne Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon, the duchesse du Maine and her husband, first at their château de Sceaux and later when they became the proprietors of the château d’Anet. The duchesse cultivated a taste for lively entertainment frequently featuring music, which included compositions for harpsichords. The developments of

11 Blanning, The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture, 32.
French composers writing harpsichord music in this period will be briefly noted, in particular, the music of François Couperin, who wrote harpsichord music for the duchesse and many in her circle who also patronized Audran.

**Anet’s Illustrious Occupants**

A château had existed at Anet since the tenth century. Having undergone numerous rebuildings and restorations over the course of its long history, the Medieval building was replaced in the sixteenth century by a château designed by Philibert Delorme (1510-70). His patronness Diane de Poitiers, widow of Louis de Brézé (from whom she inherited the old château and its grounds), expanded the property and had the new château constructed on the site of the Medieval building. A favorite at the French courts of François I and Henri II, and mistress of the latter, Diane wanted a decidedly French, rather than Italianate, building according to Pierre Désiré Roussel. Delorme enlisted French craftsmen in preference to Italian expatriates to build Anet.

Diane and the Dauphin (later, Henry II) became acquainted with Delorme through Cardinal du Bellay. Delorme, originally from Lyon and the son of a master stonemason, came to know the Cardinal when studying in Rome for three years. During his time in Italy, Delorme absorbed the architecture and treatises of Vitruvius and Alberti. Returning to France in 1547, he was awarded the commission to rebuild the château at Anet. Delorme favored the use of indigenous stone and applied the lessons of the ancients as he developed a distinctly French

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classical style.\textsuperscript{14} His designs at Anet illustrate his correct interpretation of classical elements, with the use of columns on the entrance façade and the balanced massing of architectural forms. He also included allegorical references to Diana, goddess of the hunt, a tribute to his patron’s namesake. During this period, allegorical hunts of love were deemed more chivalrous than violent scenes related to actual hunts and usually replaced them in artworks made for the French nobility.\textsuperscript{15} Accordingly, Delorme installed a bas-relief of an amorous rather than bellicose scenario above the entrance portal. Originally designed by Benevenuto Cellini (1500-1571) for François I’s château at Fontainebleau, the relief shows a reclining female nude (the so-called “nymph of Fontainebleau”) surrounded by forest animals, one arm wrapped around a stag, one of François’s emblems.\textsuperscript{16} Recontextualized at Anet, the relief became associated with Diane de Poitiers and her namesake Diana, goddess of the hunt. Such allegorical references linked the hunt with the chivalrous pursuit of love that became popular in the upper-class circles during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.\textsuperscript{17}

The completed château became noted for its interior decoration, continuing the use of the many symbolic references to Diana and alluding to the female proprietor through the use of monograms, emblems, and admirable attributes. Roussel speculated that Diane intended to appear sincerely mourning her husband, Louis de Brézé (d. 1531) by choosing to wear black and white for the rest of her life. The predominant use of black marble in the interior and the extensive palm fronds further conveyed the expression of grief. However, the interiors also

\textsuperscript{14} On Delorme receiving the commission, see Anthony Blunt, \textit{Art and Architecture in France, 1500-1700} (1953; repr., Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1986), 84; regarding his architectural plan see Blunt, \textit{Art and Architecture}, 86-87.
\textsuperscript{15} Matt Cartmill, \textit{A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 70-71.
\textsuperscript{17} Cartmill, \textit{A View to a Death in the Morning}, 70.
allude to Diane and Henry II through symbols, such as arrows, crescent moons, and the Greek letter delta. The Greek delta signified the letter “D” for Diane and was entwined with examples of the letter with “H” for Henry.\(^\text{18}\) Innumerable ornamental references covered and adorned the interiors down to the smallest details and imbued the château with a mythical or enchanting quality, which earned the building its fame.\(^\text{19}\) Much of these interiors survived at the arrival of Audran, who was to enliven the centuries-old decoration.

Anet had been in the possession of the Vendôme line since the early seventeenth century, when César, duc de Vendôme (a child of Henry IV and his mistress Gabrielle d’Estrées) married Marie-Françoise de Lorraine, a descendant of Diane de Poitiers. In 1669, it passed to Louis-Joseph, duc de Vendôme, a grandson of César and the son of Laura Mancini, a niece of Cardinal Mazarin. The château served as the retreat of the duc de Vendôme until his death in 1712.\(^\text{20}\) The duc was a respected military commander whose service in the Nine Year’s War (1688-97, also known as the War of Grand Alliance) earned him a promotion to the rank of maréchal. Though rumored to be homosexual, he married a cousin from the Condé branch of the House of Bourbon, Anne Marie de Bourbon (1678-1718) when he was in his mid-50s. He was a member of the circle that formed around the Grand Dauphin, Louis de Bourbon (1661-1711), the eldest son and heir of Louis XIV. This circle, known by its adversaries as the “cabale du Dauphin,” is described by musicologist Don Fader as being “part of the complex network of competing political elements at the royal court.”\(^\text{21}\) This clique included powerful men linked through “kinship, political patronage, and friendship” who countered the grave moral tone of the court at


\(^{19}\) Roussel, *Histoire et description du château d'Anet*, 27.


Versailles with libertine private life-styles. Louis-Joseph would be one of Audran’s earliest patrons, and his support had a lasting influence on Audran and other artists and writers. For instance, Louis-Joseph provided Jean de La Fontaine with a pension and Audran would later draw inspiration from that poet’s *Fables* as part of the decorative scheme for the Ménagerie at Versailles. Louis-Joseph hosted a fête for the Dauphin at the château in 1686, and the two maintained close ties that benefitted Audran after completing work for the duc at Anet in 1689.

In the last decade of his life, the duc de Vendôme was often in residence at Anet, where he was frequently joined by his younger brother, Philippe (1655-1727), the Grand Prieur of the Order of Malta. Philippe would succeed his older brother as the fourth and last duc of Vendôme. Like Anet’s previous occupants, the brothers pursued the hunt. Hunting, which had been a favorite royal and noble sport for centuries, was governed by custom and ritual, some of it dating back to the thirteenth century. The pursuit and killing of animals for sport rather than for food served as a substitute for warfare during interludes of peace, and contemporary as well as antique hunting treatises recommended its moral and physical benefits. Hunting for sport was the exclusive right of only a privileged minority who belonged to the upper social and political ranks. The right to hunt included the appropriation of private property of the lower classes,

23 As evidence of his long-term association with the house of Vendôme, Audran bequeathed a 75 livres life annuity in his will to his godchild and daughter of the duc’s conseiller Flambert. An posthumous inventory of Audran’s personal property also included a portrait of the duc de Vendôme.
27 Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning*, 62.
who were obliged by law to support and facilitate the hunters’ pursuit of their quarry.  

Louis XIV loved the hunt and conducted it on a large scale, with packs of staghounds of his own as well as those of the Grand Dauphin and other members of the royal family.

The château d’Anet, a longtime hunting mecca, not only served as the duc de Vendôme’s refuge from Versailles but also as a place to relive through the hunt the successful military career that had earned him the title of maréchal and its attendant prestige. It was also the place where he entertained, and it was in anticipation of hosting the Grand Dauphin there that the duc hired Audran to update its interiors in the later 1680s. Unfortunately, most of the château was demolished in 1811. Nonetheless, relying on written descriptions, we can assess Audran’s work. Audran created ornamental designs complementing the interiors and hired François Desportes (1661-1743) to assist in executing them. A sense of Desportes contribution and his relationship to Audran can be culled from unedited memoires published later in the nineteenth century. This 1854 Mémoires inédits notes,

He [Desportes] had always been in close association in his youth with M. Audran, nephew of the famous engraver of the same name, and himself famous for his drawings of grotesques. It was with this friend that he worked for a long time, first at the château d’Anet for the duc de Vendôme, then at Clichy for the Grand Prieur, his brother, at the hotel de Bouillon and elsewhere; but chiefly at the menagerie of Versailles, where he also painted pictures, which are always to be seen with pleasure. He composed and placed at his own will in these grotesques, all sorts of animals, ingeniously grouped with ornaments, and painted artistically on a white or gold ground.  

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In this early commission, Audran may have been open to Desportes’s input for completion of the interiors. Audran, however, would have been directly responsible to his patron for completion of the interior according to the agreed upon specifications. Especially for this significant project, Audran would have held the reins to control the final product. Audran’s work at Anet clearly made a good impression, since the heir to the throne later hired Audran to work at his château at Meudon beginning in 1699, a commission to be discussed later.33

While the painted interiors Audran executed at Anet are no longer extant, textual descriptions help us to reconstruct them. An inventory of the château’s contents, c. 1781, completed by M. Vilbert, tapestry-concierge of the château at the time, was included in M. Lemarquant’s Description du château d’Anet, published in 1789. Lemarquant’s publication was included in the expanded 1875 text by Pierre Désiré Roussel and Rodolphe Poin and published as Histoire et description du château d’Anet depuis le dixième siècle jusqu’à nos jours.

In this project, Audran created interior ornament to complement the existing décor of the château. In the process, he subcontracted François Deportes to complete the depiction of animals. The delegation of work to other artists under Audran’s direction became a life-long practice that began in this early commission. It may have been an efficient method to complete the project or a means for Audran to circumvent the need to take on a business partner. Lemarquant wrote that in the rooms of the rez-de-chaussée, or ground-floor, of the Anet château, Audran, did gilding and painting in the grotesque genre, and François Desportes added renderings of animals to the arabesques Audran devised.34 The two artists also painted the ceilings of four ground-floor

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rooms listed as the Salon des Muses, the Salon des Glaces, the Salon Doré, and a bedroom.\(^{35}\) In some of the rooms, Audran’s painted decorations coordinated with, and perhaps were inspired by, existing Renaissance designs from the time of Diane de Poitiers. Those designs were left intact in this seventeenth-century renovation. It may have been somewhat daunting for the relatively inexperienced Audran to work in, and in some instances to alter, such well-known and venerable Renaissance interiors, but this commission introduced Audran to interiors specifically designed for the original patroness, Diane de Poitiers. Audran accommodated the earlier designs even as he customized his own designs to his patron, an innovation, noted in contemporary Parisian guidebooks, by which he became recognized as setting a new standard for arabesque-painted interiors.

In the Salon des Muses, a new design by Audran was ornamented by twelve painted panels in which figures of muses personifying knowledge and the arts were encircled by painted arabesques and enframed by gilded wood. A rendering of Apollo, whom the muses served, was set between two casement windows, and the image of Minerva, goddess of wisdom and arts, was placed above the fireplace. This illustration of Apollo and his muses may have been a symbolic reference to Louis XIV as Apollo, with the muses representing the duc and the nobility in service to the crown, though no documentation makes mention of this possible allegorical depiction. Additional panels featuring the muses of Eloquence, Tragedy, Lyrical Poetry and Heroic Poetry were placed opposite the fireplace, which was flanked by figures of Comedy and Music on the right and Music and History on the left. The group was completed by the figures of Astronomy and Painting that were placed between the door and the window casement. On the ceiling, two satyrs in each corner supporting medallions illustrated the four elements, and along the sides,

four figures carried the duc de Vendôme’s coat of arms.36 Although there is no correlation between the muse figures and the four elements of the ceiling, Audran may have illustrated the elements as maidens engaged in appropriate activities that would have coordinated with the muses.37

The Salon des Glaces incorporated extant ornament from the sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries where painted panels featured delicate arabesques framed by marble. The gilded ceiling, though it retained the tripartite division of an earlier era, was painted by Audran and Desportes. Its four corners bore personifications of the four seasons accompanied by appropriate animals and attributes painted in ultramarine. Traditional labors of the months were portrayed below each of the four major figures, while above them signs of the zodiac were displayed. The ceiling’s sides were ornamented with references to the four elements and to the animals, birds and fish appropriate to them. Apollo, as god of the sun, appeared on a chariot pulled by four horses traversing the twelve signs of the zodiac. Two support beams of the ceiling included representations of Mars, Hercules, Mercury, and Venus, each paired with familiar attributes. Hercules was accompanied by a laborer; Mercury with scales; Mars with attributes of war; and Venus, accompanied by birds (presumably doves), was shown taking Cupid or Eros by the hand.38 Roussel speculated that this design may have been inspired by Guido Reni’s frescoed ceiling of the Casino dell’Aurora in the Rospigliosi palace, Rome, Apollo in his Chariot

Preceded by Dawn (ca. 1614) though apparently Audran did not include a figure of Aurora.39

The Salon Doré, described as magnificent, included gold in its decoration with paintings and sculpture dating from the Renaissance period. Six door frames (two of which were false but

36 Lemarquant, Description du château d’Anet (Paris: Chez G. Desprez, 1789), 37-38.
38 Lemarquant, Description du château d’Anet, 43-44.
39 Roussel, Histoire et description du château d’Anet, 58.
maintained symmetry) were made of marble and were crowned by carved overdoors said to be by Jean Goujon (1510-1572), a remarkable craftsman of the sixteenth-century period.40 Twelve pilasters carried carved attributes, chevrons, and ciphers of Diane and Henri II. Carved marble panels alternated designs between the pilasters, but these were removed in 1680 and replaced with painted arabesque panels.41 The ceiling, which Audran and Desportes produced for the Salon Doré, made reference to the hunt, Anet’s raison d’être. Vignettes showed the hunt of the stag, the wolf, and two types of birds, all presided over by forest nymphs perhaps inspired by Cellini’s famed bas relief at Anet and by amours or cupids.

The ground-floor bedroom was another space in which sixteenth-century ornament and sculpture was retained in the lower reaches of the room, and Audran and Desportes repainted the ceiling. A portrait of one of the ducs de Vendôme hung over the fireplace until 1688, when it was replaced with one of the Dauphin prior to his visit to the château. The seventeenth-century painted ceiling, a “masterpiece of emblems and allegories of the god of sleep,” was appropriate to a room devoted to rest.42 According to Lemarquant, motifs at the ceiling’s corners alluded to phases of night. Its early hours were suggested by a personification of Night unfolding her veil accompanied by Cupid. Next, in a scene connoting the middle of the night, the goddess Diana was seen being awakened by the spirit of the hunt and by hounds nudging her. In the third corner, the god of dreams, Morpheus, was seen in deep sleep amid an abundance of poppies. The final scenario showed a figure hurrying to bear the morning star in advance of Aurora, seen with roses emblematizing dawn.43 At the ceiling’s center, an ornamental rosette was formed of bats’ wings. The ceiling also bore cartouches that once held the Vendôme coat of arms and were now

40 Roussel, Histoire et description du château d’Anet, 56.
41 Roussel, Histoire et description du château d’Anet, 56-57.
42 Roussel, Histoire et description du château d’Anet, 59.
43 Lemarquant, Description du château d’Anet, 46.
repainted with those of the Grand Dauphin in anticipation of his visit.\textsuperscript{44} In each of these rooms, Audran added mythological imagery to enhance the existing decorative motifs in the style akin to the interiors of Versailles, but without the propagandistic message of the crown. This first major commission served as an advertisement for Audran’s abilities and soon led to additional prestigious projects.

**Other Country Home Commissions Received in the Wake of Anet**

Philippe de Bourbon, the Grand Prieur, spent a good deal of time at his brother’s château in Anet and soon commissioned work from Audran and Desportes. Less extensive than the project at Anet, Philippe’s commission called on the two painters to ornament a ground-floor salon in a hunting lodge at Clichy-la-Garenne. The redecoration was undertaken on behalf of his mistress, Françoise “Fanchon” Moreau, a celebrated actress of the Académie royale de musique.\textsuperscript{45} The lodge at Clichy, originally built in the mid-seventeenth century by Louis XIV for one of his own mistresses, Louise de La Vallière (1644-1710), had recently been acquired by Fanchon (Figure 7).\textsuperscript{46} She ordinarily co-habited with Philippe at the Hôtel des Templiers, the traditional residence of the Grand Prieur in Paris, which during their residence became the site of raucous parties and scandalous suppers enjoyed by a libertine elite.\textsuperscript{47}

Philippe and Fanchon were regular theater- and opera-goers who embraced the subversive libertinism popularized at the Opéra during the 1690s in the work of Lully’s sons, Louis and Jean-Louis. These productions parodied the ballet de cour favored early in the King’s

\textsuperscript{44} Roussel, *Histoire et description du château d’Anet*, 59.
\textsuperscript{47} Trouilleux, “Fanchon et Louison Moreau de la troupe de Lully,” 167-168.
reign and often ridiculed mythological heroes in the King’s pantheon, such as Apollo, Hercules, and Jupiter. Philippe’s relationship with Fanchon was in keeping with the “fad among gentlemen in the 1690s for taking actresses and dancers as mistresses,” and doubtless advanced her career. The affair was also fodder for relentless gossip at Versailles where, according to Rodolphe Trouilleux, “the tongues of vipers were rife.” The lodge at Clichy-la-Garenne, which became known and is known today as the pavillon de Vendôme, thus provided the couple a respite from both the wagging tongues at court and the stress of city life.

The hunting parties hosted by Françoise and Philippe at Clichy-la-Garenne inspired Audran’s ceiling design, a sketch for which has been identified by Weigert (Figure 9). This drawing shows motifs and attributes of the hunt: bows, arrows, huntresses, and game animals (probably rendered by Desportes): deer, foxes, and wolves, that reflect the rustic locale of the lodge and the chief occupation of its guests. These motifs, depicted in gold and green against a white background, can still be seen in the recently restored pavillon de Vendôme. Some years after Audran completed this ceiling, Philippe, now fourth duc de Vendôme, hired the ornamentalist in 1720 to work at his private mansion, originally known as the hôtel de Tessé, in the rue de Varenne. The architect Boffrand worked on the hôtel de Tessé and extended its construction in order to create architecture appropriate to the rank of its new proprietor. Audran’s commission, now lost, was intended to enhance the interiors, as in the earlier effort for

49 On the fad to take mistresses from the theater, see Fader, “The ‘Cabal du Dauphin,’ Campra, and Italian Comedy,” 391. On Versailles gossip see Trouilleux, “Fanchon et Louison Moreau de la troupe de Lully,” 173.
50 Weigert, “Une oeuvre de Claude III Audran à Clichy,” 231.
Philippe at Clichy, and the decoration complemented the architectural renovation. Philippe also commissioned Audran to undertake work in his personal apartment at the Hôtel des Templiers.\textsuperscript{52}

The favorable impression made by Audran’s work at Anet may have proved his abilities and served to secure a commission from the Grand Dauphin, who hired him to work at his private château at Meudon. This royal domain dated to the French Renaissance. Its original occupant, Anne de Pisseleu d’Heilly, styled duchesse d’Étampes (1508-1580), was a mistress of François I. Her rise at court resulted in her father’s elevation to Seigneur de Meudon.\textsuperscript{53} After François’s death, the duchesse d’Étampes was banished from court by Diane de Poitiers, and the Meudon property passed through the hands of several owners. They included an early Superintendent of Finances for the young Louis XIV, Abel Servien (1593-1659), and, later, Louis’s Secretary of State, François-Michel le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, who owned Meudon until his death.

Louis de Bourbon, the Grand Dauphin, took possession of Meudon in 1695 and under his constant care the country estate was refurbished after decades of neglect. Soon known as Monseigneur architecte, Louis lavished great attention on the renovation of the château and its grounds.\textsuperscript{54} Audran’s previous work at Anet must have appealed to the Dauphin because he enlisted Audran’s expertise for Meudon around 1699. Audran painted two ceilings in the Dauphin’s château and created tapestry designs, the \textit{Portières de deux}, for the bedchamber.\textsuperscript{55} Audran’s success in winning this first royal commission when the Gobelins reopened in 1699 elevated the status of Audran’s work and his reputation as an ornamentalist. These Gobelins

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\textsuperscript{52} Weigert, “Une œuvre de Claude III Audran à Clichy,” 231.
\textsuperscript{54} Devedjian, “L’aspect extérieur du Château-Vieux de Meudon,” 92.
tapestries, combining arabesque motifs with allegorical deities, created an opulent decorative art program appropriate to the status and position of the Dauphin (Fig. 11 and 12). In 1705, Louis decided to have a new château constructed under Jules Hardouin-Mansart’s supervision. The resulting plans and interiors set noble precedents in interior design. The rooms featured marble fireplace surrounds and paneling with trumeau mirrors and overdoor paintings. At least three of the rooms on the ground floor, the main salon and two other chambers, were graced by gilded painted ceilings by Audran, now lost, for which the artist received more than 5,000 livres upon their completion in 1700. This compensation represented an extravagant fee despite the fluctuations in currency value, especially when one considers that this amount did not include the materials for gilding.

Audran conceived a second Gobelins tapestry series, *Les douze mois grotesques* (c. 1708) specifically for the new château at Meudon (Figure 16). *Les mois grotesques* personified the months by way of appropriate gods and goddesses, who were flanked in turn by seasonal decorative elements and zodiac signs, and set within colorful arabesque motifs. The month of January, for instance, was represented by an image of Juno, who was shown crowned and holding a scepter while seated on dense clouds and accompanied by the sign of Aquarius. Audran collaborated with both Desportes, who rendered the animals, and Antoine Watteau, who

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58 Audran’s compensation of 5000 livres for this commission was more than a well-paid servant’s yearly income of 3000 livres during the reign of Louis XIV. Wage-earners (a step below guild workers or masters like Audran) earned an average of 776 livres between the years 1696-1715. Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in the Popular Culture of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 75, 131.
60 “Claude III Audran obituary,” *Mercure de France* (Juillet 1735), 1604.
only recently had joined his studio, and is believed to have rendered the large central figures for the cartoons.61

Les mois grotesques constituted a marked departure from earlier and more Italianate Gobelins tapestries designed by its previous director, Charles LeBrun. LeBrun’s cartoons emulated Raphael and Guilio Romano.62 Under Mansart’s supervision, Gobelins tapestries became less narrative and more ornamental, and Audran was chiefly responsible for this transformation. While using traditional motifs associated with the seasons and the elements, Audran created decorative arabesques that were less ponderous than those created by LeBrun.63

For instance, LeBrun’s Gobelins tapestry series entitled the Four Seasons dating from 1664 included a complex iconography and allegorical scheme meant to glorify the reign of Louis XIV. The crown’s Petite Academy organized the allegorical references used for the illustrated narrative and border elements. Each tapestry illustrates a classical god associated with one of the earthly elements, such as Neptune and Thetis for water along with dense scenery. This narrative scene was framed by a border of motifs and circular medallions referencing events in the king’s history and his virtues (Figure 57).64 Audran’s Les mois grotesques also present mythological gods, but in an ornamental, non-narrative presentation. Audran received a payment of 900 louis for his cartoons, and the Mois grotesques would continue to be considered one of his major works. His obituary in the Mercure de France included a detailed description of their designs.65
The Grand Dauphin’s numerous court absences spent in Paris or Meudon created divided courts, one headed by himself, the heir apparent, and the other by his father. In the waning years of Louis XIV’s rule, Versailles was virtually deserted in favor of more entertaining locales, such as Meudon. In 1696, the Mercure Galant published a description in verse portraying an entertainment presented at Meudon entitled Idylle de Meudon. Musical performances, amateur theatricals, cards and gambling provided indoor and nighttime activity that supplemented the allure of the hunt there. The following year, the Marquis de Dangeau, Philippe de Courcillon (1638-1720), noted in his journal that “The King, after supper, was found alone with M. du Maine because Monsieur, Monsieur and the princesses are all at Meudon or Paris…” Audran’s tapestries and décor certainly set the tone of light-hearted amusement that became the château’s principal attraction.

The château de Sceaux and the duchesse du Maine

Anne Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon was one of ten children born to Anne of Bavaria and her husband, Henri Jules de Bourbon (1643-1709), prince de Condé (from 1686). During her privileged childhood at the ancestral homes of the hôtel de Condé, Paris, and the château of Chantilly, she mastered gallant behavior and came to appreciate grand fêtes featuring the latest comedies by Molière and the tragedies of Racine. The duchesse had from an early age

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66 Bertrand, “Tapestry Production at the Gobelins,” 388.
displayed an independent spirit, a keen imagination, and fine appetite for acquiring knowledge of the sciences and literature.  

Married at age sixteen to Louis Auguste de Bourbon (1670-1736), the duc du Maine, legitimized son of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon, the duchesse became a well-known society hostess. But she lacked patience for the unremitting etiquette at court. Prompted by the need for a place of their own, her husband the duc purchased the château at Sceaux, in 1699, the former residence of Jean-Baptiste Colbert. This private venue provided the perfect escape from court and allowed the duchesse to orchestrate renowned entertainments and preside over a salon that drew many famed musicians as well as men of letters.

The château at Sceaux had been built in 1597, but its previous owners in the seventeenth century, including Colbert, followed by his son the Marquis de Seignelay, had restored and enlarged the palace. Colbert had hired Le Notre to lay out the grounds, and the landscaper surrounded the château with terraced parterres featuring sculptures. When the duc and duchesse acquired the property, they immediately set about updating the interiors. The duchesse’s own apartments on the ground floor overlooked the flower gardens and contained luxuriously appointed rooms with fine decorative arts.

In 1704, Audran contributed to the décor, which has not survived, painting the ceiling of the alcove and the duchesse’s petit appartement. According to a description by J.-J. Guiffrey, the alcove ceiling had the figures of Apollo and the virtuous figure of love enclosed by interlaced golden ornament. The ornament served as a perimeter in which there were additional figures of

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70 Cessac and Couvreur, Études sur le 18e Siècle—La Duchesse du Maine, 7.  
72 Victor Advielle, Histoire de la ville de Sceaux depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours (Paris: G. Delarue, 1889), 268.  
73 Advielle, Histoire de la ville de Sceaux, 51.  
74 Advielle, Histoire de la ville de Sceaux, 56.
the arts and sciences, diverse animals, flowers, trophies, and other ornaments, all painted in color against a white background. In the petit appartement, the center room had a raised inner dome said to be in the shape of a calotte or rounded cap, painted with a white background. It also appeared to have a trompe l’œil inner dome painted with branches, flowers, and other organic decoration, opening out to eight directions. It was enriched on the four sides with figures of cupids occupied with the cares of gardening and accompanied by numerous animals and birds with rich colors. The four corners below the dome were ornamented with foliage, flowers, and fruits. An article regarding the duchesse’s appartement, written by A. Panthier, noted a contemporary poem circulated at the court of Sceaux describing the appartement. The poem begins by describing “the principle of the pleasure of the eyes, the pencil, by faithful traces marks with grace and freedom the subjects whose novelty causes charm and surprise.” The interior design scheme advocated the pleasures of the garden and complemented the entertaining function of the Duchesses’s private rooms. According to Nina Star Lewallen, the duchesse sought to commemorate the interiors through the commissioned poem that “reveals the allegorical intent of the decorative ensemble.” Although the interior no longer exists, two drawings by Audran remain preserved at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, and illustrate a ceiling design that corresponds to Guiffrey’s description (Figure 58).

Delighting in her love of literature and lavish entertaining, the duchesse reveled in her château escape by founding the Order of the Honey Bee, of which she was the Grand Mistress. Playing off the chivalric orders, she devised a parody in which selected aspirants swore by Mount Hymettus (a Greek mountain known for its honey) their eternal fealty to the fairy

Ludovise. In their oath, they promised “to love pleasure and the dance” and to cherish a medal with the inscription “Louise, Baronne de Sceaux, Directrice perpétuelle de L’ordre de la Mouche a Miel.”79 In this retreat, the duchesse found her refuge from court and became legendary.

Music as an Escape

The duchesse du Maine, like all the nobility, appreciated and performed music among her friends in the privacy of her salon at Sceaux (and later at Anet) or her Parisian residence on the rue de Varenne. A posthumous inventory noted more than one hundred volumes of musical works preserved at Sceaux.80 The author A. Trevoux’s Les Divertissement de Sceaux, c. 1712, noted that the duchesse went to Sceaux when the court was at Fontainebleau. She sought and found a measure of freedom at Sceaux, where she sang and was known for her charming humor that created a lighthearted atmosphere for her guests.81 Trevoux further noted ingenious amusements, “ces noble plaisirs,” found at Sceaux. Catherine Cessac described those noble pleasures as “small amusements, often impromptu, mixed with comedy, music, games, poetry, portraits, riddles and bits of rhyme, conversations on the most diverse subjects, walks and the pleasures of the [card] tables. Here, music is an integral part of the whole art of living.”82 The king and his entourage sometimes even stopped at Sceaux on their way to Fontainebleau.83

79 Piépape, A Princess of Strategy, 60-61.
82 “petits divertissements, souvent impromptu, mêlés de comédie, de musique, de jeux, de poésies, de portraits, d’enigmes et de bouts rimés, de conversations sur les sujets les plus divers, de promenades et des plaisirs de la table. Ici, la musique fait partie intégrante de tout un art de vivre.” Catherine Cessac, “La duchesse du Maine et la musique,” 98.
83 Cessac, “La duchesse du Maine et la musique,” 100.
The music heard at Sceaux coincided with a period when harpsichord music became popular. In fact, the posthumous inventory of the duchesse du Maine, c. 1753, noted that her estate possessed several harpsichords. These instruments could be transported easily and could follow their proprietors from house to house. In this period, harpsichord music served as an accompaniment or an independent form of private elite entertainment. Despite the popularity of the music and the practice of ravalement, a refurbishing process, Audran’s decorative contribution on such instruments has received little to no attention to explain the need for or the extent of his involvement.84

In the eighteenth century, the original Flemish harpsichords with two transposed keyboards received new keyboards to extend their range and to accommodate new musical works by French composers. Enlarging the original four-octave scale to four-and-a half octaves, was termed petit ravalement, and the keyboard was squeezed into the original case. However, more often the scale was extended to five octaves, described as grand ravalement, and this enlargement required an entirely new exterior case.85 The opportunity for new exterior finishes on the instrument case allowed the painting style to reflect contemporary French trends in ornamentation. The enlarged instrument cases could be given simple decoration, or depending on the patron’s budget could be extravagantly ornamented. A harpsichord painted and gilded by Audran, now preserved at Versailles, will be discussed because it is possibly the same one owned by the duc and duchesse du Maine, based on a posthumous inventory.

84 Designs for harpsichord cases have been attributed to Audran, Gillot, and Watteau, the latter two will be discussed in chapter 6.
85 Germaine, “Harpsichord Decoration—a Conspectus—France,” 40. I am indebted to Sheridan Germaine for meeting with me (July 2013), Germaine shared her expertise and explained the hybrid nature of Flemish-French harpsichords.
The numerous instruments owned by the Maine family attested to their interest in musical entertainment. Of those instruments, one is described as “a harpsichord with ravalement made by Denis in 1697, in wood painted with figures, on feet painted gold.” This designation of a harpsichord’s exterior painted with figures and supported on a gilded base clearly indicated an expensive instrument. The harpsichord’s importance was based on its original construction, deemed valuable enough to undergo the process of ravalement, which necessitated the new exterior case with the costly gilded ornament. Cessac cites a harpsichord fitting this description, now preserved at Versailles that has been attributed to Audran. That harpsichord originally made by the Fleming Couchet in 1652 underwent ravalement in the French atelier of Blanchet at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was provided a painted and gilded finish in the process (Figure 59-A and B).

The Versailles harpsichord’s revalement featured Audran’s fashionable arabesques. Examples such as this instrument survived in part because harpsichords were considered beautiful long after they were considered musically useful. Of these, according to harpsichord specialist Sheridan Germann, many instruments were incinerated to heat classrooms during the severely cold winter of 1816. She attributes the survival of some harpsichords, like the one at Versailles, to their highly prized decorated surfaces.

The harpsichord at Versailles presents just such a remarkable survival of a rare instrument. The harpsichord’s surface decorated by Audran had a gilded background and jewel-
toned painted arabesque ornamentation. The decorative motifs of the harpsichord appear comparable to the motifs Audran used for the Gobelins tapestry series, *Les mois grotesques*. In each, putti appear playing instruments or holding sheet music amidst scrolling arabesques motifs and floral garlands. Draped palmettes and singerie are also depicted, and in both applications there is a lush distribution of arabesque detail. The tapestry series dates from 1700 and coincides with the decorative harpsichord ornament from 1705. Audran completed work at Sceaux in 1704 and it would have been plausible that the duchesse would have commissioned Audran to decorate her harpsichord to coordinate the instrument’s ornament to complement the décor.

Although one can speculate that the duchesse du Maine originally owned this harpsichord, little is known about its provenance, the patron who commissioned the work, or its original owner. Nonetheless, the precious nature of the instrument suggests that the original French proprietor was a member of the nobility. Elite patrons had become accustomed to hearing or playing music because, as in the case of the duchesse du Maine at Sceaux, music was woven into the fabric of everyday life as part of noble courtly pleasures.

Audran also participated in another renovation project that featured a painted harpsichord, dating from 1712-14 at the château de Bercy, located east of Paris. The project enlisted a number of artists, such as Nicolas Bertin, Pierre-Denis Martin, Jean-Baptiste Blin de Fontenay in addition to Audran and François Desportes. The architect Jacques de la Guêpière supervised the modernization of the building, originally designed by François Le Vau in the late 1660s. The redistribution of space for the proprietor Charles-Henri II de Malon de Bercy included a double enfilade of rooms. On the park side of the building, the ensemble of rooms

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90 This attribution was documented in the Versailles scholarly file for this item, Acc. No. 16.382. The author of this attribution is unknown, but may have occurred when the harpsichord entered the collection at Versailles.
included two salons, one after the other, which was not an uncommon arrangement at the time because it allowed for flexibility in the social use of the rooms. One of these salons functioned as a concert room and included a harpsichord said to be by Ruckers and decorated with painted arabesques on a gilded background.\(^{92}\) Despite the fact that Audran worked on the premises, no documentation attributes the painted instrument there to Audran, and the extent of Audran’s work at Bercy remains unknown. The only evidence of Audran’s contribution can be seen in his drawing for the *salle des bains* (bathing room) at Bercy delineating a sketched design for a wall decoration (Figure 60).\(^{93}\) It is known that Desportes assisted Audran on this project, and his contribution included four overdoor animal paintings.\(^{94}\) This project and those previously mentioned provide evidence that Audran had a design vocabulary that included the depiction of mythological figures within his arabesques and that his oeuvre included painted harpsichord cases, and, probably, the Versailles harpsichord.

In the Cronstedt collection of drawings at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, three drawings provide evidence of Audran’s harpsichord ornamental style in addition to the instrument preserved at Versailles. The first is a red pencil sketch of an instrument’s top (Figure 61). The rough draft illustrates three areas with figural compositions surrounded by ornamental motifs including c-scrolls, singerie and birds. The second and third drawings are more finished, perhaps presentation drawings (Figure 62). One has a black ground with the top divided into three fields. The largest field on the left includes a winged figure playing a harp under a draped lambrequin; the center field has two figures dancing under a lambrequin (a short decorative drapery); and in the third a winged figure plays a harpsichord. In each field, ornamental framing

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devices and decorative motifs surround the central figures. The other presentation drawing has a
gilded background and jewel toned motifs and figures. The elongated proportions of some of
these motifs may indicate an early design reminiscent of the late-Renaissance mannerist style. It
also has hybrid figures with human heads and chimerical animal forms. Birds, putti, musical
ornaments blend with wreaths, draped swags, cornucopia, and figural masks. The mélange
provides a decorative, non-narrative ornamental finish, which might have blended with the
patron’s intended interior scheme.

From the last decades of the king’s reign and continuing into the Régence, music
followed the social trends towards lighter, simpler melodies. Composers who came of age at the
turn of the century displayed a taste different from their predecessors, one in which instrumental
music emphasized brevity, simple harmony, and transparent, homophonic textures. Dance
suites were one of the two types of harpsichord music popularized in the eighteenth century. The
second type, the genre piece, referred to some person, thing, situation, or event through its title,
such as Les Abeilles referring to the duchesse du Maine’s Order of the Honey Bee or Le Tendre
Fanchon referring to Fanchon, Françoise Moreau, and lyrical melodies and can be related to
Audran’s décor or his patrons.

François Couperin, the preeminent composer of his time, composed and published four
collections of musical compositions between 1713 and 1730. The titles of his harpsichord
compositions referred to examples of objects and persons in the context of his time. For instance,
the delightful experiences of the fête champêtre were reflected in the composition entitled Les
Plaisirs de St-Germain-en-Laye; the dazzling presentation of soldiers was given expression in

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96 Jane Clark and Derek Connon, ‘The Mirror of Human Life’: Reflections on François Couperin’s Pièces de
Clavecin (Huntington, England: King’s Music, 2002), 107, 129.
the work, *La Marche des Gris-vêtus*; and the comical acrobats and theatrical characters were suggested in the music of *Les Fastes de la Grande et Ancienne Ménestrandise*. In Couperin’s first collection, an allemande entitled *L’Auguste* referred to the duc du Maine, and the composition *Les Silvains* meant to refer to the duchesse. *Les Abeilles* was intended to reference the duchesse’s pseudo-chivalric Order of the Honey Bee. Another Couperin work entitled *La Charoloise* referred to the duchesse and her diminutive size. Four articles of the *Mercure Galant* mentioned Couperin’s participation in entertainment given by the duc de Bourbon at the château de Saint-Maur in July 1700 and again in August 1701. Another article described Couperin’s performance before the king in November of 1701 and also mentioned that he performed on another occasion for the king at the château at Sceaux. In July 1702, a summer entertainment given in honor of the duc de Maine’s son, the Prince de Dombes, included music co-created by Couperin and Jean-Baptiste Matho (1663-1743). According to Jane Clark and Derek Connor, Couperin composed numerous pieces referring to the entertainment and parties hosted by the proprietors of Sceaux. Not only in his first book but also in his second and third books, Couperin titled a piece *Le Gazoüillement* or the chattering birds, intending to refer to the duchesse and her coterie of friends, known as Les Oiseaux de Sceaux or the birds of Sceaux. He used this theme in other compositions published in Book three, c. 1722.

The painted harpsichord of Versailles, or one appearing like it, may have once graced the salon of the duc and duchesse du Maine. The grand ravalement completed on the instrument

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100 Clark and Connor, “*The Mirror of Human Life*,” 54.
103 Clark and Connor, “*The Mirror of Human Life*,” 67-68.
104 Clark and Connor, “*The Mirror of Human Life*,” 83.
provided the opportunity for Audran to ornament the new exterior case. The enlarged keyboard
enabled the contemporary compositions of Couperin to be played and enjoyed by the elite. The
lively musical pieces complemented the colorful arabesques in visual and musical harmony. The
two art forms brought together in the harpsichord also helped to bring the outmoded Flemish
instrument up to the musical standards of the eighteenth century. Despite the tone limitations of
the harpsichord, the instrument produced music that was perfectly suited for the intimate
interiors of the early eighteenth century.

Late-Life Return to Anet

As it turned out, the château d’Anet not only was the site of one of Audran’s earliest
commissions, but also one of his last. Some thirty years later the ornamentalist returned to the
château at the behest of the duchesse du Maine. She had inherited Anet from her mother, Anne
of Bavaria, Princess Palatine. By the time she set about renovating it, the duchesse was quite
familiar with the work of Audran, and so they turned to the elderly Audran to refurbish his
original designs. He chose Christophe Huet (1700-1759) to assist him when he started the
restoration in 1733. Huet, born in Pontoise, hailed from a family of painters but may have
trained with Oudry prior to joining the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1734. Like Desportes, he
specialized in renderings of both domestic and exotic animals and continued to paint interiors
after Audran’s death.

105 When the duc de Vendôme died in 1712, Anet passed from him to his widow, the former Anne Marie de
Bourbon. When Anne Marie, a sister of Anne Louis Bénédicte, duchesse du Maine, died without heirs in 1718, she
left Anet to their mother, Anne of Bavaria, Princess Palatine. When the princess died in 1723, Anne Louis Bénédicte
107 Weigert, “Un Collaborateur Ignoré de Claude III Audran: les débuts de Christophe Huet décorateur, (1700-
1759),” Études d’art (Musée nationale des beaux-arts d’Alger) 7 (1952): 76.
108 Nicole Garnier-Pelle, Anne Forray-Carlier, and Marie-Christine Anselm, Singeries & Exotisme chez Christophe
In the early 1730s, Audran produced new panels for Anet’s Salon Doré, two oval-shaped and one rectangular. Each contained portraits of the duc and duchesse as well as their daughter, Louise Françoise, who never married. The portraits appeared supported by sphinx figures. To the hunt-themed ceiling painting he had made in the 1680s, and now refurbished, Audran added the cipher of the duc du Maine.\(^\text{109}\) Thus, on his return to Anet, Audran, responding to its new ownership, provided touches that personalized a traditionalist, even formulaic, décor.

As I have shown, from the outset of his career, many of Audran’s patrons sought design schemes for country homes that served as private retreats from the pressures, squabbles and jostling for power and status of the court. Audran’s earliest known commission for Louis-Joseph, duc de Vendôme, at the château d’Anet provided a refuge for the duc and his circle of friends who pursued the hunt in the French countryside. The arabesques Audran designed for country homes both referenced the hunt and incorporated images of labor on the land, vegetal motifs, and even, at Anet, the sleep of Morpheus. Audran’s success brought subsequent commissions, from the duc’s brother Philippe de Bourbon, the Grand Prieur followed by Louis de Bourbon, the Grand Dauphin. Audran’s ability to design interiors with figural and ornamental motifs reflecting the status of his royal patrons set his work apart.

The duc and duchesse du Maine escaped to their country château at Sceaux for literary and musical entertainment among friends. Harpsichords with expanded keyboards, decorated to complement interiors, brought instrumental music into the elite salon to accompany dancing and singing. The composer Couperin brought many of Audran’s own patrons together when he dedicated music to individual nobleman. In these early commissions, Audran united his arabesque motifs with the academic talent of Desportes and later Huet for the creation of unique

ornamental designs. Recognition of Audran’s ornamental skill by Louis XIV’s son, Louis de Bourbon, soon brought his talent to the attention of the king. In the next chapter, we will turn to his work for the king at the time of the renovation of the Ménagerie at Versailles by Mansart.
Chapter 4—Claude III Audran and Jean de La Fontaine’s *Fables*: Maintaining the Social Hierarchy.

This chapter will discuss two commissions, separated by thirty years, in which Audran drew inspiration from Jean de La Fontaine’s *Fables*. The first commission was completed for the Ménagerie at Versailles about 1699, and the second at the château Réveillon about 1732. La Fontaine’s *Fables* (1668) had reinvigorated the ancient moralizing fables ostensibly transcribed by Aesop in the sixth century BCE, casting them in a French conversational tone and rhythmic verse; they became so popular that they were reissued in dozens of editions.

At the time of Audran’s first commission (1699), Louis XIV’s absolute monarchy had been established for almost forty years and, during that time, the fine arts and decorative arts had been organized and developed a level of excellence under the administration of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, that continued even after Colbert’s death in 1683. The King used the arts to reinforce his position, as discussed earlier, and even exploited the significance of clothing and the display of wealth to assert noble status and social distinction. Such spectacular displays constituted *représentation*, which reinforced the nobility’s social hierarchy. John Shovlin discussed *représentation* as the method in which the court used commodities “to construct political authority and social status.”¹ Peter Burke elaborated further about how *représentation* was interpreted in the late seventeenth century, including the king’s use of ritualistic behavior as a dramatic physical presentation aimed at inspiring awe and cultivating obedience, especially among the members of his court.² The *Dictionnaire universal*, c. 1690, defined *représentation* as an “image which reminds us of the idea or the memory of missing objects and which paints them

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as they appear to us.” Burke further noted that inanimate objects owned by the king received the same deference as given to the person of the king. Louis XIV’s portrait, completed by Hyacinthe Rigaud about 1700, served as surrogate for the monarch in the throne room and was accorded the same respect, following the rules of civility. The contemporary Antoine de Courtin wrote in his publication, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnistes gens*, c. 1671, that those who have learned the refinement of civility do not cover their heads or turn their back to the portrait of a person of quality.

As the absolute monarch, Louis XIV also determined the state style for the manufacturing and production of fine and decorative art objects and set standards for architecture and interior design. Louis XIV commissioned the most accomplished artisans, craftsmen, and architects to achieve a level of magnificence that he alone could afford. Audran had been working for less than a decade when Louis XIV saw his painted Meudon ceilings. Louis XIV’s approval of Audran’s work at Meudon brought the coveted recognition that every artisan sought to attain. This acknowledgment by the monarch initiated a series of commissions from the crown, beginning with the Ménagerie project that made Audran’s career successful.

Audran’s first La Fontaine-inspired commission was part of the interior renovation of a small château on the grounds of the Versailles’ Ménagerie (Figure 10). The project was awarded in 1699 and executed under the direction of the king’s premier architect, Jules Hardouin-

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5 Il y en a même qui ayant apris le refinement de la civilité dans quelque pays étranger n’ont ni se couvrir, ni s’asseoir les dos tournés au portrait de quelque personne de qualité eminente.” Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnistes gens* (Paris: Chez Helie Josset, 1671), 26.

Mansart. The Ménagerie was refurbished as a retreat for the king’s granddaughter-in-law (who was also his grand-niece), Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy. Audran’s decors at the Ménagerie featured allegorical references and themes of play appropriate for a child. They included a room ornamented with scenes from La Fontaine’s *Fables*. The animal motifs related to the setting of the château, which was located within the precincts of the king’s zoo. Audran’s painted interiors, recently brought to light in a newly discovered 1764 inventory by Gérard Mabille and Joan Pieragnoli, have not been analyzed with regard to their significance to the young princess.\(^7\) The *Fables* theme and the allegorical motifs appropriately conveyed the noble status of the duchesse and constituted a variation of Louis XIV’s unified style according to the concept of convenance.\(^8\)

Audran’s second and much later La Fontaine-themed commission came from Jules-Robert de Cotte, who hired Audran to decorate the first-floor salon at the château Réveillon (Figure 29). Audran designed four large panels with arabesques and four overdoor panels for the Réveillon salon. He enlisted renowned *animalier* Jean-Baptiste Oudry to depict scenes from La Fontaine. These panels remain intact today. This commission occurred during the reign of Louis XV, when the strict observation of convenance had considerably evolved toward the notion of caractère. The concept of convenance, which will be discussed and compared with the concept of bienséance in this chapter, concerned the harmonious compatibility of a building’s aesthetic and functional qualities.\(^9\) Whereas the notion of caractère “refers to the expressive function of a building” through its “architectural form, spatial configurations, proportions and décor.”\(^10\) In this later installation, Audran’s patron may have chosen the fable theme based on fable use at the

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*Note:* All citations are from the following sources. 

7 The unpaginated inventory, “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” dated to about 1764, is in the collection of the National Archives of France (O^1 2080). The inventory is referenced in Gérard Mabille and Joan Pieragnoli, *La Ménagerie de Versailles* (Arles: Éditions Honoré Clair, 2010).


Ménagerie and the appropriateness of an animal theme for a country château’s salon rather than as an expression of his social status.

This chapter begins with a discussion of convenance and bienséance, two terms closely allied to the notion regarding “the desire to emphasize decorum and respect for etiquette in a building’s representation of the social status of its owner.”\footnote{Marc Grignon and Juliana Maxim, “Convenance, Caractère, and the Public Sphere,” \textit{Journal of Architectural Education} 49, no. 1 (September 1995): 29.} The refurbished Ménagerie interiors had to reflect the change in status and function from décor suitable for the king to decorative themes appropriate for the young duchesse. Mansart worked within the building’s footprint and created smaller, more intimate interiors. Audran enhanced these spaces with his arabesques and met the objective of his patron Louis XIV to lighten the serious allegorical themes initially proposed for the interiors. There were two contemporary sources for Audran’s use of the fable theme. The first of these was La Fontaine’s \textit{Fables}, first published in 1668. The poet’s mode of writing will be discussed briefly to describe the character of the poetic verse that engaged generations of readers. The \textit{Fables} also included illustrations devised by the French engraver François Chauveau (1613-1676), who worked on the first of twelve books and made some of the illustrations for books seven and eight before his death in 1676. The second source of the fable theme was found in the Labyrinth Garden at Versailles. In 1671, an existing garden had been enhanced by sculptures designed by Charles Perrault (1628-1703), the learned author and secretary of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres. Charles LeBrun, Louis XIV’s premier artist, assisted Perrault on the project.\footnote{Jacques Wilhelm. “Le Labyrinthe de Versailles,” \textit{Revue de l’histoire de Versailles et de Seine-et-Oise} 1 (1936): 49.} Inspired by a translation of Aesop’s \textit{Fables} earlier than La Fontaine’s, Perrault’s sculpted scenarios adorned thirty-nine garden fountains.
Convenance / Bienséance

During the reign of Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu insisted on the enforcement of courtesy codes and ritualized behavior as a mark of respect and political authority. He modeled his codes on established church behavior in order to enhance the deference given the monarch. Such conduct was perpetuated as Louis XIV and his mother, Anne of Austria, battled the rebellious Fronde factions. They used the codes of courtesy as part of their political offensive to distinguish the power of the monarch and to gain the advantage over their adversaries.

Possessing the highest political distinction among the nobility, the king represented the pinnacle of social and political hierarchy of the state. Both institutionally and personally, the monarch demanded obedience from his subjects. The king also created an image of magnificence through his patronage of the fine and decorative arts, both to display his wealth and taste and to foster the projection of his lofty status and absolute authority. The potential reward of his patronage inspired artists and artisans to deliver excellence in their work as they competed for the financial support and sponsorship of the king.

Louis XIV focused his attention on the creation of Versailles as the French monarchy’s social and political center. To create a palace of magnificence, the king called on his assistant Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who established workshops and ateliers for all manner of artistic production. The resulting output raised the standard of quality, and elaborate, labor-intensive items, such as Boulle ébenisterie, represented decorative arts affordable only by the crown. The king’s appropriation of such rarified luxury goods, according to Pierre Bourdieu, acted as a

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16 André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732) perfected the technique of using tortoiseshell, pewter and brass for cabinetry veneer as an ébéniste working for the monarchy’s batiments du Roi.
visible mark of social distinction. The exclusivity of the fine and decorative art objects served as evidence of the elite character of the monarch, his unparalleled judgment, and the availability of time to devote to their acquisition.

The notion of consumption establishing differences in status was not a new method for demonstrating distinction, but Louis XIV used it to his advantage when he established his absolute monarchy. Consumption played a part within the contemporary cultural context, which Woodruff D. Smith defined as “an assembly of factors or traits that make ‘sense’ as an ensemble to people living in a particular time and area.” Members of the nobility defined their social status based on the idea of gentility, a socio-cultural arrangement combining the consumption of luxury goods and a display of fashion with modes of behavior deemed appropriate to one’s social position.

So, the French nobility followed the king’s example of representation through outward appearance and ownership of luxury goods. Their hereditary wealth and position enabled the opulence of their representation. Moreover, their choice of costume and other personal accoutrements served to reinforce their social status. As Norbert Elias noted, noblemen were the “people of the society of estates” making up the royal court. They maintained a tradition of demonstrating the status and importance of a person based “on his bearing, speech, manner or appearance.” This included that individual’s domicile, and society kept a close eye on whether a peer was “respecting the traditional boundaries proper to his place within the social

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21 Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 45.
hierarchy.” The status and position of a nobleman dictated the degree of conspicuous consumption displayed via such symbols as the size and ornamentation of house.

Using this sense of architectural propriety, which dated back to the Middle Ages, with the king at the top of the nobility’s hierarchy that was ranked according to title, each position carried expectations of conduct according to precedent, known as decorum. The 1690 *Dictionnaire universal* defines decorum as “observing all the laws of bienséance.” The same source described bienséance as “the propriety to openly behave and take an honest/courteous position before greater men and women. Etiquette requires more respect and civility of us. It must be observed in all things.” The contemporary author Michel de Frémin wrote *Mémoires critques d’architecture*, published in 1702. In it he provides a layman’s interpretation of convenance, stating, “it’s a science of avoiding anything in buildings that is above the dignity or status of the master,” and noting that failure to observe this characteristic “consists in forgetting his condition or in omitting the rules of modesty and prudence.”

The French architect and later professor of the Académie d’Architecture, Jacques-François Blondel, discussed convenance in his *Architecture française*, c. 1703. He noted that this characteristic was the most essential part of a building. Under the architect’s directions, convenance could be found in the dignified character of a building, and through the edifice’s

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25 “Pour dire observer toutes les loix de la biensénace.” Furetiere, Dictionnaire universal, s.v. decorum.
26 “Ce qui convient à une chose qui lui donne de la grace, de l’agréement. Il est de la bienséance de se tenir découvert et en une posture honnette devant les Grands et les Dames. La bienséance exige de nous plusieurs devoirs et civilités. Il faut en toutes choses observer la bienséance.” Furetiere, Dictionnaire universal, s.v. bienséance,
27 “Il me reste à vous dire un mot en abrége de ce que j’entends de la convenance pour l’état des personnes qui sont bâtit, c’est la science de ne rien mettre dans un bâtiment qui soit au-dessus de la dignité et de la condition de maître, quand l’on en fait c’est une inconveniencé, laquelle consiste dans l’oubly de son état ou dans l’omission des regles de la modestie et de la prudence.” Michele de Frémin, Mémoires critiques d’architecture (Paris: Chez Charles Saugrain, 1702), 54-55. See also Dorothea Nyberg, “The ‘Mémoires critiques d’architecture’ by Michel de Frémin,” Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 22, no. 4 (December 1963): 217.
siting, materials, and plan, all suited the personal needs of the patron. It determined the proper order, wealth, or simplicity of decoration. Boffrand described convenance as the same as bienséance, the term used by Vitruvius. For the French eighteenth-century architect, the rules of bienséance or convenance determine the decoration of public buildings including ornament, paintings, bas-reliefs, and attributes that represent virtuous actions, generosity, gratitude, and justice.28

Based on such rules, Audran designed the Ménagerie interiors for the wife of the Dauphin. Mansart had first proposed a design scheme taking inspiration from the main palace and featuring allegorical female deities. Audran portrayed a selection of these deities but added lighthearted and playful motifs to brighten the overall tone of the interior design. The ornaments, representing virtuous actions or aversions to folly, reflected the position and status of the inhabitant. La Fontaine’s *Fables* suited this design program because the narratives served as moral lessons that opposed folly or heedlessness.

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28 “La convenance doit être regardée comme la partie le plus essentielle du bâtiment; c’est par elle que l’architecte assortit la dignité & la caractère de l’édifice qu’il doit élever; elle enseigne le choix des emplacemens & celui des matériaux propres à chaque partie de la construction; c’est elle qui, selon l’objet du bâtiment, détermine à sacrifier plus ou moins de pièces principals ou de dégagemens dans un plan, soit pour la commodité personnelle du maître, ou de ceux qui sont en relation avec lui, soit pour elle des domestiques; c’est enfin la richesse, ou la simplicité de la décoration extérieurs & intérieure.

Ce que nous entendons ici par convenance est nommé par Vitruve bienséance, & c’est selon ces Auteur l’aspect d’un edifice dont la décoration est approuvée & l’ordonnance fondée sur quelque autorité; de manière qu’on doit observer exactment dans l’architecture les règles de la bienséance ou de la convenance, puisque c’est elle qui enseigne à ne se servir dans la décoration des edifices publics que de formes décentes, d’ornemens, de tableaux, de bas-reliefs & d’attributs qui représentent des actions de vertu, de générosité, de reconnoissance, & de justice.” Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française, ou recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profiles des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels & édifices les plus considérables de Paris, ainsi que des châteaux & maisons de plaisance situés aux environs de cette ville, ou en d’autres endroit de la France bâtis par les plus célèbres architects, & mesurés exactement sur les lieux* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Joubert, 1703), 1:22.
La Fontaine and the Revitalization of Aesop’s *Fables*

To understand Audran’s images from La Fontaine, it is necessary first to survey the history of this work, as it was of great influence in its time. In 1661, when La Fontaine’s patron the French finance minister Nicolas Fouquet, was arrested and imprisoned at Louis XIV’s command, La Fontaine found that his own name was besmirched by association. In an effort to rehabilitate his reputation, he set to work on a new translation from Latin of Aesop’s *Fables*, which he rendered in verse. He dedicated the first volume of the six books to the king’s six-year-old son in 1668. He dedicated his next collection (books 7-11) to Madame de Montespan, the maîtress en titre to the king. Montespan bore the king seven children, the youngest of whom was born in 1678, the year the collection appeared.29 La Fontaine went on to publish several more volumes of fables, the last of which became available in 1694 and was dedicated to Louis XIV’s twelve-year-old grandson. It was the marriage of this grandson to Marie-Adélaïde, celebrated three years later, that had prompted the renovation of the Ménagerie.

La Fontaine used fables to reflect and comment upon the social mores of his time. In the preface to his book, he noted that their moral lessons should be viewed as sacred truths passed down from one generation to the next.30 As Marc Fumaroli observes, La Fontaine blended the ancient wisdom of the fables with a “marvelously civil” voice, that of the much-vaunted honnête homme, a model of charm and wit in late seventeenth-century France.31 According to Célene Bohnert, the author’s dedication of his *Fables* to the Dauphin was prompted by the notion that the prince’s acquisition of the traits of civility were crucial to the future king, who would serve

30 “Ce que je dis n’est pas tout-a-fait sans fondement; puisque, s’ils m’est permis de mêler ce que nous avons de plus sacré parmy les erreurs du Pagonisme, nous voyons que la Verité a parlé aux hommes par parobles.” Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables de La Fontaine*, www.fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Fables_de_La_Fontaine/Préface, xvi.
as a model of honnêteté for his subjects-to-be.\textsuperscript{32} La Fontaine’s ambitions for his translation are enumerated in the opening lines of book seven (1678):

\begin{quote}
Fable is a gift of man from the divine--
Or, if to man from man, still we should raise a shrine
To that wise soul who first invented this fine art
Or, better said, this charm that first attracts the mind
And then entirely captures it
With tales of such engaging wit
That hearing them enchants the spirit and the heart.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

The acquisition of virtuous traits may also be important for the king’s grandson. However, the dedication of book seven to Madame de Montespan may reflect not only her influence with the king, but also her role as a mother who will set forth a moral standard for her children through the medium of La Fontaine’s \textit{Fables}. La Fontaine refers to Montespan as his muse and notes that with her approval the \textit{Fables} will stand the test of time and become appreciated by future generations.\textsuperscript{34}

La Fontaine’s fables are of a type known as apologues: brief narratives that communicate morals and feature nonhuman characters (plants, animals, inanimate objects). Each can be summarized as a proverb, that is, a short, pithy statement which expresses a commonsense “truth.”\textsuperscript{35} Animals have figured as actors in and pretexts for moral lessons dating back to the ancient narratives attributed to “Aesop,” the legendary author who purportedly lived around 600

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{34}{La Fontaine, \textit{The Complete Fables of La Fontaine}, 149.}
\footnotetext{35}{La Fontaine, \textit{The Complete Fables of La Fontaine}, 17, 31-33. The fable may be compared to the parable, which uses human characters to communicate a moral or religious lesson using analogy or allegory.}
\end{footnotes}
BCE and who transcribed the moralizing lessons of an ancient oral tradition. The brief and simple tales attributed to Aesop were easily memorized and often adapted by individual orators to serve the storyteller’s own agenda. La Fontaine adopted this model and used his *Fables* to convey with subtlety his own political views.

La Fontaine was one of a long line of modern writers who retold Aesop’s fables. The earliest extant fable collection (120 fables) dates to the first century CE, and was transcribed into Latin verse by the Roman poet Phaedrus (c. 15 BCE-c. 50 CE). Phaedrus’ Latin translation was, like La Fontaine’s French one, written in verse. Latin versions of the fables continued to be copied into the Middle Ages, and the rediscovery of ancient Greek texts in the Renaissance also led to new translations. In 1509, the humanist Martinus Dorphius published a Latin prose translation of Aesop by William Hermansz of Gouda (1466-1510). Known as the *Aesopus Dorpii*, this Latin version was reprinted some two hundred times and inspired translations into French and other modern languages.

Designed as pedagogical tools for students learning Latin, early French versions, such as Nicolas N. Nivelet’s *Mythologia Aesopica* of 1610, upon which La Fontaine would draw, also

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delivered lessons for living. In the preface to his first published *Fables*, La Fontaine asserted that his verses were intended to encourage “reasoning” and to foster readers’ capacity to achieve “great things.” He also thought that the fable, an ancient genre, held the potential for formal experimentation, despite the belief of his contemporaries that moralizing tales should be simply rendered. As La Fontaine noted, the masters of eloquence believed that in relating Aesop’s stories “their principal ornament is to have none.” He wrote that since “everyone” knew the fables, the addition of “fresh ingredients” was essential to attracting and retaining the interest of contemporary readers who demanded “novelty and amusement.” La Fontaine tweaked a venerable tradition by introducing satire and humor, which appealed to his French audience and which Audran would later exploit to the fullest.

In writing fables, La Fontaine was working in a genre that the Académie française traditionally held in low esteem. The Académie’s ranking of literary genres was dictated by subject matter, with the epic or tragic held in highest regard. Since fables were not taken seriously, those who wrote them were not obliged to follow the sorts of rules that governed more serious literary endeavors, and La Fontaine felt free to experiment. As a result of La Fontaine’s

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42 “Et comme par le definition du Point, de la Ligne, de la Surface, & par d’autres principes tres-familiers nous parvenus à des connoissances qui mesurant enfin le Ciel & la Terre; de mes aussi par les raisonnements et consequences que l’on peut tirer de ces Fables, on se forme le jugement et les mœurs, on se rend capable des grandes choses.” Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables de La Fontaine*, www.fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Fables_de_La_Fontaine/Préface, xviii. The translations of this text are my own unless otherwise noted.
44 “J’ai pourtant considéré que ces fables étant scuës de tout le monde, je ne ferai rien si je ne les rendois nouvelles par quelques traits que en releuassent le goût. C’est ce qu’on demand aujourd’hui: on veut de la nouveauté et de la gaieté.” Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables de La Fontaine*, www.fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Fables_de_La_Fontaine/Préface, xv.
collections of poetic apologues, the French Academy eventually accepted the fable as a literary genre in the eighteenth century.  

Marie-Odile Sweetser observes that La Fontaine’s Latin education was about average for an educated Frenchman in the seventeenth century. He had a firm grounding in the writings of Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, to whom he made a show of deference, although he was eager to update and even improve upon ancient texts. A sense of La Fontaine’s mode of transformation can be gleaned by comparing his verse rendering of “The Frog Who Wished to Be as Big as the Ox” to the fable as written by Phaedrus, who provides the story’s moral in its introductory line: “When a man without resources tries to imitate the powerful he comes to grief.” Phaedrus goes on to tell how the frog, wishing to appear larger, puffed herself up with so much air that she “burst herself and fell flat.” La Fontaine, by contrast, jumps right into story without revealing its ultimate lesson. He paints a picture of the frog’s size by noting that “in her entirety” she was smaller than an egg. After describing her disastrous efforts to make herself appear larger, La Fontaine concludes, “The world is full of people who are no wiser,” and elaborates using analogies familiar to his audience:

Every commoner wishes to build in the style of the Great noblemen. Every minor prince has his envoys. Every marquis wants to have liveried attendants.

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47 Thomas Lawrence Noel, “The Rise and Fall of a Genre: Theories of the Fable in the Eighteenth Century” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaigne, 1971), 54.
48 He admitted in his preface that he could not match either the elegance or the brevity of the fables of the first-century Roman poet Phaedrus, and did not possess the same command of language. “On ne trouvera pas ici l’élégance ni l’extrême brèveté qui rendent Phèdre recommandable. . . . La simplicité est magnifique chez ces grands hommes: moi, qui n’ai pas les perfection du langage comme ils les ont eues.” La Fontaine, The Complete Fables of La Fontaine, xxxiii.
His use of readily comprehensible analogies drew readers in and contributed to the *Fables*’ sustained popularity. Moreover, La Fontaine’s translation of prose into verses full of alliteration and assonance set his work apart from that of his immediate predecessors.\(^{50}\)

La Fontaine’s transformation of the fable genre can be attributed to his skill in beginning each fable with opening lines that are, in the words of the La Fontaine scholar Maya Slater, “inappropriate or startling.”\(^{51}\) For instance, “The Mountain Who Labored” begins:

A mountain seized with labor pain,
Began to heave and groan and strain
So noisily that none could doubt
That very soon it would thrust out
A city more immense than Paris, but
It bore a mouse—of which, so what?\(^{52}\)

This fable instantly projects the reader into a fantasy world where a pregnant mountain gives birth to a mouse rather than to a grand metropolis. Employing hyperbole, extreme contrast, and absurd paradox, La Fontaine employed the metaphor of a mountain in labor to capture the reader’s attention and convey the moral tale with humor.

La Fontaine’s nonhuman characters were vividly drawn, witty, and articulate. Like the authors of medieval bestiaries, La Fontaine emphasized specific animals’ legendary traits to drive home points, but rather than simply describing appearance and behavior, he created striking images in his readers’ minds and this might account for his works’ attractiveness to

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artists. In recounting, for instance, the tortoise’s renowned slowness in comparison to the capering hare, the tortoise asks the reader, “Would you have run if you’d carried your house along?” This direct address to the reader asserts the animal’s ability to think. The incongruity of the tortoise’s verbal excuse for his lack of speed underscores the reason for his slow pace, but that reason is conveyed with humor. La Fontaine tended to credit smaller animals with greater mental capabilities than larger beasts as seen, for example, in “The Two Bulls and a Frog,” “The Dove and the Ant,” and “The Eagle and the Stag-Beetle.”

The animal kingdom also had a hierarchy, with the most powerful, the lion, at the top. Fables with the lion portrayed as the leader or king describe generalized monarchial activities, such as preparing for war or gathering subjects at court. One focuses on the hierarchy led by the belly, entitled The Belly and the Members. The belly calling for nourishing food, fought the rebuke of lesser body parts that quickly realized their folly when food was withheld. Their dependence on the belly paralleled the myriad of human subjects relying on the monarchy for its livelihood. Another fable, “The Lion,” acknowledges the status of the animal and the inevitable power accrued in his position. These tales portray both positive and negative attributes of kings. According to Andrew Calder, these attributes follow the conventional wisdom of the ancients and speak of the generic hazards of the abuses of power.

From our remove of more than three hundred years, it is impossible to discern all the subtleties of La Fontaine’s text, which include satirical references, veiled citations of literature,

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53 Slater, The Craft of La Fontaine, 114.
54 La Fontaine, The Complete Fables of La Fontaine, 134.
56 Slater, The Craft of La Fontaine, 117-18.
57 La Fontaine, The Complete Fables of La Fontaine, “The Lion Prepares for War” (book 5, fable19) and “The Lion’s Court” (book 7, fable7).
and criticisms of contemporaneous currents of thought. Nonetheless, it is clear that the
dialogue used in the fable of the frog and the ox and of other fables presenting animals as having
the capability of speech, alluded to the contemporary philosophical debate regarding mechanical
philosophy and animal intelligence. Those debates had faded from view before Audran began
to use the fable theme. Instead, what endured was a repertoire of animal protagonists who
succeeded or saved their skins not by brute force but rather through charm, agile wit, and
carefully chosen words. As such, they exemplified the importance and utility of civility in
interactions with others, and the animal protagonists became part of popular culture because of
their ties to contemporary life. In addition, illustrations made the tales visual and reinforced the
reader’s recollection of each narrative.

La Fontaine’s Illustrated Fables

La Fontaine’s Fables choisies mises en vers par M. de La Fontaine, published about
1668, included printed illustrations by the French engraver François Chauveau (1613-1676). The
Metropolitan Museum of Art preserves a collection of Chauveau’s prints from this edition.

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60 Calder, The Fables of La Fontaine, ix.
61 Margaret J. Osler, Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66; B. S. C. Nwaozuzu, The Intellectual Orbit of La Fontaine (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 1984), 47. In the seventeenth century, René Descartes (1596-1650) and Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) developed two opposing versions of mechanical philosophy, an early scientific-philosophic-mechanistic view of the natural world, in which all the natural phenomena came to be defined in terms of matter and motion. Descartes published his views in the Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences (1637). Gassendi’s treatise, Disquisitio metaphysica, seu dubitationes et instantiae adversus Renati Cartesii metaphysicam et responsa (1644), offered an opposing view counter to Descartes’s mechanical philosophy.
62 Slater, The Craft of La Fontaine, 85.
63 Jean de La Fontaine, Fables (Paris: Chez Denys Thierry et Claude Barbin, 1668), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. #BN.495-986 P5. The 118 illustrations of the 124 fables are set within a double-lined border, located at the top of the page and uniformly sized (68 by 52 millimeters). The discrepancy between the number of illustrations and the number of fables may be the result of economic concerns: the use of copper-plated engravings
Chauveau took inspiration for his work from earlier French and continental fable collections. His animal characters do not wear human clothing and the animals generally appear in a generic outdoor setting with trees or plants framing the foreground. They stand against a generic country background, sometimes depicted with a farmhouse or ruin, perhaps demonstrating the separation of the animals in nature from human civilization.

In Chauveau’s images, a variety of beasts illustrate the paradox of the narrative when they interact with each other. Rather than reacting with instinctive animal savagery, they demonstrate human foibles. For instance, the depiction of the tale of the lion and the rat shows the large feline as it confronts the small rodent (Figure 63). The lion raises a paw and sets the rat free, rather than demonstrating the lion’s innate impulse to eat the small animal. The liberating gesture certainly illustrates a human act of kindness, replacing the expected violent act of consuming prey.

The animal characters in the *Fables* act out a variety of human weaknesses, such as vanity, demonstrated in the tale of the dog who drops his prey when he sees his reflection, or the story of the stag who admires his antlers, which will lead to his demise, rather than his swift, though slender, legs. Chauveau does not provide details indicating time unless it plays a role in the narrative, such as the story of “The Fox and the Grapes,” in which the ripe fruit on the vine indicates the fall season. Generally, the animal illustrations depict the moments just before or after the narrative’s climax. But, when narratives include a predator eating his quarry, the
illustration does not depict the violent action. As in the fable “The Wolf and the Lamb,” the illustration shows the characters confronting each other by a stream prior to the wolf eating his adversary. Despite the violent conclusion, the image depicts the physical encounter when the lamb tries, in vain, to verbally argue with the wolf rather than follow his instinct to run away (Figure 64). The illustration of “The Crow and the Fox” shows the moment just after the tale’s climax, when the crow’s acceptance of the fox’s invitation to display his singing talent causes the crow to drop the cheese for the fox to eat. The dynamic lunge by the fox accentuates his achievement of fooling the crow and gaining the cheese (Figure 65). Chaveau’s choice of moments to illustrate without violence or when the characters hesitate for an instant when reason should come into play demonstrates his understanding of decorum promoted in academic theories of painting at the time. As Poussin noted, “the painter must begin with disposition, then ornament, decorum, beauty, grace vivacity, costume, vraisemblance, and judgment in every part.”

Jean-Marie Chatelain and Céline Bohnert name three previous illustrated fable collections from which Chauveau probably took inspiration, based on Chauveau’s appropriation of the figural disposition or poses of the animals. Those references include Gilles Corrozet’s Les Fables du très ancien Ésope (c. 1542); Bernard Solomon’s Les Fables d’Ésope (c. 1547); and Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder’s De warachtighe fabulen der dieren (c. 1567) and Esbatement moral des animaux (c. 1578). Chatelain and Bohnert note that Chauveau appropriated the

structure of his compositions, such as the position or placement of animal figures, or illustration elements and background farmhouses or human figures working in fields, from both the 1567 and 1578 fable collections. He probably relied more on the 1578 fable collection because it was also an expanded version of the 1567 publication, and it was also a French translation.

Gheeraerts’s illustrations, completed as engravings, differed from Corrozet and Solomon’s illustrations, which were wood-block prints. Chauveau took elements from the Corrozet-Solomon illustrations, but Gheeraerts’s printing technique enhanced the natural appearance of flora and fauna. Chauveau engraved hatched lines and cross-hatching create the illusion of volume and form that improved the accuracy of appearance for distinguishing between types of animals and their placement in the landscape. That accuracy included additional animal characteristics discussed by William B. Ashworth, Jr., who noted the long-recognized tradition of printers’ appropriation of elements from scientific illustrations for the depiction of emblems and genre illustrations. Ashworth also found that many seventeenth-century scientific (natural history) illustrations surprisingly drew from prototypes of non-scientific works. He cited an illustration of a chameleon by Gheeraerts in his 1567 Aesop collection, for which there was no matching Aesop’s fable. The editor de Deene improvised a tale to accompany the illustration.68

The characteristics included by Gheeraerts emphasized the animal’s physicality, which paradoxically was opposed to the human qualities and behaviors enacted in the narratives. The accuracy of Gheeraerts’ animal engravings also enabled the reader of fables to identify the narratives at a glance. Audran would have endeavored to achieve that quality of instant

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recognition in the Ménagerie fables for comprehension of the narrative by Marie-Adélaïde and her guests.

Charles Perrault’s Labyrinth Garden at Versailles and Its Influences

In 1664, André Le Nôtre had originally designed a portion of the Versailles gardens as an unadorned maze of paths, known as the “Petit bois vert.” Six years later, Charles Perrault, chief clerk to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV’s finance minister and the superintendent of the Bâtiments du Roi, proposed a plan for enhancing the Petit bois vert with sculpted fountains depicting characters from a different translation of Aesop’s fables. Perrault worked with Charles Le Brun, First Painter to the King, on the transformation of the small, unembellished maze into a striking garden that would be influential on Audran’s work at Versailles.

Perrault had spent a portion of his youth translating the fables of the Italian humanist poet Gabriel de Faërne (1500-1561) and would go on to publish his own collection of moralizing tales, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697). Given his interest in the genre, it was probably Perrault who suggested the garden’s theme. For his part, Le Brun designed the fountains and hired a team of thirty sculptors to execute them. Many were based on life studies of animals at the Ménagerie, and the fountain figures were painted in true-to-life colors. However, some of the animals depicted were more fanciful than realistic, such as the protagonist of Aesop’s “The

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72 The first payments to the sculptors in the crown’s account books occurred in 1672 and work continued until 1677, when the Labyrinth opened. Bassy, “Les fables de La Fontaine et le labyrinthe de Versailles,” 384.
Serpent and the File,” which in the Labyrinth Garden was rendered not as a snake but as a winged and clawed dragon. This departure suggests Le Brun’s probable use of Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder’s *Esbatement moral des animaux* (1578) or a later fable publication by Aegidius Sadeler (Figure 66). Alain-Marie Bassy reviewed the concurrent creation of the Versailles Labyrinth Garden and La Fontaine’s *Fables* in an effort to explain the choice of Perrault and LeBrun to use the sixteenth-century fable translation instead of La Fontaine’s version. The illustrations of both Chauveau and Gheeraerts aimed to depict the animal characters with naturalism, Bassy did not cite any concrete evidence for the choice of the older text by Perrault and LeBrun. However, their choice may reflect an effort to distance themselves from their prior patron Fouquet and La Fontaine’s defense of the disgraced finance minister.

In order to prevent visitors from perceiving the maze’s layout, Le Brun’s design specified high hedges. The point of a maze is to plunge the visitors into an uncertain situation and oblige them to find their way. The exercise of successfully navigating a maze involves following the right path and thus may be conceptually compared to the thoughtful reading and interpretation of

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74 Bassy, “Les fables de La Fontaine et le labyrinthe de Versailles,” 392. Le Brun probably consulted a version of Aegidius Sadeler’s *Fables* based on the dragon design for the fountain of “The Snake and the File” fable. Marcus Gheeraerts’ expanded French edition with 125 fables, entitled *Esbatement moral des animaux* was published in German, probably by Aegidius Sadeler, *Theatrum Morum* (Prague, 1608), Sadeler either made or had a printer make reverse copies of the Gheerarts’s illustrations and added 15 original fables accompanied by their own etchings. Those 140 copper plates came to Paris under unknown circumstances and were used to reissue the collection with three different adaptations: [Raphaël Trichet du Fresne], *Figures diverses tires des Fables d’Esop et d’autres et expliquées par R.D.F.* (Paris, 1659); [anon.], *Fables d’Esop avec les figures de Sadeler* (Paris, 1689); [Henri-François d’Aguesseau], *Les Fables d’Esop, graveés par Sadeler, avec un discours préliminaire et les Sens Moraux en Distiques* (Paris, 1743); and Paul J. Smith, “Cognition in Emblematic Fable Books: Aegidius Sadeler’s *Theatrum morum* (1608) and its Reception in France (1659-1743),” in *Cognition and the Book: Typologies of Formal Organization of Knowledge in the Printed Book of the Early Modern Period*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Wolfgang Neuber (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 161-62. Gheeraerts’s own illustration of the winged and clawed dragon can be traced to Giovan Mario Verdizotti’s (1530-1607) *Cento favole morale* (c. 1570); it was there that Aesop’s serpent was first rendered as the dragon-like creature Le Brun’s design emulated. Paul Smith, “Two Illustrated Fable Books: The *Eshatement moral des animaux* (1578) and Verdizotti’s *Cento favole morale* (1570): A Missing Link,” in *Living in Posterity: Essays in Honor of Bart Westerweel*, ed. Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen (Hilversum: Uitgeverij verleren, 2004), 249-50.


fables. The Aesop-inspired fountains in the Versailles Labyrinth that one encountered as one progressed through the maze, symbolically marked the pursuit of wisdom. Perrault explained the labyrinth plan in a written description of the garden in *Recueil de divers ouvrages en prose et en vers* (c. 1675). Two years later, he authored *The Labyrinth of Versailles* (c. 1677, illustrated with engravings by Sébastien Le Clerc), which included the prose narrative from *Recueil de divers ouvrages* and morals written in verse relating to each fountain (Figure 70). He also included an explication of each fountain’s sculptural elements. From these expositions, it is clear that the fountains can be seen as three-dimensional equivalents of the engraved illustrations found in popular fable collections of the time.

Each fountain also was accompanied by a quatrain by the poet Isaac de Benserade (1613-1691) and engraved on a plaque. These quatrains provided yet another way of approaching and interpreting the scenarios that ornamented the fountains. These verses were published by Benserade as *Fables d’Esop en quatrains don’t il y en a une partie au Labyrinthe de Versailles* (1678). Sixteen of the thirty-nine Labyrinth Garden sculptures refer to fables that La Fontaine also transcribed. Audran alluded to all sixteen in his La Fontaine room at the Ménagerie. The remaining sixty-four vignettes of Audran’s at the Ménagerie also came from La Fontaine’s illustrated *Fables*.

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80 Isaac de Benserade, *Fables d’Esop en quatrains dont il y a une partie au Labyrinthe de Versailles* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1678), accessed August 19, 2015, www.gallica.bnf.fr. In later years, the labyrinth fountains proved to be difficult to maintain and fell into a state of disrepair. In 1778, the garden underwent a redesign following the vogue for gardens in the English taste and the garden’s name changed to the Bosquet de l’Ancien Labyrinthe and ultimately, in 1835, to the Bosquet de la Reine. Pincas, *Versailles*, 180.
The Ménagerie at Versailles

Construction of the chateau at the Versailles Ménagerie began in 1662, when Louis XIV directed Louis Le Vau (1612-1670) to create a royal zoo on the grounds of the palace. The Ménagerie was one of many displays there of the monarch’s magnificence, its numerous exotic animal and bird species comprising a collection amassed through diplomatic gifts, signs of conquest or afforded only by the king. The animals also served as models for artists who made life studies there. The sculptors of the Labyrinth fountains as well as Audran’s collaborator at the Ménagerie, François Desportes, were among those who benefitted from the availability of these rare specimens.

The small château at the Ménagerie was surrounded by open-air courtyards extending out from the building, which served as pens to house a large collection of exotic and domestic birds and mammals. The king and his visitors could view the animals from the chateau’s octagonal two-story tower, which had balconies on all sides. La Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles (1689), a visitors’ guide to the gardens with a suggested itinerary, pointed out the best places to view the animals. The guide’s unknown author compared the Ménagerie château to the sun, with its radiating animal pens (a symbol of Louis XIV, who styled himself as le roi soleil), and also compared the central tower to the sun, with the smaller planets radiating out from it.

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81 The king continued a custom dating back to ancient Egypt, when the elite acquired exotic animals and birds to ornament pleasure gardens. Harry M. Hubbell, “Ptolemy’s Zoo,” Classical Journal 31, no. 2 (November 1935): 69.
82 Senior, “The Ménagerie and the Labyrinth,” 211. Jean Baptiste Oudry, who collaborated later with Audran at the château Réveillon, also benefitted from live animal studies at the Ménagerie.
The king’s Ménagerie may also have been meant to serve, symbolically, as an image of the king’s power, and by extension, an authoritative government. Peter Sahlin argues that Louis XIV’s animal collection evoked the “cosmological model of royal authority.” The king, in an effort to reduce the power of the nobility, insisted on their attendance at the court of Versailles and engaged them in a ritualistic court routine as a means to rein in their privileges, just as the wings of birds were clipped to restrain their independence at the zoo. Sahlins believes the “civilizing process” that Norbert Elias saw in Louis XIV’s control of court culture under the roof of Versailles can also be applied to the caging of animals in his zoo. The Ménagerie architecture provided the boundaries within which the animals lived a peaceful existence, overseen by the king, and with all their physical needs met. In addition to applying this model of physical organization to the socio-cultural milieu of the nobility under absolutism, Sahlins views the Ménagerie as a pivotal site for Louis XIV. It permitted the monarch to demonstrate his power and control over nature. The zoo’s animal containment was but one example of the king’s ambitious display of control over the physical world; the symbolism also came into play through the construction and organization of the garden. In demonstrating the monarch’s control of nature, Le Nôtre drained swamps and diverted water to the site with the addition of hydraulic pumps, creating the artificial arrangements of plant materials as required for the sophisticated garden design.

Contemporary visitors to the king’s zoo included La Fontaine, who noted his impression of the site in “Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon” (c. 1669), a short story written in prose and

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verse. In this story, La Fontaine marveled at the number and diversity of rare animals and birds that lived there, along with the zookeepers’ successful breeding of the various species. The spectacle in the Ménagerie attracted a diverse audience of those who appreciated the king’s ability to capture the magnificent array of birds and animals. La Fontaine’s acknowledgment of the Ménagerie was an indication of how the spectacle persuasively communicated that powerful message of the king’s authority.

La Fontaine and Audran shared another tie through one of Audran’s early patrons: Louis-Joseph, duc de Vendôme (1654-1712), who provided La Fontaine with a pension, and later chose to employ the untried Audran at the château d’Anet (see chapter 3). Louis-Joseph hosted a fête for the Dauphin at the château in 1686 and the two maintained close ties that benefitted Audran after he completed work for the duc at Anet in 1689. Audran’s work at the château, discussed in chapter 3, enhanced that ancestral home with designs that complemented its Renaissance architecture. Audran’s approach many have appealed to the Dauphin, who enlisted Audran’s expertise for Meudon around 1699. That project appears to have served as a springboard for Audran’s career because Jules Hardouin Mansart (1646-1708), LeBrun’s successor as Superintendent of the King’s buildings, hired him for the Ménagerie commission that same year.

**The King’s Gift of the Ménagerie to Marie-Adélaïde and Its Subsequent Renovation**

Louis XIV gave the Ménagerie to Marie-Adélaïde when she married his grandson. Marie-Adélaïde was eleven years old when she first arrived at Versailles in 1696. Because of her youth,

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her marriage to Louis, duc de Bourgogne, was delayed a year. In the interim, Marie-Adélaïde received an education overseen by Madame de Maintenon (Françoise d’Aubigné, 1635-1719), the second wife of Louis XIV.91 A convert to Catholicism who had herself received a convent education, Maintenon had founded a boarding school at Saint-Cyr (a commune near Paris) for girls from impoverished noble families in 1684 and Marie-Adélaïde was enrolled there.92 Maintenon’s work for Saint-Cyr brought her into contact with Archbishop François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénélon (1651-1715), who wrote Traité de l’éducation des filles (c. 1687) during his tenure as overseer of the Nouvelles Catholiques de Paris, a community for female converts that provided them safety from disapproving non-Catholic parents.93 Like Maintenon, Fénélon believed that moral and intellectual education went hand in hand. He believed that learning was promoted by lessons that engaged the imagination, and thus he favored fairy tales and fables as pedagogic tools. In his book, he advised the would-be instructor to tell the student “some short and interesting fable, but choose one about animals and let it be clever and harmless. Show the purpose of the fable and bring out the moral.”94 Fénélon’s approach tempered the educational lessons with amusing fables, adding a lighthearted element to serious instruction. This was the approach taken later to lighten the interior design of the Ménagerie. In a letter from Madame de Maintenon to Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau, dated June 21, 1697, Maintenon wrote that a student “should do two lessons every day: one of the Fables and the other of Roman

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93 Barnard, Fénélon on Education, xiii.  
94 Barnard, Fénélon on Education, 33-34.
history” as part of her education. But, in the recorded instructions of Madame de Maintenon at Saint-Cyr, she remarked,

Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne knows how to do every kind of work. I am often astonished by it. I think she must have been brought up like our princes, and that some waiting woman, to pay her court taught her these things. She does not need to learn any of the handicrafts, wherever she is, for she knows them all; you could teach her nothing.

In the biography of Marie-Adélaïde, the author H. Noel Williams translated letters written by contemporaries of the duchesse. Williams noted from a letter dated November 15, 1696, that “the king told the princess that all the princesses possessed menageries around Versailles and that he wished to give her a much finer one than the others, and accordingly proposed to give her the real menagerie, which is the Ménagerie at Versailles.” From another collection of correspondence, Marie-Adélaïde wrote a short letter dated July 2, 1698 addressed to her paternal grandmother, Marie-Jeanne Baptiste de Savoie-Nemours (1644-1724), “They are working on my menagerie. The king ordered Mansart to spare nothing. Imagine, my great grandmamma, what it will be.” Before she took full possession of it, however, the king wanted Mansart to renovate its central building to create more intimate and up-to-date rooms. Though the Ménagerie remained a zoo, it was substantially repurposed as a private retreat for Marie-Adélaïde.

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The original Ménagerie château, designed by Louis Le Vau, comprised a central pavilion with two quadrangular wings flanking the entrance court. Behind the central pavilion, a large octagonal room overlooked a terrace and the animal enclosures. Working within Le Vau’s original footprint of the existing château, Mansart’s renovation redistributed the spaces within the two wings adjoining the octagonal salon.\(^{100}\) Each wing was designated to represent a specific season and was decorated accordingly: four apartments of the south wing were devoted to winter, and the five in the north wing to summer (Figure 68).\(^{101}\)

Mansart’s preliminary plans took inspiration from LeBrun’s interiors at the main palace. The décor he first envisioned for the Ménagerie, rendered in academic style, was to feature female deities: Diana, Pomona, and Thetis in the northern interiors, and Ceres, Venus, Minerva, and Juno in the southern wing.\(^{102}\) The king, however, declared the proposed scheme “too serious,” and in the margin of Mansart’s original letter of commission, instructed him to change the program (Figure 69). Expressing his desire for an air of “youthfulness,” Louis XIV specified “there must be childhood spread throughout.”\(^{103}\) Accordingly, Mansart added playful and contemporary themes to the Ménagerie’s iconography, which tempered the serious tenor conveyed by the presiding classical goddesses. As Jennifer Milam remarks, several artists and architects of the period used the theme of play and games “to enhance aesthetic engagement and

\(^{100}\) Meredith Martin noted the designation of the summer north wing on the right side of the pavilion’s entrance with five rooms and the winter south wing with four rooms on the other (left) side of the pavilion’s entrance. Meredith Martin, Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de Medici to Marie-Antoinette (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 103.

\(^{101}\) Mabille and Pieragnoli, La Ménagerie de Versailles, 31.


\(^{103}\) “Il me paroit qu’il y a quelque chose à changer; que les sujets sont trop sérieux et qu’il faut qu’il y ait de la jeunesse mêlée dans ce que l’on fera. Vous m’apporterez des dessins quand vous viendrez ou du moins des pensées; il faut de l’enfance répandue partout.” Louis XIV, comments in the margin of the renovation proposal by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, September 8 1699, VMS79, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Paris; Mabille and Pieragnoli, La Ménagerie de Versailles, 33.
to shape the act of viewing.” Their linkage of play and art, she writes, reflected the elite notion that amusement was “a socially significant occupation.”  

When Mansart enlisted Audran’s expertise for the Ménagerie commission in the autumn of 1699, he was charged with painting arabesques on the paneling and ceilings. In keeping with the king’s desires, and doubtless at the behest of Hardouin-Mansart, his designs were infused with lighthearted elements, although mythological elements were present as well. A room in the winter wing featured vignettes from La Fontaine’s *Fables* within the arabesque designs. These were executed in the assistance of François Desportes, who embellished Audran’s arabesques throughout the Ménagerie. Natural elements were mingled with mythological and contemporary figures. Desportes also produced five additional animal paintings for the Ménagerie interiors.

A contemporary observer, Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, noted in his journal that Marie-Adélaïde and the king visited the Ménagerie in December 1699 and spent three hours inspecting the progress of the renovation. Louis was pleased with the work and declared it “magnificent and charming.” In an entry of March 1700, Courcillon wrote that the painting and gilding of the apartments was almost complete.

Originally upholstered with fabric, the château’s walls had been updated by the installation of carved and painted wooden panels (*boiseries*) that were decorated by Audran and

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108 Dangeau (Marquis de), *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, 462.
inset throughout the château with either mirrors or paintings (totaling thirty-six works by five different artists). Gérard Mabille has examined inventories of the Ménagerie’s paintings along with extant elevation drawings of the oval and rectangular framing elements, in order to determine each painting’s placement within the interiors. He believes, on the basis of his research, that Audran’s decorative scheme took precedence, and the inset paintings played a secondary role.

The scholarship describing the Ménagerie interiors includes Fiske Kimball’s study of 1943, and more recently, Jennifer Spink’s 2003 discussion of the pedagogical use of La Fontaine’s *Fables* at the Ménagerie. Kimball documented the renovation of the site during 1699 and Audran’s commission for the interiors based on royal account payments. He noted Mansart’s memorandum to Louis XIV and the king’s remarks to improve the interior scheme. Spinks notes that the interiors included paintings, which “represented children playing, mythological figures, and La Fontaine’s *Fables* based on the period account of Germain Brice.” She also noted correlations between those decorative themes and an attributed Audran drawing for the Ménagerie ceiling design, now preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris (Figure 2). She believes the drawing indicated a design for a square room in the summer wing of the château. She also noted the payments made to Audran in 1700 and 1701 for painted ceiling

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110 Gerard Mabille, “Les Tableaux de la Ménagerie de Versailles,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’histoire de l’art français* (1975): 89. Many of those paintings were made by young artists who had worked for Mansart at the Trianon de Marbre, which was built in the late 1680s to replace Le Vau’s Trianon de Porcelain. Kimball, *The Creation of the Rococo*, 49.


and walls. From the outset, Spinks’s research depended on a small number of known primary documents.

Gerard Mabille, teamed with Joan Pieragnoli (2010), added to the scholarship. They documented the iconography of each of the newly designed rooms based on another primary document, unknown to Spinks (Figure 70).\textsuperscript{115} That primary information in the form of an inventory describes the color and design characteristics for each room and provides a wealth of new information. However, Mabille and Pieragnoli did not analyze the significance of those designs with regard to Marie-Adélæïde. In addition, the inventory notes that the room with La Fontaine fable vignettes actually existed in the southern winter wing. Spinks’s research did discuss other paintings, such as Louis de Silvestre’s \textit{Arion on the Dolphin} and Nicholas Colombel’s \textit{Orpheus playing the Lyre}, and their appropriate themes for the Ménagerie. However, recent scholarship based on the inventory of the site reveals to a larger extent the particular mythological deities and fables depicted by Audran that fulfilled the king’s dictate in the interior design.

The request of the king to create an interior with childhood spread throughout suggests a more amusing, playful theme. An interior scheme fusing a sense of leisure with social activities suggests an environment where the young princess could escape the rigors of court life. Marie-Adélæïde had assumed the activities associated with her position, hosting formal receptions where the court closely observed her adherence to the fine details of etiquette.\textsuperscript{116} The king’s objective to provide the finest menagerie to the young royal paralleled her social status. The interior ornamentation and decorative arts of the Ménagerie château reflected that position. The

\textsuperscript{115} Mabille and Pieragnoli, \textit{La Ménagerie de Versailles}, 4-96. Figure 70 illustrates their computer simulated rendering of the Ménagerie.

\textsuperscript{116} Williams, \textit{A Rose of Savoy: Marie-Adélæïde of Savoy}, 206.
payments made to Audran for the completed interior testify to his patron Louis XIV’s satisfaction. Audran answered the king’s directive, fusing allegorical deities with scenes of entertainment (opera, comedy, acrobatics, and masquerades), and children’s toys and garden pleasures.

In addition to painting the arabesque elements of the Ménagerie decor, Audran probably painted the human figures embedded within them, leaving his assistant Desportes to paint the birds and animals. According to Desportes’s son Claude-François, his father painted and placed at his own discretion “all sorts of animal species, ingeniously grouped with ornaments” on white and gold backgrounds. The viewer was confronted at every turn, he wrote, with “a easy genius, fertile and playful, with expressions full of wit and kindness especially in the fables, of which the animals are the main actors.” Such descriptions are valuable clues to the appearance of interiors long since demolished, as are Audran’s extant drawings for the project. The red-pencil

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drawing, produced in Audran’s typical four-quadrant format, presents four potential options to the patron (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{120} Another drawing for a ceiling includes multiple figures of goddesses, as well as motifs of the hunt: deer, hounds, bows and arrows, and a draped net. Highly detailed, multicolored, and gilded, the drawing was probably a presentation piece related to the Ménagerie renovation that Audran submitted for final approval (Figure 75).\textsuperscript{121} In each drawing, Audran’s conception of the entire design includes arabesque framing devices along with the figures and animals. Desportes’s assistance meant following the design scheme as mapped out by Audran.

Another useful source of information on the Ménagerie’s eighteenth-century interiors is an inventory made in 1764, which describes each room’s theme and décor and gives cursory descriptions of Audran’s color schemes.\textsuperscript{122} For instance, one of the five summer rooms to the octagonal salon’s north included an antechamber with boiseries (carved wood paneling) and ceiling painted by Audran. Scenes of country life: shepherds watching their flocks, folk dances, peasants gathering grapes, decorated this room, which was rendered in ultramarine and grey. In the adjacent room, dedicated to youthful amusements, Audran’s ceiling portrayed Hébé, the Greek goddess of youth and the daughter of Zeus and Hera, distributing games to children.\textsuperscript{123} The boiseries in this room featured paintings of swings, kites, dolls, drums, hobbyhorses, and hoops. The next three rooms in the suite were small, and shaped, in succession, as an octagon, a rectangle, and an oval. In the octagonal room, Audran depicted court ceremonies, such as military tournaments, and included the French and Savoyard royal crests. One can imagine Marie-Adélaïde passing through this room into the rectangular room where Audran painted

\textsuperscript{120} The drawing is illustrated in Scott, \textit{Rococo Interior}, 23.
\textsuperscript{121} [Design by Claude III Audran], Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, acc. #5482A.
\textsuperscript{122} Mabille and Pieragnoli, \textit{La Ménagerie de Versailles} cite this previously unknown documented inventory (Archives nationales, O\textsuperscript{`}1 2080), describing in detail Audran’s designs, the paneling, paintings, and some of the furnishings for each room. The unpaginated inventory’s first page bears the title, “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” and will be referenced as such. My descriptions are based on this Archives nationales source.
motifs associated with music and dance. Apart from Audran’s designs, two paintings depicting legendary musicians hung in the room: Colombel’s *Orpheus Playing His Lyre* and Silvestre’s *Arion and the Dolphin*.\(^{124}\) In the oval chamber at the end of the suite, Audran painted the goddess Flora accompanied by garden motifs and pastimes: a flowered and trellised bower with birds, small animals, and diverse figures as well as fountains and floral festoons.\(^{125}\) Flora was celebrated in Roman rites of springtime and associated with renewal and youthfulness.

The winter suite included four rooms and each featured a god or goddess. Following a similar program with the summer suite, the first antechamber featured Diana, the virgin huntress and emblem of purity. Desportes illustrated the goddess in four hunt scenes enclosed in Audran’s arabesques.\(^{126}\) Two successive rooms were dedicated to Venus, the goddess of love; and Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom (associated with the Greek goddess Athena). Both featured arabesque-painted ceilings by Audran along with motifs associated with their legendary narratives. The ceiling of Venus depicted the golden apple inscribed “to the fairest,” which was awarded by Paris, according to Greek mythology and Ovid. The noted golden apple was surrounded by four depictions of the goddess, including one of Venus at her toilet and one of Venus triumphant; in each she was accompanied by cupids (referring to Venus’s son, Cupid, as

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\(^{124}\) A painting of *Arion Playing his Lyre* was attributed to Silvestre’s circle when it was auctioned at Bonham’s on July 9, 2003, lot 97, and described in the catalogue as based on a prototype in the Louvre. I have found no modern trace of Colombel’s *Orpheus*, although it is listed as one of his “principal productions” in Matthew Pilkington, *General Dictionary of Painters* (London: Thomas McLean, 1824), 1:216. The theme of Orpheus was appropriate for the Ménagerie because Orpheus was said to charm and tame wild animals with music. Arion was another mythological character known for his skill as a musician. As told by Herodotus, Arion was a renowned poet-musician returning home from a musical competition when he encountered greedy sailors who intended to kill him and steal his prizes. After singing a hymn to Apollo, Arion leapt overboard and was saved by a dolphin, and legend held that Apollo later placed Arion and the Dolphin among the stars. (Herodotus, 1:23, [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)). And also quoted in Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, trans. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop. (1986; repr., Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 59-60.

\(^{125}\) “Peintures de la Ménagerie.” Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers, with zephyrs, the warm soft breezes from the west, against a gilded background. Ovid recounts that Zephyr, the god of the west wind, fell in love with Flora and carried her off. He is said to have presented her with dominion over the flowers, and she in turn gave the world honey. Ovid, *Fasti*, quoted in Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 165.

\(^{126}\) “Peintures de la Ménagerie” provides written descriptions for each room’s design themes.
well as to the room’s theme of romantic love). In the cabinet of Minerva, that goddess was shown resting on clouds surrounded by the figures of the arts and science. The goddess exemplifies wisdom, and the other figures productive application of knowledge and skill.127

The final room in the winter suite was dedicated to Momus, an unusual choice, considering the god’s signification as the ancient personification of satire. He is the only god portrayed there. Momus was expelled from Olympus by Zeus for his criticism of the gods. When Audran portrayed Momus, the god of satire and mockery, he presented La Fontaine’s moralist view of the incurable follies of human nature. The fables depicted in this room overseen by Momus point out inherent human weaknesses but with a lighthearted and amusing spirit.128 Audran’s ceiling design portrayed Momus along with gilded masks and sphinxes, all amid colored arabesques set on a white ground. Additionally, the room’s paneling, doors, and shutters were painted with eighty episodes from La Fontaine’s *Fables*.129

In his 1764 inventory, the anonymous chronicler of the Ménagerie provided titles for each of the dozens of scenes in the room, including “The Wolf and the Shepherd,” “The Cock and the Fox,” and “The Stork and the Wolf,” but did not give any details apart from their location within the room. We know that “The Stag and the Vine,” for instance, appeared above the chimney, but the record does not tell us anything about the depiction itself. The entrance door featured four scenes, and the companion false door bore six more. (It was customary to balance design elements, and this false door was intended to create symmetry.) Twenty-eight vignettes covered the paneling and the shutters of a recess on one wall, among them, “The Serpent and the File.” The fables appear to have been randomly selected. The list does not give any indication

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129 See the translated list of eighty fables in the appendix to this dissertation.
that the scheme corresponded to La Fontaine’s ordering of his tales, and the characters and
stories do not seem to adhere to a single theme.

The inclusion of La Fontaine’s *Fables* complements the zoo’s inherent animal theme but
also suits the king’s design dictate to lighten the tone of the interior decoration. The inclusion of
this fable theme parallels the use of the fable characters seen in the Labyrinth Garden, which
Perrault dedicated to the Grand Dauphin’s education. The lighthearted sculptural designs were
intended to convey venerable themes for the august nobleman’s benefit. La Fontaine had also
dedicated his first collection of fables to the Grand Dauphin, the heir to the throne. The status of
the Grand Dauphin elevated the significance of the fable and its written and sculptural works by
association. Although the Académie française may have considered the fable genre low in the
ranking of literary genres, the success of La Fontaine’s publications and the appropriation of the
theme for the monarchy’s properties proved the genre’s value for acceptance by the academy.
The lofty status of Marie-Adélaïde may also have been indicated by the use of these ornamental
fables in the château renovated and redecorated on her behalf. The coordinating furnishings for
these interiors further underscored the distinct status and social level of the duchesse as indicated
in the inventory.

Each room featured paneling designed by Pierre Cailleteau (1655-1724), known as
Lassurance, who became Mansart’s aide-de-camp as part of the Bâtiments du roi in 1684. His
paneling designs, first in the Trianon and then at the Ménagerie for the duchesse, extended up to
the ceiling cornice and introduced arches, some with large inset mirrors, above the
chimneypiece. The innovative designs at the Ménagerie featured varied panels shapes—
rectangular and circular—with the inclusion of consoles to display smaller decorative arts.

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Other furniture pieces included carved and gilded stools, chairs, benches, and even two daybeds. These pieces were upholstered en suite for each room in gros de Tours, a silk textile in white, blue, green, or red with gold thread embroidery.\textsuperscript{132} Such fabric produced in Tours, one of the top manufacturing textile centers in France, represented the high end of the market for expensive patterned silk.\textsuperscript{133}

In addition, André-Charles Boulle supplied seven tables for the Ménagerie complementing Audran’s designs that featured his unique marquetry of tortoise shell, brass, and pewter with gilt-bronze mounts. Boulle, a Dutch émigré, achieved success in 1672 when he was granted the royal privilege of lodging in the galeries du Louvre and received the royal warrant of “ébeniste, ceiseleur, doreur et sculuteur du roi.”\textsuperscript{134} He worked as part of the Bâtiments du roi, supplying marquetry and parquetry floors in addition to furniture. His principle patrons, aside from the king, included an elite list of financiers and ministers.\textsuperscript{135} He supplied some twenty pieces of furniture to the monarchy. The seven for the Ménagerie include two corner tables, like the two examples now preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 72).\textsuperscript{136} Boulle received 6,400 livres for this commission, which was completed in 1701.\textsuperscript{137} The marquetry of these tables, with rounded fronts, featured putti riding on dolphins, leaning against an anchor while holding a trident in one hand and a lance in the other. Another small marquetry table, with

\textsuperscript{132} As noted per room in Mabille and Pieragnoli, \textit{La Ménagerie de Versailles}, 37, 40-44, 46, 48.
\textsuperscript{135} Pradère, \textit{French Furniture Makers}, 70.
\textsuperscript{136} Pradère, \textit{French Furniture Makers}, 69. Tables and cabinets with Boulle’s technique of brass and pewter with tortoiseshell marquetry were made in première partie (predominantly tortoise shell) and contrepartie (predominantly brass or pewter) in pairs featuring the same design.
six legs, has a top depicting monkeys drawing an aviary motif. A similar table is now in Wallace Collection, London. It features borders of foliate scroll motifs (contre-partie) and a central scene (première-partie) of a fanciful carriage pulled by oxen and led by a bearded figure. The canopied carriage carries putti and satyrs (one playing a tambourine and the other blowing a trumpet), who sit beside Cupid on a swing (Figure 73). The exquisite marquetry designs of these tables and the corner tables complemented and completed Audran’s design scheme for the Ménagerie interiors. When the renovation was completed, Marie-Adélaïde and her ladies frequented the interiors, sometimes took a light meal or entertained the king and other royal family members.

Five years later, in 1769, Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d’Argenville published his Voyage pittoresque des environs de Paris, which included a description of the Ménagerie and Audran’s treatment of the Fables in its décor. Argenville noted that the small château consisted of two sets of apartments, centered on an octagonal salon, filled with paintings of animals and were “executed with great taste and elegance.”

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139 Peter Hughes, The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Furniture (London: Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 1996), cat. #160, 2:752-57. The central scene has Boulle marquetry première-partie with a tortoise shell background and brass illustrating the central scene. By contrast, the foliate borders contre-partie have a predominant brass background and the tortoiseshell depicting the scrolling motifs.

140 Williams, A Rose of Savoy, 158.

141 “Ce petit château bâti par J. H. Mansart, est isolé, & consiste en deux appartemens, & un salon octogon rempli de tableaux d’Animaux, au dessous duquel il y a grotte. L’appartement qui est à main gauche, est composé de cinq pièces, dont les plafonds, les lambris & les volets présentent de arabesques peints sur des fonds d’or & dont les fables de la Fontaine ont fourni les sujets. Ces riches ornemens ont été exécutés avec beaucoup d’élégance de goût, par les Audran.” Antoine-Nicolas Dézailliers d’Argenville, Voyage pittoresque des environs de Paris, ou descriptions des maison royale, châteaux & autres lieux de plaisance situés à quinze lieues au environs de cette ville (Paris: Chez Debure, 1769), 2:148. The full quote has not been included as it can be noted for its inaccurate description of the five rooms whose ceilings, paneling and shutters appear to be painted with arabesques on gold backgrounds and of which La Fontaine’s Fables supply the subjects when in fact, not every room had arabesques on gold backgrounds nor did they all have fable illustrations. In addition, he noted the ornaments were executed by “les Audran,” which might indicate the collaboration of Audran and Desportes.
When devising the décor for the Ménagerie’s fable room, Audran probably collaborated with Mansart. No documentation specified the mastermind who conceived the original theme of the décor. Mansart or Audran may have been inspired by the Labyrinth Garden sculptural fountains and also by the illustrated publications of La Fontaine. Either of the two probably was drawn to La Fontaine because of the Fables’ topicality and popularity, and more specifically because the garden sculptures and publication, which had been dedicated to the Dauphin, made the fable theme appropriate for the noble status of the duchesse de Bourgogne.\(^{142}\) Audran employed those motifs and others depicting childhood games and toys to add a lighthearted and playful tone to the interior design scheme of the Ménagerie as the king requested. Audran’s interior coincides with a “romantic/nostalgic” discourse of play, as described by Jo Ailwood, characterized as “pressure free, intrinsically motivated, free from external rules, enjoyable, and social.”\(^{143}\) In the process, Audran’s painted schemes combined with the richly appointed architectural and decorative arts specified by Mansart in the zoo’s renovation to create a décor appropriate to the status of the royal inhabitant, Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy.

The king likely envisioned the duchesse as a future queen of France, but Louis XIV would in fact outlive Marie-Adélaïde and her husband, both of whom died of measles in 1712. The Ménagerie continued to be maintained well into the eighteenth century, but the royal impulse to keep and observe animals diminished after Louis XIV’s death, and the buildings were already in disrepair when the chateau was destroyed and the remaining animals turned loose during the French Revolution of 1789.\(^{144}\) None of the decoration has survived.


\(^{143}\) While the perceptions of childhood have changed since the turn of the eighteenth century, the romantic/nostalgic discourse of play characteristics apply to the Ménagerie venue. Jo Ailwood, “Governing Early Childhood Education Through Play,” Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood 4, no. 3 (2003): 289.

\(^{144}\) Mabille and Pieragnoli, La Ménagerie de Versailles, 92.
Nonetheless, Audran’s designs for the Ménagerie not only corresponded to the king’s dictates for the venue, but also instigated the goût moderne, a design trend characterized by interiors designed to provide an enhanced sense of comfort and intimacy. This style would become increasingly popular in the first decades of the eighteenth century. More particularly, Audran at the Ménagerie took advantage of the carved paneling that had broad planes to receive arabesque ornament. The cachet of a successful royal commission helped Audran win new patrons, many of whom were interested having him fashion customized arabesques unique to each commission.

**Audran and Desportes: A Collaboration in Savonnerie Tapestry Production**

The exclusive use of the fable theme by the monarchy did not last for long, because Audran created La Fontaine’s *Fables* cartoons for the renowned Savonnerie tapestry house around 1710. In eighteenth-century records, the panel cartoons are sometimes ascribed to Audran and sometimes to Desportes, but in any case the commission went to Audran, who was responsible for the design as a whole. In his study of Audran’s Savonnerie designs, Pierre Verlet hypothesized that Audran possibly provided the general panel design and Desportes the central animal vignette. In this collaboration, Audran provided designs for portable woven screens, known as paravents, which ranged in size from three to nine panels per screen. In two extant examples, the vignettes are either enclosed within medallions or cover the entire surface of the panel, where they are accompanied by dense floral and decorative motifs (Figure 74 and 75).

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148 Although it is impossible to confirm, the medallion vignette design may reflect the compositional form of *Fables* that Desportes used at the Menagerie.
According to Savonnerie records, both the three-panel and nine-panel screens were available between 1711 and 1720. The tapestry production entries recorded that 134 panels of Audran’s designs were manufactured.

The Savonnerie records of these screens do not describe which fables were illustrated. However, an extant three-panel screen in the Waddesdon Manor collection illustrates three tales, two of which I have identified as “The Wolf and the Lamb” and “The Hare and the Frogs.” The last image of the three-panel screen shows two dogs confronting one another, and may relate to a fable that, in modern translation, is titled “The Dog who Saw His Reflection and Dropped His Prey.” The Ménagerie inventory mentions the same fable, calling it “The Dog Who Loses his Prey to the Shadow,” and the paravent image may have been a contemporary interpretation.

In this collaboration with Audran, Desportes relied on animal studies made from life, which he created for projects commissioned both before and after the Ménagerie project. The paravent vignettes showed animal protagonists in confrontational and dynamic poses in the manner of Chauveau’s illustrations of La Fontaine, whereas the sculpted animals in the Labyrinth Garden assumed static, formal poses. On the other hand, Chauveau’s illustrations lack the benefit of the lifelike colors with which the Labyrinth sculptures were painted. The naturalism of Desportes’s tapestry designs is characteristic of his work, and set him apart from

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150 The records noted that twenty-six panels were completed in 1712, eighteen in 1713, eighteen in 1714, thirty-two in 1715, twelve in 1716, eight in 1717, eight in 1718, and two in 1719-1720. Verlet, “Les Paravents de Savonnerie pendant la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle,” 110.

151 The image interpretations are my own based on the illustrated animals and related *Fables*’ titles. See also Verlet, *The Savonnerie*, 111.


153 Archives national de France, O^1 2080, 17 –“La chien lâche sa proye pour l’ombre.”
his contemporaries at the time of his acceptance into the Académie royale in 1698. This quality for naturalism probably had led Audran to choose him as a collaborator at the Ménagerie.\textsuperscript{154} Despite the lack of any physical evidence of his Ménagerie illustrations, Desportes’ consistent style provides an indication of the imagery he completed for those interiors. He applied his talent for rendering lifelike animals before, during, and after his collaboration with Audran, guaranteeing his subsequent career success in painting animal portraits and creating other tapestry designs.

\textbf{Claude III Audran and Jean-Baptiste Oudry at the Château Réveillon}

This second interior in which Audran included depictions of La Fontaine’s \textit{Fables} illustrates how quickly the observance of convenance had changed. Audran’s commission for the château Réveillon came from Jules-Robert de Cotte, who became the proprietor of the château in 1731. De Cotte called upon Audran to paint the interior of the ground floor’s central salon. The son of famed architect Robert de Cotte, Jules-Robert became familiar with Audran and his work while serving as intendant and ordonnateur in the Bâtiments du Roi beginning in 1718.\textsuperscript{155} Although details of the Réveillon commission are scant, we know the design of Audran’s arabesques there included vignettes of La Fontaine’s \textit{Fables} because the installation remains intact. Audran’s arabesques at Réveillon, are typical of his mature work: set off by boiserie frames ornamented with complementary rococo scroll-and-shell motifs. Together, the arabesques and frames create a unified effect.

\textsuperscript{154} Lastic and Jacky, \textit{Desportes}, 66.
\textsuperscript{155} The original château, located in the valley of the Grand Morin in the region of Champagne, was constructed in 1725 by the French statesman René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, marquis d’Argenson (1694-1757). The marquis had profited from the market conditions under John Law in 1720, but his fortune was quickly spent, and he was forced to sell the estate in 1730. Kimball, \textit{Creation of the Rococo}, 125.
De Cotte, who probably knew Audran’s painted vignettes at the Ménagerie, would therefore have had a good sense of what he was commissioning. The salon’s setting in a country château may have served a similar purpose as the Ménagerie as a retreat for its proprietor, and the La Fontaine vignettes may have continued to indicate their original noble status as at the Ménagerie. But rather than the light-hearted theme of childhood noted in the Ménagerie, the La Fontaine Fables used for Réveillon’s salon carry darker themes that may have been intended for its adult audience. By this date, De Cotte may have sought the cachet associated with Audran, rather than the ornamental status of his themes because Audran had worked consistently for the crown since the Ménagerie commission. His ornamental talent continued to attract the elite as he entered his seventies.

During the intervening thirty years since the Ménagerie project, and with the end of absolutism, the concept of convenance had decreased in significance. When the Regency began, Philippe II, duc d’Orléans moved back to the Palais-Royal in Paris followed by the nobility, who engaged in redecoration of their Paris hôtel particuliers townhouses. During this time, wealthy financiers joined the ranks of the elite purchasing land and constructing houses. Their emulation of noble style and the concomitant erosion of the strict hierarchy of convenance under both the Regent and Louis XV, changed the significance of design and decorative arts.156 Louis XV’s patronage still fostered a royal style, but as Leora Auslander notes, the social restrictions on the emulating of that style no longer continued.157 In the Réveillon project, the choice of the fables as a theme may simply relate to their ubiquity in French culture by the 1730s, when the fables were routinely referenced in spoken and sung entertainments. Such performances may well have

taken place in the salon at Réveillon, and the animal theme suited the château’s situation in the countryside some sixty miles outside of Paris where animals roamed free.

Audran chose Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755) to assist in the decorative arabesques at Réveillon because Oudry was the foremost illustrator of the *Fables* and produced many works based on them. Oudry was also an obvious choice for Audran because the two had already collaborated successfully at the Parisian townhouse of the engraver and miniaturist Jean-Baptiste Massé. In 1725, Oudry assisted Audran with an arabesque painted ceiling in a cabinet for Massé. Evidently, the room’s white background ceiling was unevenly divided by a support beam. Oudry painted the smaller area following Audran’s painted designs on the larger ceiling area. Oudry’s portion, described in a catalogue of his works, had a central oval basket motif and depicted four Chinese birds and eight monkeys said to be artistically dressed and depicted in comic actions.

Before he became well known as a painter of animals, Oudry trained at the Académie de Saint-Luc (where his father was the director), apprenticed to Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746), but shifted allegiance and was elected to the Académie royale in 1719. Having been raised in a picture-selling household (his father was also a dealer on the pont Notre-Dame), Oudry was familiar with and inspired by the work of Flemish animaliers such as Frans Snyders (1579-1657) and Jan Fyt (1611-1661). The influence of Flemish artists on French art dated from the

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seventeenth century, when émigrés such as Willem van Aelst and Jan-Baptist Weenix came to France in the 1640s. Oudry’s mentor Nicolas Largillière (1656-1746) had received some of his early training in Antwerp between 1668 and 1674 with Antoni Goubau. Dutch cabinet paintings later became popular among French collectors in the early eighteenth century. Because of Largillière’s mentoring and the fashion of collecting Flemish works in France, Oudry was said to take inspiration from works of the Flemish tradition. Later, he became an admirer of Pieter Boel (1622-1674), an Antwerp-trained animalier who found work at the Gobelins tapestry manufactory. Boel based his portrayals on studies he made of live animals kept in the royal Ménagerie.

By 1725, Oudry had produced five cartoons after La Fontaine’s *Fables* for Savonnerie manufactory tapestry screens. *The Fables* proved to be a popular theme, and designs based upon them remained in production for forty years. Oudry collaborated on these screen designs with Pierre-Josse Perrot, who devised acanthus scrolls and framing devises similar to the earlier screen designs of Desportes. Perrot’s motifs visually divide the panels into thirds with the fable illustration in the center. In 1726, Oudry was made a painter in the Beauvais tapestry works (he would later become its director). He also worked as an illustrator and in the late 1720s began work on a series of pen-and-gouache drawings to be used for engravings of a luxury-

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162 Lastic and Jacky, *Desportes*, 154.
166 Christine Giviskos, “Technique and Tradition in Oudry’s Animal Drawings,” in *Oudry’s Painted Menagerie*, 81.
illustrated version of La Fontaine’s *Fables*. Between 1729 and 1734, he produced almost 300 drawings, many of which were used as models for tapestries and paintings before they were published as La Fontaine book illustrations in 1755.  

Oudry was known for the naturalism of his animal portrayals, so he was challenged by the task of illustrating La Fontaine’s anthropomorphic animals engaged in human actions and interactions. Like Desportes, Oudry illustrated animals in their natural settings, but taking on human actions instead of portraying an animal’s instinctive behavior. Art historian Sarah R. Cohen has described Oudry’s illustrations as renderings of “real animal encounters” that resembled those seen in nature. Oudry focused on an animal’s physical traits in order to suggest its character. The emphasis on the expressive characteristics of animals enhanced the illustrations by conveying an emotional tension, matched to the choice of demonstrative written words exchanged by the fable characters.

When Oudry began collaborating with Audran at Réveillon in 1732, he came prepared with an arsenal of possibilities for use in the decor. The two painted the salon’s four main panels, which were flanked by glass doors that looked out to the grounds. Each panel was adorned with pastel arabesques accented by animals, birds, garlands, and bouquets of flowers. Each had a central cartouche framing a vignette from La Fontaine’s *Fables*, in this case “The Wolf and the Lamb,” “The Fox and the Goat,” “The Fox and the Grapes,” and “The Stag Who Sees Himself in the Water” (Figures 76-79, overdoors-30-A and B). There is no evidence that might explain why these specific fables were used on the four main panels and the four overdoors in the salon.

172 Cohen, “Animal Performance in Oudry’s Illustrations to the *Fables* of La Fontaine,” 34.
interior. It is possible that the main panel motifs and the chosen tales may have been a reference to the four seasons. The use of seasonal imagery or related themes such as the four elements, the four times of day, or the four continents were established decorative themes for a four-sided room that continued in the eighteenth century.

This instillation provides a rare example of an intact Audran commission in its original site and features iconic arabesque motifs used by Audran. Each Réveillon arabesque panel features bilateral garlands and C-shaped framing devices at the top of the paneling inside the carved boiserie wooden molding. Oudry’s animal vignettes are contained within the top half of the panel and are surrounded by curving floral garlands and birds sitting on perches draped with palmettes. Audran’s use of these bilateral perches can be seen in an early arabesque ceiling design for the duchesse de Bouillon dating from 1696 (Figure 6). In that early example, springing C- and S-shaped forms rise from the center of the narrow border of the rectangular end. These elements culminate in a pair of perches for birds and squirrels on either side of a crown motif. Bilateral perches with palmettes can also be seen in an earlier presentation drawing of a ceiling designed for the princesse de Conti, which dates to about 1709 (Figure 21). In that case, the perches for the diminutive birds at each end of the rectangular ceiling have small draped palmettes. Similar draped perches are used for each panel at Réveillon, and in this case Audran depicts different types of birds along with squirrels and dogs. Audran’s use of paired ornaments in the Réveillon arabesques continues on the lower halves of the panels. The curving elements of the bottom border swing up to the center and are united by an S-shaped fan device and springing forms terminating in cone-shaped vases of flowers. Such springing forms can be found in many of Audran’s designs, and in the Conti ceiling design such forms can be seen springing up from the lower corners with winged female terms holding leafy garlands aloft.
With regard to the illustrated fables, the tale of “The Wolf and the Lamb” begins by stating that “the strongest argue best and always win.” It is a serious and dark tale in which a wolf instigates a quarrel with a lamb at a stream, accusing it of fouling his water by drinking from it. Although the lamb presents reasonable retorts to the wolf’s irrational claims, the wolf still eats the lamb. In Oudry’s vignette, the snarling wolf is positioned above the lamb, with the stream separating the two, as described in the fable itself (Figure 78). In addition to illustrating the text of the fable, this tableau could also have signified spring, with the lamb traditionally born in that season. Additionally, there are New Testament associations with the Easter lamb.

“The Fox and the Goat” recounts another tragic story of two thirsty animals who descend together into a well to get water (Figure 79). The fox cunningly persuades the goat to give him a boost to help him out of the well. Once out, the fox bids the goat adieu and goes on his way. The vignette shows the fox having escaped but the goat still trapped. Each animal’s face conveys his situation-specific emotions: the fox assumes a commanding stance as he looks down victoriously into the well, rewarded for his cunning in outsmarting the goat, whose panicked expression acknowledges its helpless position. The moral here is to “look before you leap,” or at least to think through potential consequences before you act. The characters’ thirst may indicate the response to the heat associated with the summer season. Flanking the vignette are quails, members of the pheasant family that have symbolic associations of warmth and ardor based on their characteristic brownish-red plumage and their migratory appearances in early summer.

“The Fox and the Grapes” tells of a hungry fox who tries in vain to grab some ripe red grapes hanging from a high vine (Figure 77). In frustration, he rationalizes that they are still green and not worth his while. In other words, he adopts the attitude of “sour grapes,” a common expression today that originated with this tale. In the Réveillon panel, the protagonist prances beneath a high fruit-laden vine, his face expressing hungry anticipation. The ripe grapes on the vine refer to the autumn season.

Finally, “The Stag Who Sees Himself in the Water,” another sad tale, tells the story of a stag, who stops to consider his reflection in a stream, he admires the beauty of his antlers but criticizes his long spindly legs (Figure 76). However, his antlers prove to be his undoing when they become entangled in some tree branches, preventing him from escaping from a chasing hound. The moral is that what is most truly valuable is frequently underrated. Although the symbolism is not typical for winter (the stag stands by a flowing stream in a leafy forest clearing), the stag’s antlers could be symbolic of the season. Stags shed their antlers in winter and begin to regrow them in spring.

The overdoor paintings of the salon depict “The Wolf Turned Shepherd,” “The Dog Who Sees His Reflection and Drops his Prey,” “The Two Cocks,” and a scene that may be “The Partridge and Cocks.” The overdoor illustrations, although smaller than those of the wall panels, do resemble Oudry’s animals in the larger panels (Figure 30-A and B). As with his other depictions of animals, Oudry depicts his principal characters with expressive faces and suggestive postures.

177 La Fontaine, The Complete Fables of Jean de La Fontaine, 67.
179 La Fontaine, The Complete Fables of Jean de La Fontaine, 139.
The salon provided a space in which guests were entertained, and the animal tales may have served as an appropriate backdrop for vocal renditions of the tales. Even in La Fontaine’s time, the tales were recited in salons as a type of entertaining monologue. La Fontaine’s stories employed a very topical voice that appealed to both contemporary readers and playwrights.

Edme Boursault was the first dramatist to adapt fables to the stage. His play *Eusope à la ville*, inspired by fourteen fables, was presented at the Comédie-Française in 1690. The following year, Eustache Le Noble’s *Ésope*, based on twelve fables, was mounted at the Théâtre-Italien. Both received rave reviews, and Boursault’s in particular was performed some forty-eight times in 1690. Similar plays followed, inscribing moralizing lessons into French farces.

Continued popularity led to the publication of an eight-volume set of songbooks entitled *Nouvelles poésies spirituelles et morales sur les plus beaux airs de la musique française et italienne, avec une basse continue* by G. Desprez and J. Dessartz (1730–37). Each volume consisted of new spiritual and moralizing songs set to well-known French and Italian music. The music, originally arranged by some thirty composers, included melodies by Jean-Baptiste Lully and François Couperin, among others. The first six volumes included a selection of La Fontaine’s *Fables* set to “vaudeville” tunes. The *Fable* songs in this volume proved to be so popular that they were published separately in 1732.

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Part of the success of the series stemmed from the six-page article in the January 1730 edition of the *Mercure de France*, providing a positive review of the selected La Fontaine *Fables* set to well-known melodies easily accessible to children for “fun and useful amusement suitable to their age.”[^186] John Metz has noted that the combination of the verses and music thus placed the parodies “somewhere between folk art and cultivated music.” As such, the blending of the two was not only “thoroughly French” but also perfectly suited for amateur performances in a salon setting.[^187]

La Fontaine’s ingeniously satirical verse in the *Fables* transformed the ancient apologues into contemporary French literature celebrating the venerable tales. His dedication of the first volume to the Dauphin assured that the public’s recognition of the *Fables*’ was associated with the elite status of the monarchy. The fable theme then inspired the enhanced garden fountain sculptures of the Versailles Labyrinth Garden. When Audran conceptualized the interior design for the Ménagerie, he probably drew inspiration from those fountain examples as well as Chauveau’s *Fables* illustrations to satisfy the design dictates of Louis XIV. The concept of convenance drove the thematic choice to reflect the status of Marie-Adélaïde, duchesse de Bourgogne. But the intervening years of the Regence and the early years of Louis XV reign brought about a decreased significance regarding *convenance*. During these later years, La Fontaine’s *Fables* became a ubiquitous part of French literary culture and even part of popular


[^187]: The eight-volume set was published between 1730 and 1737. Metz, *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 16.
entertainment with singing and acting performances of the *Fables*. Audran’s later Réveillon commission reflected these changed circumstances. Such entertainment could have taken place in the salon of the château Réveillon. Audran received this commission around the same time that these songbook collections were published, and the first volume of songs included the same four fables illustrated in the salon. The painted arabesque panels in this interior served as a complement to the natural environment just beyond the glass doors and perhaps provided an appropriate backdrop to private performances of songs from popular culture.

The successful reception of the *Fables* can be attributed to their engaging verse form, which conveyed La Fontaine’s satirical opinions to his contemporaries. But the initial dedication of the *Fables* to the Dauphin instigated the decorative use of the venerable theme for elite design programs. Despite the decline in social significance of the convenance concept, the cachet of the decorative theme associated with elite court culture persisted. In addition to Audran’s re-use of the fable theme at Réveillon, Lassurance, who originally designed the Ménagerie boiserie panels, used the fable theme for carved boiserie panels of a chambre de parade, a room used to receive friends, at the hôtel de Noirmoutier, for his patron Élisabeth-Alexandrine de Bourbon-Condé when she became its proprietor after 1733, which will be discussed in Chapter Six (Figure 80-A and B).¹⁸⁸

When Mansart created an environment for the young Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, he followed Louis XIV’s demands for a pleasing environment in a venue offering the young duchesse a respite from the stresses and obligations of court life. Audran, collaborating with

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¹⁸⁸ Olivier Blanc and Joachim Bonnemaison, *Hôtels particuliers de Paris* (Paris: Éditions Pierre Terrail, 1998), 129. Originally, a chambre de parade was a room to receive friends and often had a bed, such as Louis XIV’s state bedroom at Versailles (referred to as the Chambre de parade du Roi), but such a bed was symbolic and never slept in. It would be the terminus of a number of rooms enfilade in the King’s apartments.
Desportes, designed arabesques for the interiors and ceilings featuring mythological figures. The two artists added children playing with toys along with illustrations of La Fontaine’s *Fables*. The paintings and the arabesques were created to meet and comply with the king’s directive to infuse youthfulness into the interiors. This commission confirmed Audran’s approach of employing motifs from popular culture to meet the expectations of patrons. He adhered to that approach for the rest of his career, despite the vicissitudes of the marketplace. The Ménagerie’s carved interior panels with Audran’s painted arabesques set a trend in design. Audran developed this design technique further in the eighteenth century. When Audran used La Fontaine’s *Fables* at the château Réveillon, the adult visitor might have been amused by the arabesque panels with illustrations and marked their appropriateness for the château setting and, possibly, for the engaging seasonal entertainment within the interior. Audran’s collaborators, Desportes and Oudry, brought their individual expertise to complement Audran’s arabesque designs. Despite the different purposes of each interior, Audran successfully created arabesques with illustrations of La Fontaine’s *Fables* that reflected the presumed interests of each proprietor and encouraged entertaining and stimulating discussion.
Chapter 5- Interior Décor as Status Symbol—Claude III Audran and his work for Louis Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel, Joseph-Jean-Baptiste Fleuriau d’Armenonville, and the Marquis, Abraham Peyrenc de Moras.

Claude III Audran’s arabesques, while taking some cues from original ancient grotesques found on the walls of the Domus Aurea, often departed sharply from the ancient model. His continued success stemmed not only from his expertise, but also from his design savvy and ability to bring fresh ideas to the delight of his patrons. Rather than seek historic revival of the ancient designs, Audran’s patrons were eager to adopt trends in the arabesque developed for royal residences. The nouveaux riches among them were particularly eager to affirm their own wealth and taste by adopting forms favored by those who were more firmly established.

Satisfying the refined taste of patrons such as the duc de Vendôme, the Dauphin and especially Louis XIV imparted an elite status to Audran’s work because these patrons belonged to the hereditary or high nobility that could boast “immemorial” lineage dating from the ancient Frank conquerors of Gaul in the fifth century.¹ Their ancestry carried the assumption that their social status was the highest possible and that the cultivation of inherent virtue and the continuation of a family’s notable achievements was a birthright.² Special privileges and the possession of wealth fostered a high degree of prestige and independent power providing the nobility with the capacity to threaten young Louis XIV during the Fronde uprising. As a consequence, the King assiduously sought to exclude the hereditary nobility from the government in order to wrest political power from them and to decrease their ability to challenge the monarchy.

² Ellis, Boulainvilliers and the French Monarchy, 22-23.
This monarchial shift to neutralize the power of the nobility opened new opportunities in government to members of the bourgeois class. It provided them the ability in this period to rise above their social class.³ The King took advantage of his power to ennoble a family bestowing what was known as “letters patent” to assign offices such as functions in the armed forces and important functions in government administration or the judiciary.⁴ As a result, the King garnered absolute power in his government and loyalty from those given advanced positions.

This trend continued in the eighteenth century when new avenues for business and trading provided markets for savvy investors, the most successful of whom were able to secure titles via the monarchy’s letters patent or to purchase them outright. Financiers actively sought posts giving them oversight of the Crown’s finances. The most prestigious posts included the receveurs généraux, which dealt with the administrative collection of property taxes; the trésoriers généraux, which disbursed funds to other government agencies; and the fermiers généraux that assumed oversight over consumption tariffs and customs duties.⁵ Despite the wealth acquired in these lucrative positions, many of these financiers could not escape their lowly origins and their lack of the primary differentiating noble trait that money could not buy: good taste.⁶ To overcome this social deficiency, they sought respectability through the cultural assimilation of gentility manifested in honnêteté by the galant homme or the “outwardly polished man.”⁷ From sartorial choices to language use and bodily comportment, and even to options in interior design, the expression of taste served as an integral marker for elite social status. To

satisfy these new patrons, Audran took his design cue from his earlier work at the Ménagerie. Just as those interiors reflected the status and youthfulness of Marie-Adélaïde, Audran consulted with his later patrons and used motifs both unique to individuals and reflecting their status as noblemen even if only recently ennobled. At the same time, the very choice by these patrons to grant a commission to Audran served as an example of their elite taste.

As these patrons earned or bought their way into elevated social status and mimicked elite cultural behavior, their patterns of consumption were affected. The economic theorist Thorstein Veblen first described the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption when he studied those in the late-nineteenth-century American working class who aspired to higher social status. Despite the difference in time and place and the retrospective application of Veblen’s judgments, the same economic and social tendencies were manifested by the French nouveau riche of the early-eighteenth century. In both periods, conspicuous consumption demonstrated not only the owner’s wealth, but also the intangible attributes of social distinction and honor. The newly minted nobles knew that their social status did not match that of hereditary nobles, but their cultivation of elite manners and taste and their patronage of highly regarded craftsmen and artisans like Audran was aimed at overcoming their inadequacies, real and perceived. Such a prescription of emulation aided these patrons during Audran’s lifetime, but the arabesque interior design formula would lose its distinctiveness in the late 1730s and led to its eventual demise.

Pierre Bourdieu addressed this issue when discussing the difference of inherited and acquired cultural capital. Those who inherit culture from familial influences have the advantage of acquiring from the start a sense of culture that matures over time, providing “the certainty of

cultural legitimacy.” Cultural capital acquired through education can help the upwardly mobile, but they may not have the same “ease given by familiarity” with culture. The inheritor of culture has the long-term benefit of time relating to things of taste that becomes ingrained in their aesthetic sensibilities whereas the nouveaux riches attempt to educate themselves to raise their level of taste.

The observations of more recent researchers in the social sciences, who study processes of cultural assimilation, have elucidated Parisian consumption trends in the early decades of the eighteenth century. As Woodruff D. Smith notes, the desire for social status and class distinction often drives consumption. Aspiring nouveaux riches frequently found that display was essential to elevated status: Smith writes, “It is insufficient to simply have money; you must let people know you have it.”

These observations were evidenced in new demands for architecture in Paris by both old and new nobility at the end of the reign of Louis XIV and continuing through the Régence. Mansart and later Robert de Cotte, among others, drew up plans for townhouses and developed new residential districts, such as the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The financier-entrepreneur nobles demanded architecture reflecting their newfound status. In addition to the purchases of

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13 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 77.
14 Mary Conway Dato-on, “Cultural Assimilation and Consumption Behaviors: A Methodological Investigation,” *Journal of Managerial Issues* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 428. Although this study concerns modern Chinese students’ assimilation and consumption behaviors, its procedures and conclusions seem apt in relation to Audran’s patrons of the eighteenth century. This study noted how acculturating students used mass media, particularly watching American television, for the acquisition of language and culturally-linked habits, such as the reliance of material symbols to gain a sense of cultural belonging and social acceptance.
15 Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 8

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offices and titles, marriages between hereditary nobles and the entrepreneurs served to further diminish the class distinctions over time. All of these social and economic currents brought new commissions to Audran, who blended venerable motifs with those taken from popular culture, as he had done at the Ménagerie, with references reflecting the taste and position of the inhabitant.

The use of singerie or monkeys provides an example. Audran took inspiration for its use in arabesques from his predecessor Berain, but Audran’s execution often added details specific to his patrons. As noted earlier, Pieter Brueghel II and David Teniers the Younger created Dutch genre scenes with singerie that made their way to Paris in the form of prints, influencing French artists. Audran pictured singerie on the ceiling of the hôtel de Nointel, c. 1708, for the arriviste Marquis de Nointel, which will be discussed later.18 Audran also incorporated singerie into his ceiling design for the Hôtel de Verrue, c. 1720, on behalf of another patron with a venerable noble heritage. This patron and the commission, presently preserved in the Musée des arts décoratifs, will also be discussed later. In both of these commissions, Audran fashioned the singerie motif in his arabesques to suit its patron. But in the progression or arc of his career, the status conveyed through arabesque motifs decreases in significance as the distinctions marking the outward manifestations of social status between hereditary and nouveau riche nobility become blurred.

This chapter will discuss three nouveau riche financiers who, having amassed great wealth, sought social transformation through cultural assimilation: Louis Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel (1649-1718); Joseph-Jean-Baptiste Fleuriau d’Armenonville (1661-1728); and the Marquis, Abraham Payrenc de Moras (1686-1732). All three of them engaged Audran to provide elaborate variations on the sorts of décors he had developed for royal residences. In each
commission, Audran created a customized arabesque design incorporating elements from popular culture that was intended to reflect the good taste of each patron. In each case, the arabesque motifs serve to signify the patron’s position as an elite member of society—as someone in the know or possessing information shared only by the nobility.

**Less is more—The Hôtel de Nointel and the Régiment de la Calotte**

The newly rich and recently ennobled financier, Louis de Béchameil, Marquise de Nointel, commissioned a painted interior including an arabesque ceiling designed by Audran and completed with Jean-Antoine Watteau’s assistance at his hôtel de Nointel, dating from about 1710 (Figure 22). The townhouse, originally built around 1700 by Jean Baptiste Prédot, had changed hands a couple of times before Béchameil purchased it in 1705. Béchameil acquired the residence soon after his rise to prominence and the acquisition of his Marquisate. Béchameil earned his promotion through his abilities as Conseiller d’État and Intendant de la province de Bretagne. The commission involved a small dining room and featured painted panels and a ceiling designed by Audran. The diminutive proportions of the room added to the sense of intimacy and allowed for close inspection of the arabesques. The design displayed not only the wealth and taste of its owner but also hinted at Béchameil’s affiliation with the secret society, the Régiment de la Calotte. The clandestine nature of the regiment dictated the subtlety of Audran’s references, the significance of which was lost on later generations.

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The Régiment de la Calotte owed its genesis to a contemporaneous cultural debate, reignited in the second decade of the eighteenth century, concerning what men of letters referred to as the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. The original dispute of the 1690s pitted two opposing academic camps against one another: the “Ancients,” led by Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711); against the “Moderns,” headed by Charles Perrault (1628-1703). They had fiercely argued over the nature of progress and its relation to the classical past. A new generation began to voice its opinions and “raised questions about progress, the authority of tradition, and the foundations of taste.”

An outgrowth of these debates was a growing concern regarding the intrigues of the court, an increase in moral license, and the declining standards of the French character. These negative indices of decline so shocked a group of young men that they were inspired to form a secret society, the Régiment de la Calotte. According to Antoine de Baecque, the members of the Calotte wanted to correct the failings they found at court and to suppress the audacity and follies of those deemed most dangerous to their cause. They saw a void in academic literature and sided in the quarrel between men of letters with those who were weary of the austere lessons of academic rhetoric. The Régiment cultivated humor to revive the literary scene and to counter the social and cultural ills. Attacking the lassitude of the Académie française, they confronted the weakness in writers who had ceased to use humor with a morality that could produce a good effect.

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22 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 11.
They purposefully established themselves as an academy of fools, opposed to and making fun of the Académie française. Many of the group’s founding members happened to have a military background, hence the use of “Régiment” in its title. The members also devised a coat of arms composed of metaphorical motifs (Figure 83). The top third of the Régiment’s pseudo-heraldic shield displayed a full moon flanked by two crescent moons. The Régiment had chosen Momus, the god who personified ridicule, as their mythological protector. Momus was intended to signify the Régiment’s use of mockery to expose the follies of others.25 The bottom two-thirds of the shield had a background of butterflies, an element that often symbolizes transformation. Butterflies were also seen in Northern Baroque images as a symbol of the struggle between good and evil.26 The scepter of Momus, the porte-marotte, stood in the foreground and displayed the characteristic head of a jester wearing a calotte. On a Régiment medallion, this important symbol of the group was illustrated above the shield. The calotte was a close-fitting gray cap trimmed with small bells. It was designed with two ear-pieces: one that symbolically could be “turned up to catch all the news; and the other turned down to shut out the world.” 27 At the peak of the calotte above the shield stood a rat and a weathervane. The rat had a double meaning in French at the time: the first suggesting the despised character of the rodent; and the second associated with the notion of caprice or whim, which coincided with the weathervane symbol. Both indicated the changeable direction of the wind attuned to the issues of the times.28 The central shield was supported on each side by singerie monkeys dressed as courtiers. The medallion’s obverse side

carried the Régimental motto, which translated from Latin meant: “With the moon to guide and under the auspices of Momus.”

When the group selected a victim for ridicule, he was sarcastically proposed as a candidate for membership in the society. The ill-fated individual received a “brevet” composed by the gentlemen of the Régiment. The individualized “brevet” was a satirical composition of couplets expounding the mockery by the Régiment, and it was circulated throughout Paris. The *Journée Calotinne* noted that the composed verses of the brevet were “seasoned with a delicate salt, without any mixture of gall whose violent bitterness could corrupt the taste and make them unbearable.” The Régiment, founded in 1702, continued in existence until about 1734.

An engraving showed the Régiment’s founder, General François Aimon (n.d.), who looks directly out to the viewer (Figure 84). His left hand rests on the porte-marotte, and with his right hand he makes an unseemly gesture—pointing his thumb and index finger to indicate the horns of a cuckold—a gesture of derision in keeping with the spirit of the Régiment. Aimon’s portrait oval was surrounded with the company’s symbolic butterflies and its coat-of-arms was positioned at the bottom of the portrait.

The activities of the Régiment undercutting pompous contemporaries became known through the circulation of the composed brevets. Audran, collaborating with the young artist Antoine Watteau, incorporated motifs referencing the Régiment into his arabesques for his patron. As previously mentioned Watteau came to work in Audran’s atelier sometime in 1708 and his contribution in Bechameil’s original interior included figural compositions in eight

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29 Packer, “‘La Calotte’ and the Eighteenth-century French Vaudeville,” 61.
30 Packer, “‘La Calotte’ and the Eighteenth-century French Vaudeville,” 62.
32 Packer, “‘La Calotte’ and the Eighteenth-century French Vaudeville,” 63.
arabesque panels lining the interior walls. The light pastel-colored arabesques framing the figural compositions are known through engravings completed by Pierre Aveline and Jean Moyreau in 1731 for the print dealer Jean de Julienne after Watteau’s death (Figure 23).34 Martin Eidelberg recounted the history of the panels that were later removed from the site. In the nineteenth century, Comte Jacques-Victor de la Béraudière (1819-1885), the son of the property owner and an art collector in his own right, discovered two of the panel designs under a heavy layer of distemper, and these panels were later donated to and remain preserved at the Musée de Valencienne (Figure 85). The engraved panel designs include their titles “Les Frileux,” “Le Faune,” “Bacchus,” “Le Vendangeur,” “Le Buveur,” “Momus,” “Le Folie,” and “l’Enjôleur.” [The Chilly one, The Faun, Bacchus, The Harvester, The Drinker, Momus, Madness, The Charmer.] The last two designs are the ones preserved in Valencienne, and they provide the information regarding the color scheme for the panels. The ceiling remains in situ.

The Bacchanalian characters Folie and Momus and theater figures used in this design by Watteau would have been recognizable to visitors of Béchameil’s interior. As Grasselli and Rosenberg noted, the character of the Fool served as one of Watteau’s stock figures as evidenced in his drawings and paintings. His Fool characterizations may have reflected the known activities of the Régiment de la Calotte at the time. He also may have drawn from the Opéra’s production of the Destouches contemporary comedy-ballet entitled Le Carnival et la Folie (c. 1703), which was based on the La Motte libretto and featured the character of the Fool.35 In the panel depiction of Momus, the figure holds a porte-marotte. The figures also wear distinctive costumes that make them identifiable such as Folie’s outfit of yellow and green with bells. A drawing at

34 Eidelberg, “Watteau and Audran at the Hôtel de Nointel,” 11.
35 Grasselli and Rosenberg, Watteau, 1684-1721, 523.
the Morgan Library by Watteau illustrates a figure with a similar pose and holding a staff, which may have served as a model for “The Faun,” (Figure 86).  

The color and the Bacchanalian theme complement the room’s ceiling design featuring Audran’s customary arabesque framing devices with vases of flowers, garlands, foliage, singerie figures, and caged parrots. Audran’s ceiling also includes painted motifs associated with both Bacchus and Momus. For instance, the central medallion composed of decorative pinecones alludes to the thyrsus or the sacred staff of Bacchus, which was topped by a pinecone. Around the ceiling’s perimeter, one singerie figure holds a glass of wine in his left paw and offers a wine-soaked sponge to the captive parrot. The references to wine naturally relate to Bacchus (Figure 22, detail).  

The companion singerie figure on the left side of the parrot appears to be holding a clyster syringe, which was used to administer enemas. Such syringes appeared with some frequency in seventeenth and eighteenth-century paintings and caricatures and represent an unmistakable scatological reference. Evidently, the popularity of using this imagery for satirical purposes resulted from Louis XIV’s ardent belief in the benefits of enemas. The clyster or enema was thought beneficial not only for hygienic matters but was also believed to provide a medical cure for certain conditions related to the bodily humors. One condition referred to as “hypochondriacal melancholy” was said to result from an overabundance of black bile most often occurring in the nobility as a consequence of overindulgence in the “good life.” Since this ailment most commonly afflicted the upper crust of society, it was not surprising to learn that

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enemas became a mania not only of the nobility but also for those of the upper middle class in
the late seventeenth century.40

The figure of Momus portrayed in the panel can be linked to the Régiment de la Calotte’s
mythological protector, and one of the ceiling’s singerie figures is posed exhibiting a gesture
similar to that portrayed in the engraving of General Aimon (Figure 84, Painted ceiling detail). In
this instance, the monkey points with his right paw and holds the porte-marotte in his left. He
also wears the costume of the fool with bells dangling from his collar. The monkey uses the same
two fingers as the General to point, in this instance, to the parrot—a bird characterized by its
inane chatter and ability to repeat human speech.41 Audran and Watteau may have devised this
juxtaposition as a subtle reference to the prickly relationship between the Régiment de la Calotte
and the Académie française.

The exact disposition of the panels in this space remains unknown. Previous scholarship
suggested an installation based on visual evidence. For instance, Jean Cailleux noted that the
panels could have been installed in two rows of four panels due to the perspective used to depict
the platforms on which the central figures stand. On four panels (the Buveur, the Folie, the Faune
and Momus), the platform perspective indicates that the panels were intended to be seen from
below. The platforms on the other four panels (the Enjôleur, the Vendanguer, Bacchus, and the
Frileux) presents a perspective meant to be seen from above.42 Another hypothesis by Bruno
Pons conjectured that the panels hung in two registers on the two doors of the room based on

their perspective and accompanied Beauvais tapestries with arabesque designs that were part of Nointel’s collection.43

Audran’s arabesques combined sinuous rococo lines with contemporary elements of popular culture versus the rigid diagonals and fixed proportions of the classical-baroque style. Béchameil’s interior presented a fine example of a hallmark of rococo design integrated with a single design theme. The light pastel colors, the floral motifs, the playful nature of the illustrated figures all contribute to the informal and light-hearted feeling associated with rococo design. Audran’s arabesques there reflected the individual taste of the owner Louis Béchameil and a sense of issues in contemporary culture. Watteau’s figures alluded to Béchameil’s sophistication and his appreciation of popular theater culture. The subtle inclusion of references to the Régiment de la Calotte indicated his association with this clandestine society. Although we do not know his precise relationship with this group, Béchameil certainly sympathized with its aims and probably contributed to its cause. His link to this society reflected an audacious stance on his part because as a nouveau riche he would be prone to miscalculate the display of his social status. Yet, he underscored his elite position with this link to the Régiment that sought to point out failures in taste or judgment. In Béchameil’s case, the use of restraint in his expressions of taste paralleled the objectives of the Régiment and demonstrated his astute judgment.

More is More—The château de La Muette and Watteau’s Chinoiserie Figures

The château de La Muette presents another commission completed by Audran with the assistance of Watteau (Figure 86). In a similar manner to Béchameil, the patron of this château, Joseph-Jean Baptiste Fleuriau d’Armenonville, a collector of Chinese objets d’art, also sought

Audran’s expertise with the expectation that Audran’s final product would function as a statement of his elite status. Like Béchameil, Armenonville rose from obscurity to earn his status as an influential financier. The differences between these two patrons becomes evident when considering the use of restraint in Béchameil’s design as opposed to the exuberance of Armenonville’s porcelain collecting. With the assistance of Watteau to create chinoiserie figures, Audran’s interior fulfilled the patron’s desire to illustrate his taste and sophistication. Although many of the key facts of the ultimate appearance of Audran’s interior remain unknown, this venue combined Audran’s expertise with contemporaneous trends in chinoiserie, and the patron’s porcelain collecting served as a statement of Armenonville’s position in society.

Armenonville had climbed the hierarchical ranks during the Régence as a minister of finance and was later named secretary of state in 1716.44 In 1705, he bought from Thomas Catalan de la Sablonnière the château de la Muette and the office of “Captain of the Forest of the Boulogne.” The château, used as a retreat, had originally been a hunting lodge dating from the time of Charles IX. It had been rebuilt in 1575.45 During Armenonville’s tenure, he extended the formal gardens of the property and contracted with Audran for the interior decorative painting of the cabinet du Roi. The venue did not remain long in Armenonville’s hands. In 1716, he relinquished it to the duchesse de Berry (1695-1719).46 After her premature death, the young Louis XV took over the site for his own pleasure.

According to Martin Eidelberg and Sekh A. Gopin, Armenonville was probably responsible for Audran’s commission. His ownership coincided with the period in which

44 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 167.
Watteau worked in Audran’s atelier. The painted paneled interior disappeared, however, sometime in the first third of the eighteenth century. The only known references documenting Audran’s and Watteau’s designs come from Jean de Jullienne’s two volumes of about 100 engravings entitled *Figures de différents caractères* published in 1726 and 1728. Thirty engravings of Watteau’s figural compositions from the original arabesques document the overall chinoiserie theme of the cabinet du Roi at La Muette.

The chinoiserie style used at La Muette by Audran and Watteau grew out of the decades old fascination by Europeans regarding China. As David Porter noted, the European perception of China evolved from one based initially on the scholarly writings of sixteenth-century missionaries to an “unremitting exoticism of total illegitimacy” in the eighteenth century. The gradual transformation of the perception of and attitudes about China, in Porter’s opinion, occurred in two overlapping phases: the first occurring generally between 1600-1740; and the second from approximately 1675-1775. The distinction between the two phases explained the gradual quality of the perception shift. In the first phase, the representation of things Chinese originated in first-hand experiences of travelers writing scholarly treatises on the East. The second phase derived from a focus on the stylistic interpretations of China in the decorative arts. Porter cited the work of Watteau in chinoiserie as an example of the second phase.

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51 Porter, “Chinoiserie and the Aesthetics of Illegitimacy,” 30, 32.
Watteau’s chinoiserie in Audran’s commission at the château de La Muette will be discussed later.

Early missionary writers and traders, such as Friar Domingo Fernández Navarrete (1618-86) and Johan Nieuhof (1618-1672), described Chinese culture as an ancient one ruled by a benevolent emperor. The emperor wielded authority yet maintained harmony consonant with Confucian philosophy. Written accounts described the abundance of natural resources available to the Chinese. They helped to bring social order and benefits to the entire population and to contribute to enabling the cohesive authority of the emperor and his ministers. The narratives, such as Navarrete’s *Account*, viewed the progress of this civilization as a model society, superior to that known in Europe.

In France, Cardinal Mazarin became one of the earliest collectors of imported Chinese wares in the late 1650s. Louis XIV and his son soon followed and became avid collectors of Chinese imported wares. The Chinese vogue spread, particularly after the king built the

52 Friar Domingo Fernández Navarrete, *An Account of the Empire of China, Historical, Political, Moral, and Religious* (1676) and Johan Nieuhof, *The Mission of the Dutch East India Company to the great Tartar Cham, the current emperor of China: in which the most memorable histories, which transpired during the travels through the Chinese lands, Quantung, Kiangsi, Nanking, Xantung, and Peking, and to the imperial court of Peking, which took place between the years of 1655 and 1657, are concisely handled: provide an accurate description of the Chinese cities, towns, government, sciences, handicrafts, customs, religious ceremonies, buildings, costumes, ships, mountains, plants, animals, etc. and the wars against the Tartars: decorated with over 150 pictures drawn in China from life* [Het gezantschap der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China: waar in de gedenkwaerdighste geschiedenissen, die onder het reizen door de Sineesche landschappen, Quantung, Kiangsi, Nanking, Xantung en Peking, en aan het keizerlijke hof te Peking, sedert den jare 1655 tot 1657 zijn voorgevallen, op het bondigste verhandelt worden: beeffens een naukeurige Beschryving der Sineesche steden, dorpen, regeering, wetenschappen, hantwerken, zeden, godsdiensten, gebouwen, drachten, schepen, bergen, gewassen, dieren, &c. en oorlogen tegen de Tarters: verziert men over de 150 afbeeldels, na't leven in Sina getekent] (1665). Porter, “Chinoiserie and the Aesthetics of Illegitimacy,” 33. Cynthia Klekar, “‘Sweetness and Courtesie’: Benevolence, Civility, and China in the Making of European Modernity,” *Eighteenth-century Studies* 43, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 357.
Trianon de porcelaine, c. 1673, at Versailles (Figure 87). This small pleasure pavilion popularized the look of blue and white porcelain. Its exterior was tiled with a faience imitation. In 1686, further confirmation of the advanced culture of China was received by the French court in the form of gifts from the ambassadors of Siam (Figure 88). The gifts were sent by Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek merchant who had established a trading concern in Bangkok. The ambassadors brought some 1,500 pieces of Chinese porcelain that were distributed among the royal family. It was the royal family who set the collecting precedents for imported porcelain.

Louis XIV and his court became enthralled collectors of Chinese goods, according to Hugh Honour, because such items contained a measure of “magnificence and exoticism” that was further complemented by gilded stands or lacquer cabinets for a level of opulence reserved for only the most elite. These pieces, such as embroidered silks, gold filigree metalwork, or blue-and-white porcelain goods, added brilliant accents to the otherwise somber Baroque interiors. And these imported goods also stood as testament to another mighty nation on a par with the contrived allegorical power of Louis XIV’s state.

With the passage of time, according to David Porter, the newly rich like Armenonville acquired Chinese goods because what they lacked in pedigree, they sought to compensate with these fashionable items conveying a “virtual patina of cultural legitimacy” because of the links to the ancient Chinese heritage. Armenonville became an avid collector of Chinese imports as his

57 Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 57.
60 Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 56.
61 Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 56.
wealth and status increased. In France, the royal family set the precedent for collecting imported porcelain and valued this commodity equally with the crown jewels.\(^6^3\) The precious nature of porcelain placed it third after gold and silver on the crown’s list of assets. From the time of the thirteenth century voyage of Marco Polo, porcelain had been referred to as “white gold” because of its treasured value and its secret formulation. This formulation was considered akin to alchemy.\(^6^4\) The ability to collect large quantities of imported items was restricted to the very rich. The exclusivity of collecting porcelain resulted from the inflated prices for the imports on the open market. However, Louis XIV and those with connections to the Compagnie des Indes acquired these items at a discount.\(^6^5\) Armenonville had eastern trade connections through his brother, who was a Jesuit responsible for the religious missions in the Levant.\(^6^6\) In his Parisian hôtel, which he also purchased in 1705, he had a wide variety of blue and white porcelain along with blanc de chine porcelain, Japanese urns, and Chinese screens.\(^6^7\) This display demonstrated not only Armenonville’s elevated social status as an insider of the import trade, but also confirmed his acumen in acquiring socially significant items.

According to Christine Jones, the amassing of luxury items became part of a nobleman’s self-fashioning. The cluster of elite behaviors, previously discussed with reference to the concept of honnête homme, included the successful performance of innumerable activities using luxury

\(^6^5\) Honour, Chinoiserie, 57.
commodities such as working at a writing desk and the drinking of chocolate. Wealthy consumers used the power of conspicuous consumption to suggest their social graces and to demonstrate their elite social status. Armenonville displayed his abundant wealth through the collection of porcelain objects at a time when only the Chinese had the ability to produce these wares. The two factors involved in the display of status were the precious nature of porcelain and the “aesthetic of surplus,” demonstrating the ability of an elite consumer to afford multiple purchases far surpassing any practical reason for the acquisitions.

In the process, Armenonville revealed his collecting personality. While the luxury of his collection proclaimed his elite status, he also found a sense of gratification in repeating the acquisition process and experience. The passion for collecting remains a deeply personal impulse, but for this rich financier, the ability to purchase the imported commodities provided a sense of security in his acquired position. As Scott noted, Armenonville appeared “inwardly calculating with financial talent,” but was “outwardly liberal in his style of life.”

Foremost in the formation of elite identities was the ability to craft a suave presentation of self and to hone one’s ability in elegant social manners, a theory put forward by Mimi Hellman who explains the exterior display of Armenonville. This patron played a pivotal role

in the monarchial world of finance, but the interior painted by Audran and Watteau provided a venue to enjoy leisure activities even as it revealed Armenonville’s collecting proclivities. The scenes created by Watteau under Audran’s direction also indicate Armenonville’s knowledge of the popular imagery of the theater (Figure 89). Many of the painted chinoiserie characters served as counterparts to those of the commedia dell’arte and the Paris fair theaters of the 1690s. In theatrical productions such as La Comédie des comédiens chinois, the character China played the part of a refined culture.73

The popularity of these characters made them creative fodder for masquerade costumes of the elite. Nobles donning costumes of Chinese theater characters played on the recognition of the figures and mocked the exotic culture of the East in their impersonations.74 Audran also drew from these theatrical sources for inspiration for his figural compositions. Some Watteau scholars, such as Katie Scott and Phoebe Scott, have suggested that the artist took inspiration from these examples of popular theater.75 Martin Eidelberg and Sekh A. Gopin presented evidence that Watteau may have accessed travelogues and other publications on China that were available in Paris at the time.76 In Hugh Honour’s opinion, Watteau may have had access to Chinese paintings. A returning Jesuit priest brought some forty-nine volumes of Chinese paintings to Louis XIV in 1697.77 According to Michael Sullivan, Chinese illustrated books and prints became part of royal collections and were also found in the collections of dealers and engravers. Those illustrations facilitated the dissemination of Chinese designs for Western interpretation.

74 Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness,” 228.
76 Eidelberg and Gopin. “Watteau’s Chinoiseries at La Muette,” 36.
77 Honour, Chinoiserie, 90.
Influential print sellers for Watteau, such as Jean de Jullienne (1686-1766), held a large collection of Chinese pictures. Another, Jacques-Gabriel Huquier (1695-1766) owned four volumes of Chinese paintings that may have been available to the artist. Sullivan further noted that even though the figural style of Watteau’s Chinese subjects may have been debatable, the captions related to transcriptions of Chinese words and thus added another layer of undetermined provenance. The research presenting these print sources for design inspiration expressed in the château’s interiors appears credible. The assumption that Watteau created the figural compositions, however, denies the fact that Audran was responsible for the commission. Audran could just as easily have seen the print sources for his design inspiration. In his role as Concierge, he could have gained access to sources in the royal collections.

It is not unreasonable to consider Audran’s responsible role in the interpretation of print sources. Regardless, the engraved figures from La Muette defy interpretation because they did not present scholarly representations of Chinese figures. Daniel Porter’s description of the cultural shift in the Western perception of the East suggests that the chinoiserie figures of Audran, rather than Watteau, no longer illustrated the archeological representation of China. Instead, Porter asserts, the figures combined Eastern-style costumes and accessories suggestive of Chinese culture with Western facial features and hair. In the process, the notion of exoticism was emptied of all meaning and the Eastern attributes became a parody for the enjoyment of the honnête homme. The primary information signifying China, which had defined this culture as exotic in the first phase, was subsumed in a secondary interpretation in which the Chinese motifs are disconnected from their cultural context and used for different purposes.

In this instance, according to Phoebe Scott, the use of Chinese costumes and accessories suggested the element of mimetic play occurring when nobles dressed in costume for masquerades. The engraved images after the interior’s paintings of Huó Nu, Chinese Musician and Idole de la Déesse Ki Mao Sao at La Muette include enough chinoiserie details or accessories related to Chinese characters that engaged the viewer to be intrigued, but instantly recognizing the element of disguise. The gentile codes of behavior, so highly prized as a marker of status, required “knowledge and power through manipulation of etiquette and sartorial code.”

Audran’s interpretation of French figures masquerading as Chinese in his figural compositions, may have taken inspiration from costume design by Berain. In the end result, Armenonville sought to convey his understanding of the cultivated honnête homme, who “transmitted information by suggestion, persuasion, and subtlety.”

Imported porcelain, textiles, and spices, as discussed by Woodruff D. Smith, stimulated intellectual and imaginative responses and proved irresistible to European consumers. Beyond their physical qualities, the foreign commodities carried a touch of fantasy because they came from a land far removed from Europe. In that far-off land, an exotic culture of “the other” flourished, and Europeans imagined that foreigners were able to do things, sexual and otherwise, that European social and cultural mores prohibited. The imported commodities served as tokens of the excitement imagined to be available in exotic venues, and they spurred the European imagination with fantasies of illicit pleasures.

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83 Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 75-76.
The element of fantasy might have added an alluring element to Audran’s arabesques designs. Watteau’s chinoiserie vignettes at La Muette were executed in keeping with Audran’s successful practice of using assistants to complete figural compositions within his designs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Martin Eidelberg and Sekh A. Gopin suggested that Watteau’s chinoiserie figures might have been painted on pseudo-lacquer background. This hypothesis may be valid, but the issue has also been the focus of scholarly debate. The engraved figures may have been shown on a solid background because they represented Watteau’s contribution to the overall arabesque design. However, the exact conformation of the chinoiserie arabesques remain unknown. Katie Scott suggested the layout of the printed images based on the arrangement of prints in the *Diverses figures chinoises et tartares* (Figure 90). She also documented an Audran drawing in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm Cronstedt collection, inscribed on the back with the word “Chinois.” The drawing sketches a ceiling design with chinoiserie elements, such as a kneeling figure wearing a conical hat (Figure 91). Scott believed that it could have potentially indicated design elements for the cabinet at La Muette and could have complemented the arrangement of chinoiserie figural motifs seen in the *Receuil Jullienne* engravings after Watteau. In addition, looking back to the 1709 ceiling design for the Princess de Conti, Audran included a figure of a faun holding long rods dangling with some sort of bait before singerie on each side. The figural construction parallels that of the engraved image labeled *Idole de la Déesse Ki Mão Sao* in the Receuil Jullienne (Figure 21). The ceiling drawing with this figural

84 Since the publication of this hypothesis by Edelberg and Gopin, scholars have presented their opinion, such as Katie Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness,” 197. Marianne Roland Michel, “Exoticism and Genre Painting in Eighteenth-century France,” in *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting*, ed. Colin B. Bailey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 115. The evidence appears inconclusive and it should be noted that if the background was pseudo-lacquered, it represented the only known commission by Audran without an arabesque design.

85 Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness,” 196.

composition lends credence to Audran’s role as the chief designer in the La Muette commission with Watteau carrying out those designs as Audran’s assistant. A comment by Edme-François Gersaint further suggests Watteau’s subordinate position when he wrote, “Watteau did not want to remain there, nor spend his life working for others…” 87 The young Watteau had to strike out on his own in part from his inability to compose independently while working for Audran and others before him. As Marianne Roland Michel opined, Gersaint’s comment inferred Watteau’s conviction that he felt capable of working autonomously rather than “simply copying or making pictures according to detailed directions.” 88

As Marianne Roland Michel noted, the reproduction of the Watteau paintings at La Muette by Boucher, Aubert and Jeurat may have been completed in part as an advertising ploy to attract the public’s attention to the print collection. 89 The twenty-six upright prints of one or two figures could have been used as panel vignettes and an additional two pair of horizontal designs might have been used as overdoor designs. Audran’s ability to conceive of the overall design layout for an interior can be noted in a drawing from the Cronstedt collection, Nationalmuseum (Figure 92). In this preparatory drawing, two alternative panel schemes appear in red and black pencil. There is no indication regarding the treatment outside the panel fields. Yet within the panel borders, rough sketches of arabesques with figures and animals are depicted. Despite the fact that the drawing’s installation site and the patron for this design remain unknown, the drawing appears to present evidence of Audran’s participation in the creation of an arabesque

89 Michel, Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century, 279.
interior’s conceptual design. Such a design could have been instrumental in the chinoiserie interior at La Muette.

The engraved chinoiserie prints by Watteau also stand apart from his other arabesque drawings engraved in the print collection. For example, a drawing in the collection of the Morgan Library shows Watteau’s use of two halves of a design to present two alternative arabesques with the figure of Diana in the center (Figure 93). It is a conceptual drawing, but it included the figural vignette with the arabesque. It serves to demonstrate one method in which Watteau may have taken inspiration from Audran in conceiving his arabesque designs.⁹⁰ The absence of the arabesque motifs from the engraved prints from La Muette may simply indicate Watteau’s limited contribution to the overall design. Regardless, they present an imaginary world of pure fantasy as noted by Hélène Belevitch-Stankevitch in the publication “Le goût chinois en France au temps de Louis XIV.”⁹¹

Armenonville’s collection demonstrated his position and elite taste. Audran’s figural designs further underlined this patron’s comprehension of and participation in the honnêteté culture. The chinoiserie figures may or may not have complemented porcelain in the chateau’s interior, but they did reflect the patron’s collecting nature with a valuable commodity exemplifying the concept of surplus.

If You’ve Got It, Flaunt It—Abraham Peyrenc de Moras and the Hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras

A period of some fifteen plus years elapsed between Audran’s commission at the château de La Muette and his work at the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras. During those years, Louis XIV’s

⁹⁰ Posner, Antoine Watteau, 91.
long reign came to an end in 1715 and Philippe II, duc d’Orléans served as Regent until his death in 1723. The Marquis de Noitel passed away in 1718 and Audran’s illustrious assistant Antoine Watteau’s short life ended in 1721. Audran continued to complete many commissions for the crown, such as restoring painting and gilding in various royal residences (Versailles, Fontainebleau, Luxembourg, Tuileries) as well as collaborating with Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay on the border designs for Charles Coypel’s cycle of Don Quixote tapestries woven by the Gobelins (c. 1716). Audran was fortunate to garner these commissions while the state treasury was facing bankruptcy. He found an alternative coterie of patrons in part when he began work for Jeanne Baptiste d’Albert de Luynes, comtesse de Verrue (1670-1736). Her noble heritage and her grasp of the goût moderne attracted a circle of nouveau riche financiers, who were flush from investments in John Law’s venture capitalist scheme. Among those in her circle was the patron Abraham Peyrenc de Moras (1686-1732), a generation younger than Armenonville. He came to appreciate Audran’s expertise as part of Verrue’s social circle and employed him in his Place Vendôme townhouse. Verrue’s influence and ability to funnel prospective patrons to Audran can be attributed to her noble social standing and to his professional cachet as Peintre ordinaire du roi, an enviable marker of status.

During the Régence, Verrue and many other courtiers built Parisian townhouses exhibiting the new taste, known as goût moderne, calling for more comfort and convenience, with smaller rooms for an increased sense of intimacy and larger windows for enhanced natural light. The lighter character of the designs, the intimate spaces, and the innovative addition of

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semi-public suites of rooms afforded a new level of comfort in the interiors overall. The room’s practical convenience, known as commodité, became hallmarks of the period’s design. In another sense, the choices made by the elite demonstrated their refined taste and distinction. According to Pierre Bourdieu, cultural practices and preferences are closely tied to one’s education and upbringing. When considering the quality of a person,

…the objects endowed with their greatest distinctive power are those which most clearly attest the quality of appropriation, and therefore the quality of the owner, because their possession requires time and capacities which, requiring a long investment of time, like pictorial or musical culture, cannot be acquired in haste or by proxy, and which therefore appear as the surest indications of the quality of the person.”

The career of financier Abraham Peyrenc de Moras illustrates Bourdieu’s interpretation because he sought to emulate the taste of hereditary nobility through the patronage of Audran. He was a provincial from Languedoc and the oldest son of a barber and wigmaker who came to Paris at an early age. He took advantage of business opportunities to rise well above his origins and to attain wealth and status on a par with the nobility. Beginning as the valet wigmaker in the service of François Fargas, a rich and unscrupulous purveyor of munitions, Peyrence de Moras seduced and married Fargas’ daughter. He subsequently profited from dealing and trading in the munitions business and became appointed as inspector general in the bank of John Law. His speculative munitions business allowed him to amass several million livres and to purchase the Place de Vendôme land and title of Marquis from Diane-Adélaïde de Mailly, Duchesse de Brancas (1713-1760). He later became the chief counselor of Louise-Françoise, duchesse de Bourbon (1673-1743), the legitimized daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

94 Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme*, 94.
95 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1.
96 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 281.
From his network of business contacts, Peyrenc de Moras came to know the comtesse de Verrue. She came from a distinguished hereditary line of nobility with branches (d’Albert and Rohan families) dating back to the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Married at thirteen in 1683, the comtesse accompanied her husband to the Savoy court located in Turin, but was widowed by late 1700. 98 She subsequently returned to France to become reacquainted with French society. She came to know the Grand Dauphin as well as the duc and duchesse de Bourgogne before their untimely deaths in 1713. As a consequence, she probably saw Audran’s work at Meudon and, in 1711-12, she purchased a modest maison de plaisance in the Meudon area and employed Audran to complete its ornamental embellishment.99

During the Regency period, she profited handsomely from savvy investments in Law’s trading ventures. She relied on the advice of some of her closest associates including Jean-Baptiste Glucq, baron de Saint-Port (1674-1748); Jean-François Lériget, marquis de La Faye (1674-1731); and Léon de Madaillon-Lesparre, comte de Lassay (1683-1750). They all reaped the benefits from Law’s Compagnie des Indes and subsequently invested in building Parisian townhouses in Verrue’s neighborhood of the Rue du Cherche-Midi.100 Their social status was reflected in their interiors, were richly decorated and adorned with art.

Verrue set the trend for collecting artworks by northern painters as well as contemporary French artists, such as the Boullogne brothers and Antoine Coypel. She collected Chinese blue and white porcelain. And she also relied on Audran to create interiors inspired by the precedent of the Versailles Ménagerie with mythological figures as well as a suite of children at play.101

98 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 35, 37.
99 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 40-41.
100 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 43.
101 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 48.
Although little remains of Audran’s work for Verrue, the Musée des arts décoratifs preserves a ceiling originally designed for her cabinet chinois (Figure 1-A and B). A deep stucco coved molding borders the ceiling with gilded singerie figures mimicking the activities of the hunt. According to Rochelle Ziskin, the original interior included twenty-four panels of “lambris de la Chine,” indicating either Chinese or Japanese lacquer or even a French imitation. Ziskin also identified two preliminary drawings by Audran from the Cronstedt collection at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (Figure 26). The schematic design in one indicates the general conception of the ceiling design and the second shows a quarter of the layout of potential motifs including a half oval for small landscape medallions that appeared in the final design. Evidently, Audran completed other ceiling designs of other rooms located in the corps-de logis of Verrue’s residence, but these have not survived.

A friend of Verrue, Louis-Augustin Angran, vicomte de Fonspertuis, whose family earned ennobled status from his father Jacques Angran, conseiller au Parlement de Metz, was a confident and captain of the hunt for the regent. Fontspertius possessed acute business acumen, profiting and then investing in the reconstituted trading company. Fonspertuis became a voracious collector of books, amassing a valuable and rare collection as noted by the collection’s sale catalogue after his death. He settled in the Place Vendôme, not far from the regent’s Palais-Royal. Besides his library of books, he collected porcelain, paintings, as well as Chinese

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102 Ziskin’s detail taken from notes by Agents of Châtelet, citing AN, MC I: 380 [10-XII-1736]. Sheltering Art, 53.
103 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 53-54.
104 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 53-54.
105 Ziskin, Sheltering Art, 143-144.
bronzes. He patronized Audran, commissioning a painted ceiling for his first-floor cabinet (Figure 27). 107

Although Audran’s patron Peyrenc de Moras lacked the royal bloodlines of a noble birth and education, he sought to assert his distinction and status by appropriating the taste exhibited by the nobles in the Place Vendôme and in the circle of Verrue. The dwellings and the practices of polite society that occurred there together formed a social and cultural world for its inhabitants that were plainly understood by all at the time. The use of elaborate decoration and the display of valuable collections were intended to signify their elite status. 108

Peyrenc de Moras began construction of his townhouse in 1723-24 with the architect Anges-Jacques Gabriel (1698-1782). The finished building and the commission to Audran served this patron by displaying his wealth and taste. The displays fit the social space described by Henri Lefebvre as “a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material and information.” 109 Lefebvre noted further that the “study of space offers an answer according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a special existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself.” 110 Building his townhouse in the established square of the Place Vendôme and commissioning the work of Audran, whose design pedigree was earned in the service of Louis XIV and elite nobles, aided Peyrenc de Moras in his efforts to assert his status through conspicuous consumption of

110 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 129.
luxury. His elite identity became apparent through the exchange of goods and services purchased for his home.\textsuperscript{111} Audran and Lancret painted arabesques in a room for Peyrenc de Moras’s wife, Mme Anne-Marie Josephe de Fargas (1699-1738) (Figure 28). Their work was complemented by opulent decorative arts as part of a richly decorated suite of rooms.\textsuperscript{112}

Archival records provide some indication of Peyrenc de Moras’s expenditures. For instance, Gabriel’s commission to design the townhouse stipulated a sum of 11,846 livres in an estimate dated 28 February 1724.\textsuperscript{113} This document also noted Audran’s participation along with Antoine Desauzières (n. d.), who was described as a \textit{peintre du Roi} and was living in Paris. Instead of a total estimate for their work, individual elements were projected by a charge per unit measure, e.g., a pied squared of burnished gold, which cost 5 livres per pied.\textsuperscript{114} The total amount was not calculated in this estimate; but remuneration was expected as work was completed. With the assistance of Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743), Audran finished decorative panels for Peyrenc de Moras’s corner cabinet, which included a painted ceiling and arabesque panels lining the walls. Gazebo-like arabesque motifs framed various theatrical figures on each panel.

Nicholas Lancret was born in Paris in 1690 and spent his entire life within the city. He first studied drawing prior to beginning an apprenticeship around 1707 in the atelier of Pierre Dulin (1669-1748).\textsuperscript{115} He studied at the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture afterwards and even competed for the Prix de Rome in 1711. His lack of success may have prompted the artist to consider other career options, and between 1712-13, he entered the shop of Claude

\textsuperscript{111} Brewer, “(Re)Constructing an Eighteenth-Century Interior,” 225.
\textsuperscript{112} Ziskin, \textit{The Place Vendôme}, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{113} Audran Papers, Archives nationale de France, M.C. XCV, 74 (28-11-1724), devis 28 février 1724.
\textsuperscript{114} Author Rochelle Ziskin provided the equivalent of a pied equal to 12 pounces, which was slightly larger than 1 English foot (approx. 32.5 cm). \textit{Sheltering Art}, xix.
Gillot.\textsuperscript{116} Evidently, the change from the study and practice of history painting to genre painting may have been a practical consideration for the artist. Genre painting began to receive greater acceptance not only from important patrons but also from the Académie. Antoine Watteau’s success with the paintings known as fêtes galantes promoted the popularity of genre painting and often featured characters from the commedia dell’arte theater. Watteau had preceded Lancret in the employ of Gillot and had later been received at the Académie as a painter of fêtes galantes.\textsuperscript{117}

Lancret work in room decoration began before he assisted Audran in the interior commission for Peyrence de Moras. He completed a set of decorative panels dating from 1723-27 now in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art. The set of five panels entitled “The See-Saw,” “The Swing,” “The Vintage,” “The Gardener,” and “Horticulture” originally decorated a pavilion located in the Place royale, now the Place des Vosges, Paris, and was built by Gaulet d’Hauteville. The panels illustrated their theme with figures set in a landscape surrounded by subordinate arabesque motifs (Figures 94-97).\textsuperscript{118} Illustrated figures in those panels present Lancret’s style with characteristically round heads that appear proportionately larger than the bodies. In addition, the figures take on a generic appearance without discriminating facial features or costumes. The figural scenes dominate the decorative arabesque elements on the top and bottom of the panel compositions.

By comparison, Audran’s arabesques depicted on the Peyrence panel designs appeared larger and frame the figures than on each panel. Audran included an interesting blend of arabesque motifs such as floral gardens, birds, and C-scrolls around a large central gazebo-like

\textsuperscript{116} Holmes, \textit{Nicolas Lancret, 1690-1743}, 21-22. Holmes also noted that the Lancret dates are an estimate based on scant primary documentation of Lancret’s life.

\textsuperscript{117} Holmes, \textit{Nicolas Lancret, 1690-1743}, 23-25. I thank Dr Katie Hanson. for bringing this commission to my attention.

\textsuperscript{118} Holmes, \textit{Nicolas Lancret, 1690-1743}, 60.
structure (Figure 98-100). This structure framed theatrical figures referred to as a “La Turc amoureux,” “la Pèlerine,” “La Dame au Parasol,” “Gille,” or “La Danseuse” (The Turkish Lover, The Pilgrim, The Lady with a parasol, Gille, The Dancer). The illustrated figures do not have the same disproportionate appearance as Lancret’s earlier panel figures. In addition to the figures on the wall panels, painted roundels located over doors and above the fireplace mantel depicted couples in a fictive landscape such as “L’Escarpolette,” “L’Oiseau Mis en Cage,” “La Bergère Endormie” (The Swing, The Caged Bird, The Sleeping Shepherdess) among others. Each of these panel and roundel compositions presented an arabesque composition in which the figures complemented the other decorative motifs.

The overall design of the Peyrenc de Moras panels can be compared to the grotesque analysis elaborated by Susan B. Cohen in her study entitled *Art, Dance, and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime*. She associated the S- and C-scrolls of earlier arabesque designs with the forms found in court ballet dance notation and recorded in references such as the *Recueil de dances composées par M. Feuillet*, c. 1700 (Figure 101). In addition, she linked those same motifs to the curvilinear patterns of garden parterres that featured bilateral symmetry and underlying geometry. She also noted the quatrefoil platform in the “Salle de Bal” used for dancing and designed by Le Nôtre in the Versailles garden. In Audran and Lancret’s painted panels, the lightweight arabesque motifs appeared to mimic the dance notations, and the panels’ oval cameos paralleled the central location of the quatrefoil in Le Nôtre’s garden design. The panels’ figural compositions framed within the gazebo enclosures could be viewed as providing

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the perpendicular terminal endpoint for the proposed “garden” notation below it. In like manner, if the arabesque motifs were read as dance notations, the theatrical figures set above the bilateral patterns can be seen as standing on a proscenium space for a theatrical production. In either instance, the figural compositions dominated and the subordinate arabesque motifs meld with the carved boiserie panel design and served to unite the overall design of the room’s interior. A visitor to Peyrenc de Moras’s cabinet would have recognized the figural characters from popular theater culture. In the process, the panel arabesques conveyed a taste for elite noble design through the execution of the figures and motifs.123

The figures of the commedia delle’arte contributed to the distinctive style developed by Watteau in his fêtes galantes. The characters came from the popular culture of the Paris fairs such as the Foire Saint-Laurent and the Foire Saint-Germain. The original theater troupe of the Comédie italienne, banned by the crown in 1697, showcased a set cast of characters such as Mezzetin, Harlequin, and Gilles among others.124 Forced underground, those characters surfaced in the theatrical productions of the fairs and drew a cross-section of elite and lower classes for an audience. Adopting a devil-may-care attitude at the fairs, the productions mixed elements from highbrow theater with entertainment from the fringes of popular culture.125 The spectacles’ successes stemmed partly from the promotional tactics outside the theaters, known as parades, presenting farces to attract clientele. The bawdy humor of the parades provided many elite clients with the inspiration to appropriate the humor for use in private performances. Thus, the farcical productions moved from the fair precincts into the elite venue of the salon. According to Thomas Crow, Watteau may have alluded to these private productions when he portrayed a

125 Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 52.
combination of costumed figures and noblemen in paintings; for example, The Perspective, c. 1715, at Pierre Crozat’s country estate, known as a maison de plaisance. The sophisticated pleasure provided in such private enclaves may also have inspired the recreation of the theatrical figures in Audran and Lancret’s arabesques for Peyrenc de Moras aimed at evoking the ambience of the country manor in an urban environment. The private appreciation of the risqué humor presented in Audran’s interior for his patron subtly asserted Abraham Peyrenc de Moras’ position and status among the Verrue circle and other elite members of society.

In each of these successful commissions, Audran devised unique designs for his clients using a medley of arabesque motifs highlighted by one-of-a-kind elements. Two factors came into play for his success. The first involved his practice of using young talent, such as Watteau and Lancet, to complete design elements suited to their individual expertise. The second factor was Audran’s obvious cultural currency as an artist who had earned high distinction and garnered the attention of the newly rich. These patrons longed to fit into their newly acquired positions by demonstrating their refined taste through the procurement and display of fine art and interior decoration. Audran delivered his uniquely tailored arabesque designs to each client and satisfied their socio-cultural aspirations. The relevance of these unique added elements provide indications of the character of the patron or the purpose of the commission. The evidence of these commissions demonstrated each client’s ability effectively to assimilate the elite cultural behavior of the honnête homme.

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126 Crow, Painters and Public Life, 55.
127 Crow, Painters and Public Life, 59.
Chapter 6—Claude III Audran’s Competitors and His Influence

The previous case studies explain Audran’s work within the cultural milieu of his times and to describe how he succeeded in his career. From the late decades of Louis XIV’s reign through the Régence and to the beginning of the reign of Louis XV, the aesthetics of Audran’s commissions responded in each period to the demands and desires of his patrons. The motifs chosen by Audran and subsequently completed by his assistants complemented the arabesque designs that matched the tastes of each patron and also served to promote the talents of the artists and their careers. Previous scholarship has confirmed Jean Berain’s influence on draughtsmen such as Pierre Lepautre. Lepautre is best remembered for his chimney designs inaugurating the use of C-scrolls, curves and counter-curves in three-dimensional carved panel design.¹ Audran’s arabesques enhanced décors with integrated panel and ceiling designs for elite interiors, but his influence on contemporary design has received little attention. His commissions at Meudon and the Ménagerie at Versailles, among others, set a new standard for noble patrons, creating a ripple effect of influence benefitting other craftsmen, artists and architects.

This chapter will first present works by Audran’s contemporaries with one example by a fellow member of the Maîtrise and additional examples by craftsmen and architects reflecting the influence of Audran’s arabesques in their work. In the course of Audran’s career, he chose artists to assist in depicting elements in his designs and examples of their subsequent work will be discussed in the second part of this chapter to note Audran’s impact on their careers. These artists include Desportes, Watteau, Lancret, Oudry and Huet.

The initial example of a contemporary of Audran is a commission by Audran’s contemporary Pierre-Paul Sevin, a member of the Parisian Maîtrise who painted the Parliamentary

¹ Kalnein, Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century, 57.
room in the Palais de justice at Trévoux, in 1698. This example provides a sense of the design approach used by the Maîtrese craftsmen, which appears markedly different from Audran’s manner of complementing his arabesques with the work of academic artists. Examples of interior design by contemporaries will also reveal the alternative media used for interior design, identify the artists who completed those interior commissions, and explain the nature of their designs. I will discuss some of the most notable examples. And in the process, the evidence will confirm that Audran’s decorative technique possessed a unique quality evident throughout his career that drew the attention of patrons and, no doubt, the academic artists who came to work with him. My review will discuss how those academic artists augmented Audran’s arabesque designs with animal or figural vignettes within the compositions and this highlighted their own talents.

Alternative Rococo interior design

Audran’s interiors with painted arabesques became hallmarks of the rococo style when motifs not only covered a ceiling but also embellished wall panels with painted or tapestry designs. Audran won the approval of his patrons with a blend of time-honored arabesque motifs and elements from popular culture. By choosing light-colored and whimsical design schemes, patrons sought not only to reflect their social status but also to make a break from the somber and grand interiors of Versailles endured under Louis XIV’s long reign. These new, intimate interiors created during the early decades of the eighteenth century by architects such as Lassurance and Oppenord, featured the use of carved or painted paneling. Some examples had simpler painted treatments using two contrasting colors and favoring lighter tones such as dove grey, yellow or celadon. More elegant reception rooms could have gilded moldings highlighting white painted panels. Carved and painted paneling introduced color and texture into a room scheme. Such
interiors could be designed and carved by specialized craftsmen. Alternatively, designs provided by draftsmen or architects could be executed by specialized craftsmen. Carved and painted stucco provided alternative surface and texture that was often used for ceilings. The hôtel de Verrue (c. 1725) represents an example where Audran’s talents were employed on such an alternative. Regardless of the chosen medium, the interiors of the period present a unified design scheme. This chapter offers design examples by contemporaries reflecting the influence of Audran. One would surmise that Audran was not the only artist considered for the numerous design commissions, but as in Audran’s case, little information is known regarding other artists, especially those of the Maîtrise. Many of those names have been lost because, as was customary and like Audran, they did not sign their work.

Audran’s Competition and his Influence on Contemporary Interior Design

A review of contemporaneous artists and architects who completed interiors on a par with those decorated with Audran’s arabesques provides an assessment of the impact of Audran’s work in the market. This is not an exhaustive review but it intends to demonstrate the alternatives for decorating interiors of the period and to suggest how Audran’s successful commissions might have influenced others. Audran’s tapping the expertise of academic artists provided him an advantage over competitors like the other members of the Maîtrise.

One such contemporary was Pierre-Paul Sevin (1650-1710). He appears to have been eight years older than Audran but a contemporary craftsman. He also came from Lyon and trained there with his father François Sevin, a master painter. Together, father and son traveled to

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Rome, and Pierre-Paul studied in Italy from 1671-1673. His subjects of study included the
designs of costumes, furniture, art, and ephemeral works. Upon his return to France, Pierre-Paul
was received as a master painter in the city of Paris, and he soon married there. He was known
for painting architectural ornament, such as festoons, flowers, fruit and chevrons. In 1683, his
wife and two children died, and Sevin returned to Lyon. Coincidentally, Louis-Auguste, the duc
du Maine, became Prince souverain de Dombes and moved the parliament of Lyon to Trévoux.
Sevin subsequently received the commission to decorate the interior of the parliamentary
chamber of the Palais de justice at Trévoux and his work remains preserved in that room (Figure
102-103).

The interior architecture is in an outmoded style of the sixteenth century with massive
beams supporting smaller cross beams. Sevin completed the ornamental decoration of the ceiling
in 1698, around the time of Audran’s Meudon and Ménagerie commissions. The massive beams
were decorated with pictorial allegories of attributes, emblems, mythological characters and
symbols of justice, the nation of France and its virtues. The center of each major support beam
has a pictorial cartouche and was flanked by a medallion with a fleur-de-lys. The smaller cross
beams have additional decorative motifs. The decorative effect achieved by Sevin complemented
the architectural design but appears retardataire in relation to Audran’s work during the late
1690s. For example, Audran’s smooth plaster painted ceiling treatment, discussed in connection
with the earlier Clichy hunting lodge commission, conveys its functional theme using elegant
decorative and figural motifs (Figure 7). Sevin’s painted composition may reflect the provincial

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4 Cayla, “Pierre-Paul Sevin,” 144.
l’architecture et des arts décoratifs, 1897-99), n.p. This commission is illustrated and described in the text under the
seventeenth century.
architecture of the period, which figured dominantly in driving the ceiling design. Such a design choice also ignored the duc du Maine’s knowledge of the latest interior architecture of the French capital. Sevin’s design incorporated mythological figures and decorative motifs, all packed within the confines of the surfaces. His design resembles the characteristics of earlier decoration, such as Jean Berain’s decoration at the hôtel de Mailly, c. 1686 (Figure 3). In contrast to this contemporaneous commission in Trévoux, Audran’s choice of the arabesque as the chief element of his designs and his use of academic artistic talent set his work apart.

In the last years of the reign of Louis XIV, the building of Parisian townhouses provided opportunities for innovative design work as discussed in Chapter five. Pierre Cailleteau, known as Lassurance, had worked as a draftsman for Jules Hardouin-Mansart prior to acquiring his title as an architect du Roi and working independently. He probably encountered Audran’s arabesque designs while working with Mansart at Versailles. Contributing to the interior design for the Salon Ovale at Versailles, Lassurance devised panels with rounded ends. He also worked on the apartments for the duchesse de Bourgogne at the Trianon as well as at the Ménagerie. Relying on his own architectural expertise, he completed townhouses for the nobility and designed interior paneling for craftsmen to carve during the Régence.

Another little-known interior, which uses La Fontaine’s *Fables* for design inspiration, remains preserved in the hôtel de Noirmoutier (Figure 80-A and B). The townhouse, built by the architect Jean Courtonne in 1724 for Antoine-François de la Trémille, duc de Noirmoutier, was later acquired by Élisabeth-Alexandrine de Bourbon-Condé. She was credited with the redecoration of portions of the hôtel, including the installation of paneling in the dining room.

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originally designed by Lassurance with carved vignettes of La Fontaine *Fables*.\(^8\) Little is known regarding this interior, which displays the figural *Fable* vignettes in natural wood, but evidently it was originally painted in pale blue, greens and lilac.\(^9\) Lassurance’s use of the *Fables* theme grew out of his experience working for the crown. He most likely saw Audran’s design at the Ménagerie, c. 1699. Lassurance worked independently on private commissions in Paris until his death in 1724.

Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742), another architect, rose to prominence during the Régence. Germaine Brice believed Oppenord was excellent in his field and possessed an “elevated genius.”\(^10\) Oppenord had studied in Italy and had absorbed the baroque designs of Borromini whose work displayed a bold sculptural effect.\(^11\) After returning to France, he tempered his style and applied his expertise to the remodeling of the Palais-Royal for the Regent in Paris.\(^12\) Prior to this commission, he designed carved and gilded boiserie panels for the hôtel de Pomponne, c. 1714 (Fig. 104). Two large panels in the interior depict trophies of the chase, with dogs and hunting equipment combined with decorative motifs set within a wooded scene. Additional narrow arabesque panels flanking the larger panels depict figures of Diana. Fiske Kimball opined that Oppenord’s illustrated panels reference Audran’s *Portières des dieux*, c. 1699.\(^13\) In addition, Kimball noted Oppenord’s predilection for using hunt motifs. He had previously employed them for the top of four chimney-piece mirror frames in a salon of the château de Bercy for its proprietor, Charles-Henri Malon de Bercy, seigneur de Bercy (1677-
The use of the same motif in different applications for two different patrons was not unusual. Oppenord would probably have been familiar with Audran’s work because his work followed Audran’s completed commission for the Grand Prieur.

Working with Oppenord, Bernard Toro (1672-1731) became known for his carving skills in the creation of boiserie wood panels. Kimball cited a short notice in the *Journal des Savants* dated August 10, 1716. That published notice described an engraved publication of Toro designs representing a wide variety of compositions, including works of silver and sculpted wood with arabesques and grotesques, which Audran had made popular in the early 1700s. Toro remained in Paris only until 1717 when he returned to Toulon. During the period of the Régence and later, craftsmen such as Toro carved interior paneling with a wide assortment of decorative motifs.

The fable theme can also be found in the work of Claude Gillot, who created sixty-eight illustrations for the fables published by Antoine de La Motte, c. 1719 (Figure 105). Gillot first did drawings, then etchings, for the publication. The vignettes feature the characters of the fables in each tale. Gillot is often noted as the mentor to Watteau, but he was also a contemporary of Audran and, in addition to his fable illustrations, Gillot worked in a number of media also used by Audran. One marked difference in Gillot’s career compared to Audran’s was Gillot’s acceptance as a member of the Académie royale in 1715. During the Régence, Gillot created tapestry cartoons for a set of six Beauvais tapestries that included the arms of Bonnier de La Mosson, a French nobleman best remembered for his cabinet of curiosities (Figure 106).
tapestries include scenes with commédia dell’arte figures (Figure 107). Gillot’s sketches for these tapestries, now preserved at the Musée des arts décoratifs, present fanciful arabesques with the characters from the commédia dell’arte. Another set of engraved, unrealized arabesque designs for tapestries or tapestry screens includes classical elements such as urns and masks that weigh heavily in the arabesque composition (Figure 108). The overall designs appear packed with decorative motifs in a manner akin to Berain’s earlier style.

Thomas E. Crow observed that Gillot applied his talent in “a varied and eclectic practice.”20 Gillot’s work included designs for engraved ornament for the handles of firearms; tapestries, some of which remained unrealized; and even a proposed design for harpsichord case (Figure 109). However, no harpsichord exists with a Gillot attribution for its painted case. The posthumous inventory of Gillot’s possessions numbered many drawings and paintings, including an unfinished engraving of his tapestry designs entitled the Portières des Dieux, c. 1722.21 In these designs, Gillot probably took inspiration from Audran’s own Gobelins Portières des Dieux, c. 1699. Despite his varied capabilities, Gillot did not apply himself to interior décor and turned his focus instead towards academic painting.

The contemporaries of Audran no doubt became aware of his ornamental arabesque designs when he received prestigious commissions from the crown, such as the Ménagerie and the inaugural tapestry commission from the Gobelins upon its reopening in 1699.22 It stood to reason that the success of these projects would influence other craftsmen and architects. In Germain Brice’s Parisian guidebooks, he repeatedly noted that Audran was one of the best

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designers at the time. No one created painted interior décor on a par with Audran. He represented a singular craftsman of the Maîtrise who augmented his own creative abilities with academic talent at a critical moment when the Académie royale began to earn prestige. The following section will discuss Audran’s influence on his protégés and how they infused arabesques with their own creative style.

**Audran’s Influence on his Assistants**

The numerous drawings of arabesques by Audran indicate his mastery in combining decorative motifs to create unique designs for each client. Though it is clear that he delegated portions of commissions to assistants, evidence suggests that it was he who conceived the overall designs to be executed. The drawings prepared for a patron’s approval, especially those that are highly finished and rendered in color, illustrate the entire conception for an arabesque. Within this process, Audran’s assistants learned his priorities in employing the design vocabulary and in balancing symmetrical forms.

Audran was not a member of the Académie royale, but for the majority of his career, he employed assistants who were either in the process of entering or already had been admitted to that institution. François Desportes was elected in 1699, Nicolas Lancret in 1719, and Jean-Baptiste Oudry became a member of both the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1714 and the Académie royale in 1719. Christophe Huet, perhaps the true inheritor of Audran’s style, followed his master and became a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc in the year of Audran’s death,

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Audran kept his finger on the pulse of cultural trends in order to incorporate the most current preferences into his arabesques. His observations probably drove his choices when taking on assistants who were most skilled at executing specialized motifs. The second and third decades of the eighteenth century represented a time, as Jennifer Milam noted, when academic artists made little distinction between easel and decorative painting. Those artists depicted noble virtues with historical, mythological or biblical subjects. However, in commissions under Audran’s direction, the subject matter included images of popular culture and experiences of contemporary life.

Painting was not the only art form reflecting hybridity in the arts in this period. In fine ébénisterie, craftsmen worked to create innovative products with new combinations of media, sometimes working in collaboration with marchands-merciers. These dealers, said to be the “dealers in everything – makers of nothing,” could afford to buy imported Chinese screens or porcelain plaques and have craftsmen build cabinetry with a mix of veneered media. The ébéniste Bernard Vanrisambugh incorporated sections of Japanese screens used as veneer for many pieces made for the dealer Hébert and others (Figure 110). Later, he used soft-paste porcelain for the top of a small writing table. Other talented craftsmen followed, such as Martin Carlin. In these pieces, they exhibited a degree of innovation through the use of new materials which may be considered on a par with new literary works combining genres.

27 Milam, Historical Dictionary, 196.
29 Pradère, French Furniture Makers, 184
In literature, writers increasingly took poetic license in order to break with tradition and to create new forms of works. An example of this phenomenon can be noted in the work of Marie-Catherine Desjardins, who wrote novels in the 1680s combining the high and low genres of history and fiction. The success of such works was initially regarded as dangerous because critics believed that this type of writing had the potential to corrupt public taste. Such novels were also viewed as manipulating history, a genre the monarchy attempted to control in service to the absolutist narrative.\(^3^0\) But this was only the beginning; writers soon took on the hybridization of other classical genres such as tragedy and satire.\(^3^1\) As Alison Stedman noted, proto-rococo writers sought innovation with an increased liberalization of form and content.\(^3^2\) They chafed under the established standards of the French Academy, and this “generic hybridization” brought innovation into their writing.\(^3^3\)

These trends brought the impetus for change within the scope of Audran’s work. For instance, Jean de La Fontaine’s *Song of Vaux*, which commemorated Fouquet’s artistic circle, was an example of this hybridization because it combined literary forms. La Fontaine’s translation of Aesop’s tales into verse rather than prose created another original publication that achieved popular success. In similar fashion, Audran’s use of La Fontaine’s *Fables* at the Ménagerie marked a departure from his use of mythological characters seen in earlier arabesques. For instance, in the commission at the hunting lodge at Clichy-la-Garenne, Audran had tapped into the hunting function of the château, using figures of Diana to illustrate a hunting

\(^{31}\) Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France*, 51.
\(^{32}\) Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France*, 56.
\(^{33}\) Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France*, 74.
theme in his arabesque. Desportes’s assistance in both projects provided him with the experience of using fable illustrations for other media such as Gobelins tapestry.

Desportes, as an academician and specialist in painting animals, benefitted from his association with Audran. The experience of working with Audran brought Desportes own specialty to the attention of Louis XIV and other aristocrats. Recognizing the artist’s ability to observe and to capture lifelike details of animals, the king commissioned Desportes to complete portraits of his favorite hunting dogs in large-scale paintings between 1702-14. Desportes subsequently executed a series of four paintings for the duchesse de Berry in 1717 entitled the *Allegorie de Sens* (Figure 111). He continued to receive commissions for a number of hunting scenes that often portrayed hunting dogs confronting their prey. As one of the first painters known as an animalier, Desportes brought his technical expertise to the development of the genre.

As previously mentioned, Claude Gillot mentored Antoine Watteau, but the young Watteau broke with Gillot sometime before 1708-09 when he became part of Audran’s atelier and assisted with designs for the interiors at Meudon. Watteau developed his decorative abilities in a variety of media while working for Audran. He contributed to Audran’s arabesques as discussed with regard to the hôtel de Nointel and other projects. J. Mathey noted that some ninety-four decorative works were engraved as part of the *Recueil Jullienne*; however, no independent decorative schemes have been documented to Watteau because he was working under the direction of Audran. In arabesque designs, Donald Posner found that Watteau’s

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34 Lastic and Jacky, *Desportes*, 170.
36 Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 58
figural compositions dominated Audran’s compositions with the attenuated decorative motifs. Jennifer Milam believed that Watteau combined “the rhythms and motifs of rocaille decoration” into his landscape scenes of aristocrats, later known as fête gallants. Watteau may have turned his attention towards the Académie royale when he realized that he could not break into the patronage circle commanded by Audran.

Nicolas Lancret’s collaboration with Audran began in 1723-24 at the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras. Lancret had been admitted to the Académie royale in 1719 as a “peintre de fêtes.” The eighteenth-century author, Antoine Joseph Dézaillier d’Argenville, writing in 1762, noted that Lancret had an advantage in following Watteau’s genius in the development of this painting genre. Watteau had cleared the way for Lancret, which benefitted the latter’s career. Dézaillier d’Argenville described Lancret as a singular talent with a distinguished place among the most successful members of the Académie. Lancret began his training as a history painter, but he switched to genre painting of scenes from everyday life as demand in the market for such works increased during the Régence. This artist seemed to be casting about looking for opportunities to advance his career in the 1720s. The scarcity of venues to get his work before the public and to be noticed by patrons may have inspired Lancret to follow Watteau’s example to work for Gillot and later Audran. Lancret may have hoped that assisting Audran would allow him to break into the patronage of elite society garnered by the ornementalist. We can see the influence of

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Audran by comparing one of Lancret’s earlier projects to the one completed in collaboration with Audran.

Prior to his work with Audran, Lancret completed a commission of five arabesque panels with pastoral subjects now preserved at the Cleveland Museum of Art. These panels were mentioned in Chapter five (Figures 94-97). They initially decorated a pavilion located in the Place Royale (now, the Place des Vosges), Paris. The original pavilion, built by the family of the Dukes of Melun in 1721, was sold in 1826.44 However, the panels were removed and preserved by the family until they were sold in the first half of the twentieth century through the dealer Lord Duveen.45 The five panels, originally complemented by over-mirrors and four overdoors of the Four Seasons, became part of a French private collection.46 The Cleveland panels include pastoral activities, and the scenes suggest that they decorated a garden salon using themes coordinating with the views of nature beyond the interior.47 In these arabesques Lancret continued the trend initiated by Watteau in which pastoral scenes dominate compositions framed by delicate arabesque motifs.

Lancret’s earlier arabesque elements appear markedly different from Audran’s arabesque designs for the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras previously discussed in Chapter five (Figures 98-100). When Lancret collaborated with Audran at the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras, Lancret depicted theatrical figures in Audran’s compositions. The arabesque motifs played an integral part of the overall design for each panel and united the overall design scheme of the interior. These figures appear as if caught in the spotlight on stage and not as part of a genre scene as Lancret’s earlier

44 Holmes, Nicolas Lancret, 60.
46 Holmes, Nicolas Lancret, 60.
47 Holmes, Nicolas Lancret, 60.
arabesques. Below each figure, Audran added an additional genre scene set within an oval
depicted in tones of blue or pink and illustrating genre vignettes. For instance, one pink example
illustrates a lady at her dressing table reading a letter. Another, in tones of blue, features a
woman on a swing with a servant gently pulling a rope to move the swing and a third example
shows a man on bended knee holding the hand of a woman sitting on a garden bench. These
additional vignettes lend interest and balance to the overall arabesque scheme. Audran’s singular
figures reflected popular culture from the Paris fairs and the reopening of the theater of the
commedia dell’arte in 1716.

Print sellers also hawked their wares at the Parisian fairs. As Thomas Crow noted, the
Saint-Germain fair included many artists and print-sellers whose work reflected the Dutch genre
images of artists such as Wouvermans and Teniers. Audran had easy access to these prints
because he resided in the same district as the Saint-Germain fair when he became the Concierge
of the king’s paintings in state appointed quarters of the Luxembourg Palace. The popularity of
the fairs for a wide spectrum of society resulted in the increased distribution of the genre prints,
and their imagery became ubiquitous elements of popular culture. Responding to this popularity,
Lancret included many examples of theater figures and scenes from theatrical production in his
fêtes galantes after his work with Audran. Lancret may have completed a set of six panels, now
in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, said to be done by a follower of
Watteau that date from the second quarter of the eighteenth century (Figure 112). Each panel
represents two months of the year through the illustration of appropriate occupations and signs of
the zodiac. The panel for January and February feature an old man and Harlequin beside a warm

48 Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 47.
50 M.R.R., “Decorative Paintings Attributed to Lancret,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 18, no. 3 (March,
1923): 68.
fire. The overall panels are slimmer than those for Peyrenc de Moras, but they also include a second smaller vignette on the lower portion of the panel not unlike Audran’s scheme. Lancret’s smaller vignettes illustrate another figure related to the season, in this instance, a skater. The overall scheme parallels to some extent Audran’s arabesque panels for Peyrence de Moras, but the later panels do not have Audran’s delicate arabesque elements that add elegance to the overall scheme. An alternate link to the theater came late in Lancret’s life when he married Marie Boursault, the granddaughter of playwright Edmé Boursault (1638-1701). Despite the successful completion of the hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras project, Lancret did not assist Audran on any other commissions, but Lancret’s talent soon caught the attention of Louis XV, and the artist subsequently completed several commissions for the monarch.

After Audran’s death in 1734, Lancret painted *Luncheon with Ham* in 1735 as a pendant to Jean-François de Troy’s (1679-1752) *Luncheon with Oysters* (Figures 113). These paintings were executed for the king’s private dining room in the petits-cabinets at Versailles. The frames of both paintings were richly ornamented with motifs of the hunt. The room’s function was to host gatherings following these royal pursuits. In 1736, Louis XV commissioned six artists to paint a variety of exotic hunting scenes for the petite galerie of his private apartments. Lancret painted *The Tiger Hunt*, complementing Jean-Joseph Pater’s (1695-1736) *Chinese Hunt*, François Boucher’s (1703-1770) *Leopard Hunt*, Carle van Loo’s (1705-1765) *Bear Hunt*, Charles Parrocell’s (1688-1752) *Elephant Hunt*, and Jean-François de Troy’s *Lion Hunt* (Fig.

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52 Holmes, *Nicolas Lancret*, 78.
The gallery walls were coated with vernis martin lacquer and included carved boiserie paneling by either Jacques Verberckt or Jules Antoine Rousseau. Lancret’s career continued to flourish and he gained many subsequent aristocratic commissions. He supplied work for the king’s apartments in various royal residences including Versailles, Fontainebleau, and La Muette. Although no evidence documented further arabesque designs by Lancret after working with Audran, the experience Lancret acquired in working with that painter may have helped him become adept in satisfying his patrons. The collaboration with Audran proved fruitful in winning patronage for the academician Lancret at a time when the Académie royale exhibitions were in a state of abeyance. The Académie salons occurred in 1699, 1704, 1725, then regularly after 1737.

The long life of Jean-Baptiste Oudry, who was born in 1686 and lived until 1755, spanned the three monarchial periods in Audran’s career, and Oudry outlived his predecessor by more than twenty years. Oudry’s affiliations with both the Académie de Saint-Luc and the Académie royale marked the period of ascendancy of the latter institution. He was received as a history painter in the Académie royale in 1719, but his expertise lay in the expressive depictions of animals. As mentioned in Chapter four, Oudry was well known for his illustrations of La Fontaine Fables prior to assisting Audran in the château Réveillon commission. The success of that project only added to Oudry’s reputation. He, subsequently, received commissions culled

53 Holmes, Nicolas Lancret, 80.
55 Holmes, Nicolas Lancret, 45.
through important social connections, such as Louis Fagon (1680-1744), Intendant des finances for Louis XV, and Henri-Camille, marquis de Béringhen (1693-1770). According to Hal Opperman, Oudry completed a commission of seven painted panels for the Marquis de Béringhen, but these are known only through the catalogue descriptions from a sale dated in 1770. Their present whereabouts remain unknown.

Oudry decorated Louis Fagon’s house in Fontenay-aux-Roses and his château de Voré. Five of the original nine painted panels, c. 1720-23, from the château de Voré remain preserved at the Louvre (Figure 115-116). They present lively illustrated arabesques with pastoral scenes in which playful singerie and commedia dell’arte characters are engaging in entertaining activities such as dancing or fishing, along with combinations of figures à la mode. When the panels first entered the Louvre collection in 2002, Marie-Catherine Sahut noted that the decorative panel scenes echoed the delightful activities associated with a country château in that eighteenth-century period. The lively figural scenes dominate each panel, which are framed with slender arabesque motifs. The top of each panel features decorative trophies and floral garlands. There are also central oval-wreathed cameos depicting mythological goddesses associated with the different country pursuits such as Diana with the hunt and Apollo with the pastoral concert. In addition, birds and acrobatic singerie decorate the central cameos.

Oudry’s foray into decorative painting was brief. In addition to his involvement as director of the Beauvais tapestry works after 1734, he received many royal commissions for painted animal and hunt scenes. He also exhibited regularly at the Académie royale salon after it

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59 Opperman, “Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1753),” 66.
was reestablished in 1737. Oudry developed expertise in rendering animals by means of an “intense transcription of mundane facts.” For example, Oudry’s *Un Lièvre et un Gigot de Mouton (Hare and Leg of Lamb)*, c. 1742, exhibited in the salon of 1742, was commissioned for the dining room of patron Monsieur de Vaize (Figure 117). It presented the dead hare and the butchered leg of lamb against a stark background. Instead of just a perspective view created in space, the artist added the effect of stark light rendering the illusion of solid forms casting shadows. Each item was illustrated with “literal realism.” The painting represented the change in contemporary taste that reflected a desire for images inspired by nature and illustrated with technical virtuosity. In Talbot’s opinion, Oudry challenged the fanciful mythological world illustrated by artists such as François Boucher (1703-1770). Oudry contrived this type of painting, referred to as *provisions de cuisine*, meaning a still-life of food stuffs awaiting preparation and directly related to everyday life. In this manner, Oudry reconciled his experiences of portraying animals with expressive physiognomy and the decorative effects of arabesques. He selectively married the two styles in order to create works with “a reality more intense than that of life.” This trompe-l’œil picture presents “a reality that compels our attention, holds us fascinated...” Oudry continued to develop this illusionistic style delighting the eighteenth-century viewer.

The last artist known for working with Audran, Christophe Huet, whose work was discussed in Chapter three, contributed to the restoration of the Château d’Anet for the patron the duchesse du Maine. Audran worked at the château until his death in 1734, and Huet subsequently

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62 Opperman, “Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1753)”, 31-32.
64 Talbot, “Jean-Baptiste Oudry, 150.
carried on the tradition of arabesque with his own interpretations. Huet, who trained at the Académie de Saint-Luc like Audran, specialized in painting animals after studying with Oudry, and exhibited regularly in the Académie de Saint-Luc salons. Like Audran, he never sought membership in the Académie royale. Examples of his work survive in situ at the château de Champs, the château de Chantilly, and the hôtel de Soubise et de Rohan-Strasbour. Other works have been salvaged and remain preserved in museums: an interior from the château de Norville at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and four panels from the château d’Ognon-en-Valois at the Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama. In addition, eighteenth-century guidebooks, such as Dezaillier d’Argenville’s *Voyage pittoresque des environs de Paris*, documented the commission of an interior for financier Joseph Pâris-Duverney at the château de Plaisance, c. 1721. The work has long since been destroyed, but it was much admired when completed by Huet. The extant examples of Huet’s work illustrate how this artist continued the tradition of arabesque design established by Audran.

Huet also carried forward the tradition of using singerie, monkeys dressed as humans and posed to mimic human behavior. He probably took inspiration from Audran’s use of singerie in previous commissions to insert a measure of levity into his compositions. Huet served his patron Louis-Henri, prince de Condé, duc de Bourbon, a prince of the blood and the head of the influential Bourbon-Condé family. The duc had prospered handsomely under the Law banking system. Then, when the Regent died in 1723, the duc made a request to Louis XV for appointment as Prime Minister, and the king responded by giving his assent. As Prime

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Minister, the duc proved to be “power mad and greedy” and engaged in a number of political maneuvers in an effort to gain more influence with the king.\footnote{Bernier, \textit{Louis the Beloved}, 45.} His opposition, André-Hercule de Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus (1653-1743), the king’s original tutor, had formed a close and trusting relationship with the young monarch. After three years of competition between the two, the duc became undone when he forced a power struggle against Fleury, and the king abolished the post of Prime Minister.\footnote{Bernier, \textit{Louis the Beloved}, 59.} Ordered into exile, the duc returned to his ancestral estate, the château de Chantilly, and soon began renovations.

Evidence suggests that the duc chose the motif of singerie, a visual vehicle for satirical content, “to affirm his [the duc’s] class position and contest his marginalization.”\footnote{Phoebe Scott, “Mimesis to Mockery: Chinoiserie Ornament in the Social Space of Eighteenth-century France.” \textit{Philament} Issue 5 (Jan. 2005): 5.} The duc employed subtle verbal dexterity to express his displeasure.\footnote{Mark Motley, \textit{Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility, 1580-1715} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 74-75.} He relied on his superior social skills that required language and verbal facility marked by eloquence and perfect ease. Thus, the use of singerie, which parodied human action, demonstrated the duc’s sophistication while marking him as equal or superior to his contemporaries. Despite his marginalization as an exile at Chantilly, he continued to show his awareness of the most current trends in interior décor in which his contemporaries participated. In particular, he maintained his association with Joseph Pâris-Duverney, who had also commissioned work from Huet.\footnote{Bernier, \textit{Louis the Beloved: The Life of Louis XV}, 47. Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, Anslem, \textit{The Monkeys of Christophe Huet}, 17.}

When Huet created singerie for the duc at the château de Chantilly, he conveyed the European notions linking the singerie figures with the exotic. As Hugh Honour noted, the exotic vision of the Orient had been woven into popular entertainments since the seventeenth century,
when *The Fairy Queen*, an operatic adaptation of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* with the original libretto by Shakespeare and music composed by Henry Purcell (1659-1695), was remade into a Chinese-themed production. The adaptation also included a scene in which six monkeys emerged from the woods and performed a dance on stage.\(^{75}\)

Huet’s creation was probably inspired by the singerie of Berain followed by singerie conceived by Audran and Watteau, where the monkeys were shown wearing the garb of courtiers. In addition, a great deal of singerie imagery continued to come to France on Chinese export porcelain. According to Christophe Levadoux, Huet could have also been inspired by the publication of Watteau’s engraved arabesque panel designs.\(^{76}\) In addition, he may have seen *L’Histoire naturelle civile et ecclésiastique de l’empire du Japon*, translated into French in 1732, or the 1736 publication by Jesuit Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674-1743) entitled *La Description géographique, historique, chronologique et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*...\(^{77}\)

The Huet attribution and date of the Chantilly commission, however, remained a mystery for many decades because neither the contemporary guidebooks nor the interior work indicated the responsible artist. Potential candidates, such as Watteau and Audran, were conjectured, but in 1890 Alfred de Champeaus, followed by Louis Dimier in 1895, published the opinion that it had to have been Huet who had completed the commission. Champeau’s conclusion was based on his study of the artist’s œuvre.\(^{78}\) More recently, Bruno Pons hypothesized that the interior’s details


dated from two separate periods. During the first period around 1720, the architect Jean Aubert installed the white and gilded wood paneling. Then, the chinoiserie arabesque was painted in the second period, at some later date. Fortunately, evidence proved Pons’s hypothesis correct when the date of the Petite Singerie was confirmed as 1735 when it was found on one of the room’s shutters. This discovery occurred during a 1994 project cataloguing the Chantilly painting collection. At that time, a Wood’s lamp examination revealed the Grand Singerie date of 1737 located on a painted block of marble to which the illustrated monkey sculptor applied his chisel (Figure 118).80

The blending of chinoiserie motifs with singerie also demonstrated the duc’s passion for the Far East.81 The Chantilly commission included two rooms, known as the Grande and the Petite Singerie. In the Grande Singerie, so-called because of the six large panels in the first-floor room, Huet painted allegories of the arts and sciences (Figure 119). The allegories included subjects such as war, the hunt, painting, sculpture, geometry, and chemistry. The motifs not only cover the wall panels above and below the dado but also the ceiling and three double doors. The complex iconography can be read through the depicted motifs and includes many references to Huet’s patron, the duc de Condé. For instance, on the art of war panel, a soldier wears the uniform of the Condé and carries the flag standard bearing the Condé colors. For the hunt, liveried servants wear the duc’s uniforms.82 In another panel, a female goddess flanked by two singerie figures can be considered Huet’s imitation of Audran’s La Muette composition of the goddess Ki Mao Sao, engraved by Aubert in 1729 (Figure 120).83 Another panel near the

80 Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, and Anselm, The Monkeys of Christophe Huet, 27.
82 Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, and Anselm, The Monkeys of Christophe Huet, 43-44.
83 Garnier-Pelle, Chantilly, Musée Condé: Peintures du XVIIIe siècle, 67.
fireplace presents a human alchemist, an allegory of the duc, who successfully sponsored the production of soft-paste porcelain, a material used in copying expensive imported Chinese wares. Many specimen jars in the scene’s background allude to the duc’s own natural history collection. And a squirrel sits atop a printing press referencing the failed paper currency system devised by John Law. The ceiling’s design is devoted to motifs and emblems related to the hunt, a favored pastime of the duc and his noble friends. The room’s arabesque designs also include references to the five senses and to allegorical figures representing the four continents. In every panel Huet continued the concept begun by Audran late in his career in which the figural compositions dominate the panel design. The scrolling gilded framing and decorative arabesque designs act as subordinate foils for the clusters of motifs and figures.

The Petite Singerie is located on the rez-de-chaussée, the ground floor. Its name implies a smaller interior, and the space includes simpler arabesque designs (Figure 121-122). The figural compositions continue to dominate the panels and illustrate the pleasurable leisure activities of the nobility. References to the four seasons can be noted in four of the panels and in the four ceiling corner cartouches. The sides of the ceiling include depictions both of episodes from La Fontaine Fables and of Parisian street vendors, known as cris de Paris.

In this instance, Huet not only paid homage to Audran’s Ménagerie arabesques, but also drew on Berain’s precedent of using cris de Paris as a theme for a masquerade at Versailles in 1685. Huet evidently visited the Ménagerie and drew the animals housed there. He used these designs for painted interiors and also published engravings based on his drawings. A series of singerie, engraved by Pierre Filloeul and published in 1743, was entitled Singeries, ou différentes

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84 Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, and Anselm. The Monkeys of Christophe Huet, 51.
87 Scott, The Rococo Interior, 132.
actions de la vie humaine représenté par des singes. Another collection, dedicated to “Monsieur Delorme, first gentleman-in-waiting and purveyor of the Ménagerie of Versailles,” included eleven singerie engravings that not only took inspiration from the zoo animals, but also included monkey figures previously seen in Audran works. For example, the singerie figure, Zigzag, which shows a monkey holding an outstretched tool to catch a bird, was included in the Saturn section of the Portières des dieux (Figure 123). It was also illustrated on the ceiling of the hôtel de Verrue, now in the collection of the Musée des arts décoratifs.

Chinoiserie as well as turquerie, in which pot-bellied figures wore turbans and Turkish costumes, continued to figure prominently in Huet’s work. Two subsequent commissions followed the precedent of Chantilly, where earlier interior paneling was updated with his painted designs. The château de Champs, site of the first commission and originally built between 1703-06, was located on noble territory dating back to the twelfth century. The patron Paul Poisson de Bourvalais, a wealthy financier, hired the architect Jean-Baptiste Bullet de Chamblain to construct the château. However, Bourvalais’ ownership was short-lived because he was charged with embezzlement under the Regency and his property was confiscated. The château, then owned by the crown, later passed into the hands of the dowager princesse de Conti. She bequeathed it to her cousin Charles-François de La Baume Le Blanc, who became the duc de La Vallière. The duc’s son Louis-César later inherited the estate and was responsible for its refurbishment (c. 1748), during which Huet completed the commission with painted arabesques in two rooms (Figure 124 and 125).

89 Garnier-Pelle, Forray-Carlier, and Anselm. The Monkeys of Christophe Huet, 67.
92 Menou, Le Château de Champs, 11.
Dezaillier d’Argenville noted the décor of these rooms in his 1755 guidebook: “The drawing room is embellished with carved panels in which Huet has painted male and female Chinese figures: on the ceiling there are light-weight ornaments comingled with birds and insects. The bedroom of Madame la duchesse de La Vallière is attached to a cabinet entirely painted in monochrome blue, representing Chinese pastoral scenes.”

The drawing room with divisions of wainscoting as at Chantilly is not gilded. The top register of Huet’s panel designs feature human chinoiserie and turquerie figural scenes and the lower register includes singerie with a variety of birds and animals.

The duchesse’s bedroom, a monochrome blue cabinet, received similar wainscoting divided into upper and lower sections (Figure 125). The figural scenes occupy the upper panels, but in this instance, Huet omitted the use of arabesque framing devices entirely. He departed from Audran’s design format, and the boiserie molding serves as the only border. In each panel, the figural scenes depict fanciful gardens populated by Chinese characters, adults and children engaged in leisurely activities.

In a similar fashion, the so-called Monkey room at the hôtel de Rohan-Strasbourg remains preserved in its original Parisian townhouse with a long lineage of ownership. The urban mansion, built by architect Pierre-Alexis Delamar (1676-1745) in 1705, combined two properties: the hôtels de Soubise and de Rohan into a single site, which today houses the French National Archives. The completed design reflected le goût moderne taste of the period. In 1751

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the cardinal de Soubise, François-Armand de Rohan (1717-56), redecorated the interior and sought the expertise of Huet to embellish the existing paneling in an upstairs apartment (Figure 142). The tripartite divisions of the wall as well as the varied widths of the wall panels provided Huet with ample space to create his painted arabesque interior. The gilded and carved panels frame curvilinear arabesques with singerie, animals, and garlands of flowers bordering the central chinoiserie and turquerie scenes. The illustrated activities provide the titles for each panel such as *The Village Dance, The Soap Bubbles, The Hot Hands Game*, among others.97

Two final examples of chinoiserie- and turquerie-themed panels by Huet remain preserved after their removal from their original interiors. The first, originally installed at the Château d’Ognon-en-Valois for the family of Maximillian Titon (n.d.), was acquired by the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama. Four panels with turquerie scenes similar to those at the hôtel de Rohan-Strasbourg are included in this example. The figural scenes also show pastoral activities entitled *The Hot Drink, The Cold Drink, The Hunting Party*, and *The Picnic in the Park* (Figure 126-127).98 The second example, preserved today at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., includes an entire room of paneling from the Château de La Norville, commissioned by François Jules Duvaucel. Bruno Pons dated the six canvases of singerie by Huet to the year 1739 based on a payment received by the artist (Figure 128).99 Installed in a paneled interior designed by Nicolas Pineau (1684-1754), the six canvases parallel the engraved compositions from Huet’s *Singerie, ou, Différentes actions de la vie humaine représentées par des singes*.100 The interior was removed from the château sometime between 1901-1906 and, in

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1922, sold on the art market to Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Hamilton. They bequeathed the interior later to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{101}

The full extent of Audran’s influence remains difficult to assess because of the relative fragility of the painted surfaces exposed to the effects of dirt and daily use and because of the succession of interior fashion trends that spurred the continual renewal of painted panels.\textsuperscript{102} According to John Whitehead, carved decoration started to supersede painting on panels in the 1730s.\textsuperscript{103} And yet, despite the shift in medium, Audran’s influence can be seen in the continuation of his decorative themes.

During this time at Versailles, Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698-1782) succeeded his father as contrôler des Bâtiments, and remodeled interiors in the mid-1730s to create petits appartements for Louis XV.\textsuperscript{104} In these new areas, the carved work of Fleming Jacques Verberckt (1704-71) created a new precedent in boiserie design. Verberckt (1704-71), a Flemish sculptor had carved panels for the Bâtiments du Roi first under Robert de Cotte before working for Ange-Jacques Gabriel. In his work, inset carved medallions of figural reliefs were created instead of painted designs within the larger boiserie panels. Verberckt also completed a set of six panels for the Cabinet vert, c. 1738, at the hôtel de Soubise that also illustrated Aesop fables in carved vignettes (Figure 129).\textsuperscript{105}


\textsuperscript{103} Whitehead, \textit{The French Interior in the Eighteenth Century}, 107.

\textsuperscript{104} Fiske Kimball, \textit{The Creation of the Rococo}, 175.

Prince Hercule Mériaud de Rohan-Soubise (1669-1749) commissioned Germain Boffrand (1667-1754) to redecorate the mansion as part of the celebration for his second marriage. Boffrand created two suites of apartments in the hôtel de Soubise: one for the prince on the rez-de-chaussée, the ground floor; and the other on the principal or first story for his new wife, Marie-Sophie de Courcillon (1713-1756). The opulence and integration of the suites of interiors culminated in an oval salon. In each salon, the wall paneling reached up to large spandrels arching over the windows and doorways, inset with themed paintings: illustrated allegories of the prince’s virtues for his salon and the legend of Cupid and Psyche, painted by Natoire, for the princess. In Boffrand’s original plan, a room linking the two suites, known as the Cabinet Vert, was located on the principal story. In this small room Verberckt created figural relief medallions as part of the paneling with vignettes of La Fontaine’s *Fables*. Evidently Verberckt took inspiration for his medallions from the engraved illustrations based on drawings by Francis Barlow in Sir Roger L’Estrange’s publication of Aesop *Fables*. The success of this publication had warranted eight editions by 1738.

In these later commissions, talented craftsmen drew on the design precedents set by Audran, such as the use of La Fontaine’s *Fables*, to enhance their commissions and to satisfy their elite clientele. Taking inspiration from the literary “generic hybridization,” Audran artfully devised arabesques combining venerable motifs with elements of popular culture. In the process, he highlighted the abilities of his protégés, who benefitted from their collaboration with him. In many instances, their contributions brought their individual talents to the attention of important

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cliente. Whether they were simply learning how to communicate effectively and to gratiate themselves to patrons or gaining the skills to enable them to work successfully and independently, each artist developed his expertise and flourished as a result of his experience with his mentor Claude III Audran.
Conclusion:

Studying an interior ornamented by Claude III Audran and imagining how it was perceived by one of his contemporaries, invites consideration of the variables shaping that perception. His contemporaneous audience, noblemen and patrons, maintained a level of cultural awareness and curiosity enabling them to understand popular culture, such as theatrical productions, especially when irony and sarcasm employed highlight the issues of the day. Most of his contemporaries did not pursue a studied, connoisseur’s approach to literature, music or art. Instead, those noble observers and potential patrons endeavored to use wit and charm with an unstudied nonchalance. Having endured the reign of Louis XIV’s monarchy while living in the large, drafty rooms of Versailles, their escape to private retreats or return to Paris meant the opportunity for gratification of new desires, including those relating to interior décor. Not least among the new aesthetics were smaller, more intimate rooms, with comfort supplied by light and air from windows during the summer and by improved heating during the winter. No doubt these noble patrons had expectations that differed from our own with respect to comfort. But there is also little doubt that in these rooms the provision of seating and the freedom to sit represented a marked departure from the strictures of rank that had existed at Versailles. The metaphorical motifs of power employed by Louis XIV were replaced for these patrons in their private interiors by relief in light-hearted and entertaining motifs for visual effect. For gatherings in these smaller rooms, the curve of a chair complemented the c-scrolls and fanciful figures of Audran’s arabesques.

As an art form, arabesques in these interiors could be appreciated on several levels. From afar, the arabesque created an all-over decorative effect in any application. On closer scrutiny, individual colors and elements could be discerned and examined. When viewed at night in the
flickering candlelight, these motifs would be seen through the play of light and shadow. Marian Hobson spoke of the illusion of the rococo and the notion of papillotage: the viewer’s perception based on first registering the ornamental motifs, then instantaneously becoming cut off from them at a glance.¹ The cumulative effect of the colors and various motifs on the viewer resulted in a “fragmentation” of the attention to what is seen in that instant.² Blondel, writing later, described the effect of such ornamental decoration as “un faux délire.”³ He noted further, “What can we say of these ingenious things, accompanied by the carved frames and by the principal moldings of the panels, the great charm of which is that they have neither beginning nor end?”⁴ Such observations, even years after Audran’s life, testify to the fact that the arabesque created a striking visual experience for the viewer. The experience did not convey the kind of grand didactic message one might receive with a history painting. Instead, the arabesque served as an amusement, a reflection of the patron’s taste, as a person in the know and as one of the cultural elite.

To assess the work of Claude III Audran as simply “repetitious pattern book designs”—as the Academy dismissed the work of artists of the Maîtrise guild—is wholly inadequate.⁵ Audran learned early in life that he needed to distinguish himself in his work in order to earn prestigious commissions and in order to succeed in overcoming competition. In fact, the analysis of his work proves that he was a linchpin in the development of the rococo style. He earned this

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² Hobson, *The Object of Art*, 52.
⁴ “Que dire encore des ces rien ingénieux, assotes aux cadres chantournés, & aux principales moulures des panneaux, dont le grand charme est de n’avoir ni commencement ni fin ?” Blondel, *L’Homme du mode*, 104.
distinction by using his talent for ornamental design. In the process, he expanded the repertoire of motifs by including elements from popular culture. Such infusions of fresh ideas and forms revitalized the venerable arabesque for interior décor and delighted Audran’s patrons.

From his earliest commissions, he brought arabesque design to a new level of expression when he chose to tap the expertise of younger artists to complete figural or animal illustrations within his arabesques. He may have understood that their contributions resulted in a balance between the capabilities of Audran’s guild training as part of the Maîtrise and the fledgling status of the painters in the Académie royale before that institution dominated the contemporary art market. The input of the young painters may have also increased the efficiency of completing commissions, and employing them as subcontractors, not partners, enabled Audran to retain creative control of artistic expression and to balance cash flow.

Audran needed to be a clever conversationalist with a quick wit to mingle familiarly and to converse readily with his noble patrons. His uncle may have helped to instill these social traits as Audran acquired his training. Louis XIV’s palace at Versailles became the center of power for the monarchy, but also the hot house for the nobility’s intrigue and social climbing. At the same time, the rigors of the King’s court reinforced the requirement to display the noble manners of honnêteté. During the reign of Louis XIV, interior décor served as a signifier, reflecting the rank and status of a patron. Audran gained access to many high-ranking patrons after the success of his early commissions.

Audran fashioned his arabesque interiors by inserting motifs appropriate to each project. Audran’s blending of motifs made his arabesques decidedly French and topical. He drew from sources such as literature, theater, and other forms of popular culture. Even when he revisited the La Fontaine Fables theme, his arabesques reflected different sensibilities because of the
differentiation between patrons. His early commission at the château d’Anet updated a French Renaissance interior, venerated even in the period, refreshing it with complementary motifs. At the hunting lodge at Clichy-la-Garenne, with Desportes’s assistance, Audran remained faithful to the functional theme of the venue by depicting four types of hunts on the ceiling, using the goddess of the hunt, Diana, and complementary motifs.

From these early commissions, he gained the attention of the Grand Dauphin and subsequently Louis XIV. At the Ménagerie, Audran had to strike a new chord and to satisfy the king. He found his winning formula, combining venerable mythological figures with light-hearted motifs of children playing and La Fontaine _Fables_. This literary theme carried with it the esteem of noble acceptance as it had been used earlier in the Versailles labyrinth garden; the popular tales conveyed a witty charm. Because his arabesques represented a development from the ancient grotesque formula, the combination of old and new motifs conveyed the prestige of Audran’s patrons, especially within the royal family. Audran garnered a cachet of royal approval, measured in part by his work for some twenty years at Versailles and other crown properties executing various commissions. In the process, Audran’s arabesques contributed materially to the concept of the integrated interior, which became a hallmark of rococo design.

Previous art historical scholarship has been ambivalent regarding Audran’s expertise, largely because he never became a member of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. As his career reached its maturity, neither the Maîtrise nor Académie painters could be assured of earning commissions because of the dismal state of the Crown’s treasury. The Académie required time to develop its importance as an institution for art production. In that period, artists had a choice of two paths in their career: to proceed as part of the established Maîtrise guild or to aspire to be received as a member of the newly organized Académie. In most high-profile
commissions at the time, the two types of artists worked side-by-side on projects. Audran chose the conservative route of remaining with the Maîtrise. His employment of young artists, however, created a link to the Académie that served his purposes in completing projects distinguished for their excellence. Audran’s numerous successful commissions in a wide variety of venues over some forty years demonstrates the continued appeal of his arabesques.

I have examined Audran’s career in depth with the aim of demonstrating his artistic abilities. The non-narrative quality of Audran’s arabesques provided an alternative to the didactic themes of history painting at a crucial moment in art history. Patrons, even Louis XIV, sought an alternative to history painting. The role of Audran as a Maître ornamentalist has been illustrated in this study. He represented a type of artist who could succeed prior to the dominant role of Académie royale in art production.

The development of Audran’s career demonstrates his ability consistently to respond to his patron’s desires and to create a unique art form, one that does not fall within the hierarchy of academic genre. The extant drawings, from purely conceptual sketches to finished presentation pieces, show Audran’s mastery of spatial relationships and of figural and ornamental motifs for any number of installations. He created designs for ceilings, wall panels, tapestries, harpsichords, and furniture, and he presented patrons with choices even within the complementary sections of the drawings for a given commission.

The arabesque allowed for unlimited variations of design, but its appeal was short-lived. The taste for rococo interiors was soon overtaken as the Académie gained influence on artists and took control of the art market and soon established discrete works of painting and sculpture as the highest category of art. This examination of Audran’s creative output demonstrates the broader context of art production that existed in the period. Understanding his method of
working and the aesthetic of the arabesque provides insight into this transitional period in art history. Future scholarship may uncover additional projects completed by Audran. His lighthearted decorative motifs communicated a message to contemporaneous viewers about an individual patron’s position and taste, a message that we have only recently begun to understand and appreciate.
Appendix-

Chronology of Audran’s oeuvre-


1696—Hôtel de Bouillon, Paris, duc and duchesse de Bouillon

1697—Hunting Lodge, Clichy-la-Garenne, Philippe de Bourbon and Françoise Moreau

1699—Château Meudon, Meudon, Louis of France, Grand Dauphin.
--Gobelins, Paris, set of tapestries—Portières de deux.

--Ménagerie, Château de Versailles, Versailles, Louis XIV and Marie-Adélaïde.


1702-05—Duchesse de Bourgogne and dowager princesse de Conti, Versailles, unspecified painting.

1703-04—Completion of Coronelli Globes, Marly, Louis XIV.

1704—Château de Sceaux, Sceaux, Louis-August de Bourbon, duc de Maine, and Anne-Louis Bénédite de Bourbon-Condé, duchesse du Maine.


1709—Château de Versailles, Versailles, Ceiling of a small bed chamber, Princessse de Conti.


1709-12—Château de La Muette, Paris, Fleuriau d’Armenonville.

--Château de Versailles, Versailles, Ruckers and Couchet double clavichord.

1708—Hôtel de Nointel, Paris, Louis de Béchameil, Marquis de Nointel.

1709—Château de Marly, Marly, Louis XIV, Berceau des singes.

1714—Château de Fontainbleau, Fontainebleau, antechamber ceiling.
1719—Hôtel Angran de Fonspertuis, Paris, Louis-Austin Angran de Fontspertius.

1720—Hôtel de Verrue, Paris, Jean-Baptiste d’Albert de Luynes, Comtesse de Verrue.

1723—Hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras, Paris, Abraham Peyrenc de Moras,

1731—Château de Réveillon, Réveillon, Jules-Robert de Cotte.

1733—Château d’Anet, Anet, duc and duchesse du Maine.

Other potential Audran commissioned works-


Château de Menagerie, Versailles- The Cabinet of Momus Inventory of Audran’s painted fables.¹

Eight fables painted on the ceiling-
  The Wolf and Shephard
  Wolf and Sage in Bed
  The Tailless Monkey and the Fox
  The Cock and a Fox in a Trap
  The Wolf and the Stork
  The Stork that Treats the Wolf
  The Dog and the Wolf Traveling
  The Old and Young Dog

Seventy-Two Fables Painted on the Paneling-
On the Chimney- The Deer and the Vine
On the Entry Door-  The Oyster and the Litigants
                  The Monkey and his Small Ones
                  The Scythian Philosopher
                  The Cat and the Cock
On the False Door- Fortune and the Child
                  The Monkey and the Cat
                  Mercury and the Woodsman
                  The Two Cocks and the Partridge
                  The Woodsman and the Ox
                  The Fox and the Grapes
On the Shutters-  Man and the Flea
                  (on the Courtyard) The Frog and the Rat
                  The Serpent and the File
                  The Villager and the Serpent
                  The Hen and her Chicks
                  Man and the Hen with Golden Eggs
                  The Wolf and the Mask
                  Juno, Peacock and the Nightingale
                  The Cook and the Swan
                  The Fisherman and the Little Fish
                  The Crow and the Vase
                  The Dog who dropped its Prey for its Reflection
                  The Bird Catcher, the Hawk, and the Lark
                  The Hornets and the Honey Bees
                  The Heron and the Little Fish

¹ The unpaginated inventory, “Peintures de la Ménagerie,” dated to about 1764, is in the collection of the National Archives of France (O 1 2080). The inventory is referenced in Gérard Mabile and Joan Pieragnoli, La Ménagerie de Versaille (Arles: Éditions Honoré Clair, 2010). Untranslatable words are enclosed in brackets.
On the First Shutter-across from the Chimney
   The Bird Catcher, the Hawk, and the Lark (repeated in inventory)
   The Oyster and the Rat
   The Cat and the Mouse
   The [Sonneau] and Spider
   The Cock and the Diamond
   Mirth Becoming a Rabbit
   The Tortoise and the Two Ducks
   The Hare and the Tortoise

On the Second Shutter-across from the Chimney
   The Fisherman and the Fishes
   The Monkey and the Dolphin
   The Man and the Serpent
   The Serpent and the Hedgehog
   The Man and his Image
   The Monkey in a Shirt
   The Man and the Mouse
   The Cat[enfarine] and the Mouse
   The Bird, the Ant, and the Dove

(in the middle)   The Jay Deplumed
   The Counsel of the Rats
   The Miller, his sons, and the Ass
   The Wolf Pleading against the Fox Before the Ape

On the Door of the Little Stairs
   The Fox and the Mud in the [Laite/r]
   The Fox and the Crow
   The Milkmaid and the Jug of Milk
   The Stag who see Himself in the Water

On the Panel next to the Door-
   The Stag, the Wolf and the Ewe
   The Cock, and the Quick Chicken
   The Astrologer Who Fell into the Well
   The Horse and the Lion

The Panel in Front of the Small Door-
   The Eagle, the Rat, and the Frog
   The Lion and the Rat
   Phoebus and Boreas
   The Crow and the Sheep
On the Panel not aligned to the Small Door-
  The Rolf and the Fox in a Cistern
  The Cat and the Bird
  The [Colleur] and the Dog
  The Ears of the Hare

The Panel Following- The Wolf, the Dog, the Ewe and the [Coutouver]
  The Young Cock, the Cat and the Small Mouse
  The School Master and the Boy
  The Wolf and the Crane

The Panel Following- The Eagle and the Tortoise
  The Hare and the Frogs
  The Acorn and the Pumpkin
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  RI 2006.127.1-Painted ceiling, C. III Audran
  4647-Drawing for ceiling, C. III Audran
  8395, 8396, 8397, Painted panels (Hôtel de Peyrenc de Moras), C.III Audran and N. Lancret


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