Beds and thrones: the reform of aulic space in late eighteenth-century France

Jean-François Bédard

An advocate of pre-Revolutionary monarchy under the Restoration, the Countess de Genlis denounced the artificiality of Napoleonic court culture. She shunned its ludicrous protocol, so different from accepted ancien régime usage, and is said to have hinted that Napoleon’s officers had consulted actors to set it in place.¹ She despised imperial decorative art just as much, finding its inelegant heaviness and pretentious iconography totally foreign to the refined forms of earlier royal furniture—unlike later observers who detected continuities between eighteenth-century neoclassicism and the Empire Style. In the Countess’s view, strident Empire interiors and their bombastic furnishings could hardly mask their patrons’ glaring lack of social and political legitimacy.²

Napoleonic etiquette was indeed different from that of the old monarchy. While ancien régime protocol established the rank and favour of courtiers according to a temporal scale, which dictated the length of time one could spend in the king’s presence, that of the Empire adopted instead a spatial measure.³ As was practised in the households of other European rulers such as the pope, the status of members of the French imperial court was commensurate with how far they were permitted to penetrate an enfilade of rooms, the last of which was reserved exclusively for the emperor. Required to be constantly visible to his subjects, the king of France had bestowed distinction by the duration of his intercourse with courtiers, whereas the Emperor of the French regulated his interactions through a form of architectural triage. This transformation of the ceremonial resulted from a decisive change that occurred during the eighteenth century: the desacralization of the monarchy. From mid-century onward, a more utilitarian understanding of power replaced the

² Genlis, Dictionnaire, vol. 1, 22-3.
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religious model emulated by royal absolutism, which had postulated the indivisibility of the physical body of the king from the political body of the kingdom. A decline of religious fervour and the advance of critical thinking led to the waning of a Christ-like aura of royal presence and in its place fostered representations of statehood derived from a strict separation of the ruler’s person from his political agency.

The shift from the embodiment of power to its external display had profound consequences on the shaping of aulic space. The increasingly spatialized ceremonial led to a greater formalization of rooms, greater attention to their sequence, and renewed scrutiny of the role of furniture and objects in palace settings. The displacement of attention from the monarch’s body to his ritualized actions reduced concerns about the needs of his person but increased consideration of the public display of his power. The diminished importance of beds to the benefit of thrones in the late eighteenth-century French court strikingly conveys this change. Unlike other European monarchies, in France it was the king’s bed and not his throne that had symbolized his temporal power. Louis XIV sat on a throne only in exceptional circumstances, for example when receiving important ambassadors. French kings reclined on a bed when attending the special sessions of the Parlement de Paris (aptly named ‘lits de justice’) during which royal edicts were registered. Yet, the palace plans of innovative architects of the late ancien régime—among them Marie-Joseph Peyre (1730-1785) and his brother Antoine-François (1739-1823), known respectively as Peyre the Elder and Peyre the Younger—minimized the importance of the royal bed and thus of the king’s persona. They focused instead on grandiose settings for public pageantry, creating extensive enfilades of salons, enormous banqueting halls, and pompous throne rooms, shifting the conception of the royal palace as the king’s residence to the symbolic center of the nation.

Called upon by Napoleon to give material form to his court protocol, Antoine-François Peyre’s pupils, the architects Charles Percier (1764-1838) and Pierre-Léonard-François Fontaine (1762-1853), pursued their master’s vision for reforming palace environments. Inspired by Peyre the Younger’s example, Percier and Fontaine devised for the imperial court longer sequences or rooms, grand banqueting halls, and lavish throne rooms. Paradoxically, they couched the new ceremonial in archaic forms. Like the Peyre brothers, they looked to antiquity and to Louis XIV’s grand siècle, but also to the Renaissance palaces of Italy, for the decorative language

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5 I thank Jean-Philippe Garric for pointing out the political underpinnings of the transformations in palace design.
necessary to legitimize the upstart imperial regime. They simplified, regularized, and enlarged palace layouts to produce monumental compositions in the manner of Roman imperial architecture. In their furniture and decorative schemes, they favoured large volumes, simple geometric shapes, and flat surfaces unbroken by sculpture, on which they applied large expanses of bright colour and gilding. A militant simplicity, even an ardent primitivism, was at work in Percier and Fontaine’s buildings and furnishings. Rejecting the ceremonial and decorative practices of the early eighteenth-century court, they wanted to stamp out the allegedly pernicious influence of Louis XV on palace architecture. They wished to reinstate a perfected grand siècle, purified by a severe vision of antiquity and its Renaissance reinterpretations and suffused with an aesthetic of the sublime. Their innovative plans and archaic decorative forms should lead one to reconsider Madame de Staël’s often-quoted observation that Napoleon needed only to ‘make the walls speak’ to re-establish the monarchy when he took over the palace of the Tuileries. On the contrary, Napoleon and his architects Percier and Fontaine sought a profound reform of French aulic space, a project that the Peyre brothers and other eighteenth-century architects had paradoxically initiated from within the old French court.

**Palace reform before the Empire**

The emblematic palace of the French monarchy, Versailles was also its most idiosyncratic. Its inadequacies, acknowledged by Louis XIV himself, preoccupied later rulers and their architects. Ange-Jacques Gabriel, replacing his father Jacques Gabriel V as First Architect to Louis XV in April 1742, had proposed several schemes for Versailles’s improvement. In successive plans for a ‘grand dessein’ (great scheme), the earliest of which Christopher Tadgell has dated to 1743-1744, Gabriel sought to correct the most incongruous aspects of the château. Following in

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6 See for instance [Charles Percier, P.F.L. Fontaine et C. L. Bernier], *Palais, maisons, et autres édifices modernes, dessinés à Rome; Publiés à Paris, l’an 6 de la République française*, Paris: Chez Ducamp, 1798. I thank Jean-Philippe Garric for bringing to my attention the influence of Italian palace designs on Percier and Fontaine.


the footsteps of his predecessors at the Royal Buildings, Gabriel wanted to harmonize Versailles’s disparate court and garden façades and provide the main prospect of the palace with the central focus it lacked. Furthermore, the architect urgently needed to replace the structurally unsound Ambassador’s Staircase and dispose a new grand staircase eastward to command the enfilade of the large apartments lengthened by the addition of the Salon d’Hercule, begun in 1710. More importantly, Gabriel was obliged to improve the royal family’s lodgings. Appropriate suites of state, interior, and private apartments were needed to replace the haphazard arrangement left by Louis XIV: contrary to custom, the late king had used the bedroom of his private apartment for state occasions. In November 1771 Louis XV approved Gabriel’s final scheme, which, like earlier ones proposed by the architect, preserved the garden-facing ‘envelope’ conceived by Louis Le Vau and modified by Jules Hardouin-Mansart but completely destroyed rooms facing the Cour Royale (fig. 1). Gabriel suggested the replacement of the last vestiges of Louis XIII’s château by a new addition centred on a top-lit picture gallery followed by a large cabinet on the avenue de Paris. To either side of this room, he developed symmetrical apartments, one to the north for the king, the other to the south for the queen. Behind this enfilade, around two courtyards flanking the picture gallery, he disposed the smaller rooms of their private apartments.

Figure 1 Nilay Akbas, draftsperson after Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698-1782), architect. Partial second floor plan, “Great Project” for the reconstruction of the château de Versailles, Versailles, France (1743-1774). 1771. Based on O1 1766 n°6, Paris, Archives Nationales de France. The light blue indicates Gabriel’s addition.

Gabriel’s ‘grand dessein’ made possible the even more radical changes to Versailles that later mavericks drafted in their palace proposals for the last king of France and the first Emperor of the French. The Peyre brothers delineated such plans for the refurbishment of Versailles. In their interpretations of Gabriel’s ‘grand dessein’, they showed that they were less concerned than their predecessor about providing appropriate accommodations for the royal family. They focused instead on public rooms on a grand scale. Espousing the shift in the nature of kingship, they downplayed the body of the Baroque sovereign as they choreographed the representational role of the Enlightenment ruler.

In an essay entitled ‘Dissertation sur les distributions des Anciens comparées à celles des Modernes, et sur leur manière d’employer les colonnes’, published in the *Mercure de France* in August 1773 and reprinted in the second edition of his *Œuvres d’architecture*, Marie-Joseph Peyre criticized what he considered an exaggerated emphasis on the domestic portion of contemporary palace design. He questioned the expertise that moderns had claimed in distribution, the aspect of architectural theory the educator and theorist Jacques-François Blondel upheld as the most significant contribution the French had made to the art of building. However, Peyre the Elder contended that the architects of antiquity had not only prefigured the moderns’ command but largely surpassed it by successfully combining grandeur and convenience, whereas moderns could only quibble about the minutiae of comfort. Versailles exemplified this deficiency, Peyre observed. He deplored the lack of halls large enough for the ceremonies that took place in the palace, a defect Gabriel had addressed with his proposed addition of a large picture gallery and a huge salon en suite. Peyre also criticized the smallness of Versailles’s rooms, which, he argued, could hardly accommodate the constant crowds of visitors. While Gabriel balanced the prince’s personal needs with the imperatives of display, Peyre clearly gave precedence to his representational duties.

With his ‘Plan d’un palais pour un souverain’, drafted before 1765, Peyre the Elder implemented his reform programme patterned after the organizational system

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of the great thermal baths he had studied in Rome in the 1750s (fig. 2). He devised a more compact plan to replace Versailles’s long enfilades wrapped around internal courtyards. He filled the palace’s internal courtyards with vast apsidal halls lit by high windows in the manner of Roman frigidaria. The architect explained that he intended these as vessels for ‘resplendent ceremonies’. He flanked them with the smaller spaces necessary for convenience. While he preserved the existing arrangement of the staterooms in an enfilade facing the gardens, he realigned their doors to the room’s geometric centres. With its hierarchical plan that combined large, multi-story spaces and smaller rooms, its varied geometries, its axial planning, and its extensive use of columnar screens, Peyre’s proposal for an ideal palace adapted to Versailles the features of Roman imperial architecture that had impressed him during his Italian sojourn.

![Diagram of a palace](Image)


13 Peyre, Œuvres d’architecture, 1765, 23.
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Peyre the Elder’s ‘Plan d’un palais pour un souverain’ anticipated the architectural consultation organized in 1780 by the Director General of the King’s Buildings, Charles-Claude Flahault de la Billardrie, comte d’Angiviller, to complete Gabriel’s ‘grand dessein’, which had been halted after the accession of the new king. A champion of artistic propaganda, d’Angiviller had sponsored an ambitious state programme that employed artists and architects to reinvigorate a weakened monarchy.14 To modernize Louis XVI’s image, he asked leading architects (including the Peyre brothers) to provide schemes for the palace’s reconstruction. Étienne-Louis Boullée, Charles-François Darnaudin, Jean-Jacques Huvé, Jean-François Heurtier, Antoine Leroy, Pierre-Adrien Pâris, and Nicolas-Marie Potain also submitted proposals.15 When in 1807 Napoleon was considering refurbishing Versailles, he asked Fontaine to review his predecessors’ designs. The architect deplored them unequivocally,16 reserving his praise exclusively for a project of Peyre the Younger: Fontaine thought that it, unlike the others, was ‘of such perfection that it is impossible to detect in even the smallest detail the constraints or imperfections of a restored building’.17 Fontaine identified Peyre’s scheme as the model he and his colleague Percier adopted in their designs for the palace of the King of Rome, the vast dynastic residence commissioned by Napoleon.18 Had it been completed on the Chaillot hill in Paris, it would have embodied the pair’s most consummate expression of palace planning.

Peyre the Younger’s plans for the reconstruction of Versailles anticipated the regularity and formality of the distribution proposed by Percier and Fontaine at Chaillot. Peyre published two proposals for Versailles in his Œuvres d’Architecture of 1818.19 In his first, more conventional project (fig. 3), he expanded the central

14 On d’Angiviller’s artistic policy, see for instance Andrew McClellan, ‘D’Angiviller’s “great men” of France and the politics of the Parlements’, Art History 13:2, June 1990.
16 Fontaine, Journal, 179.
18 Percier and Fontaine, Résidences de souverains, 158.
portion of the château with courts to the north and south of the original envelope, around which he set two suites of royal apartments, each including state and private bedrooms. Following Gabriel’s scheme, Peyre kept the Hall of Mirrors and the north and south state apartments of Louis XIV’s château, and provided two new monumental staircases on the Cour Royale. However, he completely reconstructed the original state apartments as a suite of salons. He enlarged the individual rooms and replaced the enfilade near the exterior wall with an axial path, much as his brother had done in his project for an ideal palace (fig. 2).\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20} Peyre, \textit{Œuvres d’Architecture}, 1765, plate 16.
Peyre the Younger’s second proposal for Versailles, closest to Percier and Fontaine’s project for Chaillot, was probably the one Fontaine embraced so enthusiastically. In it, Peyre followed Gabriel even more closely: the eastern half of

![Diagram of Versailles palace](image)

Peyre’s reconstruction of the Cour Royale is a direct copy of the First Architect’s plan. Like Gabriel, Peyre placed the two royal apartments on the main façade of the palace, to either side of a central salon. In this way, he fulfilled Louis XVI’s only requirement for d’Angiviller: that the royal bedroom be located on the main façade, as his ancestor’s had been (fig. 4).  

21 Peyre, Œuvres d’Architecture, 1818, 9.
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each monarch had two formal suites accessed from the grand staircases and a more intimate apartment around one of the central courtyards—Peyre limited the king’s and queen’s lodgings to their apartments on the main façade and adjoining rooms behind the enfilade. He combined this less commodious arrangement with a monumental processional route leading visitors from the great staircases to the royal bedrooms. Peyre’s trajectory was even longer in his second proposal, despite a more compact plan made possible by the gallery’s top lighting (Gabriel’s and Peyre the Elder’s version of the gallery, too, was top-lit; see fig. 1 and fig. 2). Rather than Gabriel’s straightforward circulation, visitors to Peyre’s refurbished Versailles would follow a spiral path through the five rooms of one of the original large apartments, half the length of the Hall of Mirrors, the entire length of Peyre’s new gallery, the king’s new Great Cabinet, and the new first royal antechamber before reaching the king’s bed. Peyre’s enthusiastic embrace of the new protocol was clearest in the banqueting hall and throne room he placed in the south and north branches of his cruciform gallery. He depicted the throne prominently in a longitudinal section of the gallery (fig. 5 and fig. 6). His throne design, flanked by columns and statuary and surmounted by a large barrel vault, also included a large fabric dais shaped like the mantel of a royal coat of arms, complete with crown and helmet. Its architecture and decoration departed significantly from the existing throne rooms in French palaces, and it influenced Percier and Fontaine’s later arrangement at the Tuileries (fig. 7).
Peyre the Younger’s second project for Versailles was an extraordinary subversion of Gabriel’s ‘grand dessein’. Following the plan of Louis XV’s architect, Peyre transformed Gabriel’s masterful reworking of Versailles into a strikingly exotic but also archaic composition. Peyre’s perfunctory interest in royal apartments was indeed foreign to the traditional practice of the French court. So was his multiplication of generic rooms to lengthen the enfilades at Versailles, in contradiction of the temporal distinction upheld in traditional ceremonial. Also unusual for France was his provision for a banqueting hall and a grand throne room. If the former had no precedent at Versailles (the ceremony of the grand couvert...
took place in antechambers furnished for the occasion, not in a specially designed room) the latter was far more impressive than any other. The architect accompanied his exploration of a decidedly un-French ceremonial with archaic elements. His allotment of a single bedroom for the king would have brought back to Versailles Louis XIV’s aberrant use of his private bed as his state bed, a defect Gabriel sought to remedy by providing Louis XV with three bedrooms. Like Gabriel, Peyre preserved significant portions of Louis XIV’s château. He conserved the king’s and queen’s large apartments and the Hall of Mirrors, although he greatly simplified their geometry and articulation. Removing all smaller seventeenth– and eighteenth–century additions, Peyre reinterpreted the grand siècle with touches of Roman grandeur.

Percier and Fontaine’s palace designs: the case of the Tuileries

Figure 8 Charles Percier (1764-1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853), architects? Second floor of a project for the First Consul Bonaparte, Château of Saint-Cloud under the Consulate and the Empire, Saint-Cloud, France (1801-1814), ca. 1801-02. Saint-Cloud, Domaine national de Saint-Cloud, Unnumbered document.

Photo credit: Domaine National de Saint-Cloud

Percier and Fontaine’s proposals for Napoleon’s palaces were as exotic and archaic as the brothers Peyre’s vision of Versailles; their work on former royal residences had already begun during the Consulate. In October 1801, three years before Napoleon became Emperor of the French, as First Consul, he ordered the
refurbishment of the château of Saint-Cloud. An unpublished plan for this château can be associated with this project in which Peyre the Younger’s influence on Percier and Fontaine’s design is recognizable (fig. 8). Like their teacher at Versailles, the architects of the First Consul simplified and monumentalized the plan of Saint-Cloud. They eliminated several interior partitions to make the rooms more regular and symmetrical. They introduced new programmes, such as a banqueting hall and other rooms adapted to the needs of this militaristic and at that time anticlerical regime (suites for the Secretary of State, a map room, a library in the former chapel). And like Peyre, Percier and Fontaine planned a new axis at the centre of the building, providing a focus to its original pichi-shaped configuration. To implement this central axis, they cleared the rooms at the centre of the château, between the courtyard and the garden (the Salon des Ministres et des Audiences, a corridor, the banqueting hall), which, again inspired by Peyre, they articulated with groups of columns.

The formality of the Napoleonic court reached new heights with the May 1804 decree that instated Bonaparte as Emperor of the French. A grandiose coronation was held at Notre-Dame in Paris in December of that year. To replace the haphazard practices of the Consulate, a more exacting imperial ceremonial was codified in a manual entitled Étiquette du Palais Impérial, of which the first edition was published in March-April 1805. The Étiquette du Palais Impérial not only regulated the deportment of courtiers in imperial palaces but also identified the palace of the Tuileries, Napoleon’s Parisian seat, as a model for the design of all other imperial residences. Thus, despite the shortcomings of its plan, the Tuileries became the privileged site of experimentation with palace architecture for Napoleon’s architects, at least until the emperor began contemplating more

22 Fontaine, Journal, 34.
24 I am grateful to Michaël Decrossas for sharing with me the existence of this plan kept at the archives of the Domaine national de Saint-Cloud and for providing a photograph of this document.
26 ‘Autant que cela est possible, les Palais impériaux sont distribués comme celui des Tuileries.’ Organisation de la maison de l’Empereur, 1810, 131.
ambitious projects, such as restoring Versailles as an imperial residence and building an entirely new urban palace in Paris.\textsuperscript{27}

Preexisting conditions at the Tuileries made it difficult for Percier and Fontaine to pursue Peyre the Younger’s more radical proposals. The Empire lasted too short a time to allow the architects to complete all the transformations required for the optimal service of the imperial court. Fontaine, working independently, could only envisage more ambitious plans for this palace after King Louis-Philippe I considered residing there upon his accession to the throne. Since the spatial logic of imperial ceremonial supposed an increase in the number of rooms the courtiers could occupy, depending on their status, Percier and Fontaine largely restricted their work at the Tuileries to the refurbishment or elongation of the existing enfilades.

Changes made by Percier and Fontaine to the Tuileries followed the increasing precision of imperial ceremonial, itself the result of a more pointed confrontation between the French and other European courts. The five editions of the \textit{Étiquette du Palais Impérial} may be divided into two groups (see Table I). The first (the 1805, 1806, and 1808 versions), dating from the time when the imperial court was established, fixed the basic distribution of palaces by specifying the three types of apartments necessary for the imperial couple. A large apartment of representation was to be accompanied by two ordinary apartments, one for the emperor and one for the empress, each further divided into apartments of honour and interior apartments. A manuscript ‘Règlement pour l’ameublement des Palais Impériaux’, dated 25 July 1805, provided additional details regarding the furniture for the different rooms.\textsuperscript{28} Composed of a guards’ hall, first salon, second salon, throne room, Emperor’s Salon, and gallery, the large apartment of representation at the Tuileries was the only one of the three that remained virtually identical during the Empire, despite minor changes in use. In fact, it retained the same configuration it had had since Anne of Austria’s Regency.

A lack of time and resources stifled Percier and Fontaine’s hope to emulate their teacher’s most ambitious plans. They nonetheless sought inspiration in Peyre

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\textsuperscript{28} [Géraud-Christophe-Michel Duroc], ‘Règlement pour l’ameublement des Palais Impériaux’, 25 July 1805, Paris, Archives Nationales, O\textdegree{} 504, dossier 1, pièce 3; mentioned by Samoyault-Verlet in ‘Les appartements des souverains en France au xixe siècle’, 123.
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the Younger’s work, particularly in the design of the imperial throne room, the principal component of the large apartment of representation at the Tuileries. The throne’s decorative setting owed much to Peyre’s second project for Versailles. Like its model, it included a dais shaped like a heraldic mantel (fig. 7). Percier and Fontaine were more adventurous with the design of Napoleon’s throne, proposing an extraordinary composition of simple geometric shapes: a cubic base surmounted by a circular back that recalled a shield, broadcasting the ‘primitive’, immemorial origins of imperial power.

The second group of versions of the Étiquette, comprising the 1810 and 1811 editions, was issued at the time of the emperor’s second marriage, to the archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria in March 1810. The arrival of a Habsburg princess at the Parisian court led to a sharp increase in formality. Competing with the Austrian imperial house, French court officials sought more precise descriptions of the emperor’s and, of course, the empress’s household. A similar competition between France and other European powers, but also with the past grandeur of France symbolized by Louis XIV’s construction programme, prompted Percier and Fontaine to document the principal palaces on the Continent. Published in 1833 under the title Résidences de souverains, this collection of drawings included only plans, the type of architectural representation best suited to highlight differences in protocol between European monarchies.

The 1810 and 1811 editions of the Étiquette occasioned the most important transformations at the Tuileries. These were carried out in the ordinary apartments of the emperor and the empress. Thus, between 1805 and 1810, the two sequences of rooms that made up the emperor’s ordinary apartment were considerably extended. In 1805, the emperor’s apartment of honour consisted only of a guards’ hall, and a first and second salon, while his interior apartment comprised a bedchamber, a

31 Before Napoleon, Louis XV had also conjured the associations with the Frankish origins of his kingdom symbolized by the circular shield. In an unrealized project for a monument in Rouen, the sculptor Lemoyne had depicted the monarch clad in a Renaissance-style armour, raised on a shield by three warriors, in the manner of Merovingian rulers. See notably Daniel Rabreau, ‘La basilique Sainte-Geneviève de Soufflot,’ Le Panthéon symbole des révolutions: de l’église de la nation au temple des grands hommes, ed. Barry Bergdoll, Montreal and Paris: Centre canadien d’architecture and Caisse nationale des monuments historiques, 1989, 44.
32 Jean-Philippe Garric has kindly pointed out Napoleon’s emulation of Louis XIV in his imperial residences.
cabinet, a rear cabinet, and a topographical room. The apartment of honour grew markedly after 1808. The architects moved the emperor’s bedroom further out, creating a new room by merging the former bedroom and cabinet of Louis XIV. They changed the emperor’s old bedroom into an additional cabinet for the apartment of honour (figs 9 and 10). The Étiquette specified that the emperor’s bedroom was to be the dividing point between the two parts of his ordinary apartment: the 1808 transformations thus led to an enlargement of the apartment of honour, which, growing from three to five rooms, gave the emperor command of a wider range of spatial marks of distinction.

Figure 9 Nilay Akbas, drafts person, Plan of the second floor in 1805, Palace of the Tuileries under the Empire, Paris (1799-1814). Based on V.A. LIX, pièce 16, Paris, Archives Nationales de France.

Figure 10 Nilay Akbas, drafts person, Plan of the second floor after 1808, Palace of the Tuileries under the Empire, Paris (1799-1814). Based on V.A. LIX, pièce 16, Paris, Archives Nationales de France.

To transform the emperor’s ordinary apartment at the Tuileries, Percier and Fontaine destroyed the smaller rooms whose masterful disposition had been considered a French specialty. The architects concurred with Marie-Joseph Peyre in rejecting the French emphasis on distributive refinements and provision for comfort. Their commentary on Versailles, published in Résidences de souverains, is eloquent in this respect. They railed against the changes made to Louis XIV’s palace by his successor, who they maintained was overly attached to his own personal comfort.33 They also judged the château of Compiègne more successful than Versailles, although they justified their destruction of several ‘small divisions’ of its rooms on

33 ‘La corruption des mœurs, dont les arts, et principalement celui de bâtir, subissent trop souvent les funestes influences, avait sous Louis xiv créé le besoin des petits appartements mystérieux, l’usage des boudoirs secrets, des escaliers dérobés, des couloirs tortueux, et de toutes ces petites commodités de caprice que la faiblesse et la dépravation exigent, mais qu’il est difficile d’obtenir sans offenser les bonnes règles de l’art.’ Percier and Fontaine, Résidences de souverains, 117.
the grounds that new imperial practices were incompatible with royal traditions.\textsuperscript{34} Above all, palace architecture should be majestic, they claimed.\textsuperscript{35} The emperor himself shared their vision, one inspired by the aesthetic of the sublime. Napoleon only saw beauty in vastness. He always opposed joining the Louvre to the Tuileries because of the subdivision of a large urban square that would have resulted. He flatly rejected his architects’ proposal to install columnar screens to hide the misalignment between the two palaces, arguing that ‘length and immensity can make one forget many a defect’.\textsuperscript{36}

The avowed archaism that prompted Percier and Fontaine to condemn the \textit{petits appartements} in royal residences also prompted them to implement older forms of distribution in their refurbishment of French palaces and dictated their preservation, sometimes even their pastiche, of seventeenth-century decoration. While Peyre the Younger intended to conserve only selected parts of the original décor at Versailles—indeed, besides the Grande Galerie, it is difficult to imagine how he could have preserved the surfaces of the other rooms, as he recast them so completely (fig. 5)—Percier and Fontaine employed as many original ornamental fragments as possible at the Tuileries. Napoleon himself probably ordered the architects to preserve these relics. The emperor referred to the Tuileries as the ‘sanctuary of the monarchy,’ espousing his architects’ belief that royal residences should be preserved as national monuments.\textsuperscript{37} Percier and Fontaine reported with satisfaction that, thanks to their interventions, the large apartment of representation

\textsuperscript{34} Percier and Fontaine, \textit{Résidences de souverains}, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{35} Percier and Fontaine, \textit{Résidences de souverains}, 341-342.
\textsuperscript{36} Percier and Fontaine, \textit{Résidences de souverains}, 55-56. Jean-Philippe Garric has noted, however, that Napoleon’s preference for architectural simplicity might be explained by budgetary concerns.
of the Tuileries had regained the decorative aspect it had under Anne’s Regency. Only the Salon des Maréchaux, the former guards’ hall of this apartment, was given an entirely new décor, although it also evoked royal architecture, albeit from an earlier time. With its replicas of Jean Goujon’s caryatids in the guards’ hall at the Louvre, Percier and Fontaine’s Salon des Maréchaux was a throwback to the reign of Henry II (fig. 11).

Figure 11 Charles Percier (1764-1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853), architects. Perspective of the tribune of the Salle des Maréchaux, Palace of the Tuileries under the Empire, Paris (1799-1814). Plate 18 of the Texte explicatif joint aux numéros du journal des Monuments de Paris envoyés à l’Empereur de Russie dans les années 1809, 1810, 1811, 1814 et 1815 (Paris, s.d.). Collection Canadian Centre for Architecture / Centre Canadien d’Architecture, Montréal, Library, Cage M ID90B661. Photo credit: Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

38 Percier and Fontaine, Résidences de souverains, 49-50.
Percier and Fontaine’s evocation of older distributions paralleled the creative nostalgia at play in their décors. While they emulated grand siècle forms in their new compositions, they nonetheless removed all features they thought too ‘baroque’. Thus, in the guards’ hall of the ordinary apartment of the emperor, they chose not to restore the trompe-l’oeil painting they found on the ceiling, though it had been commissioned by the queen regent herself. They thought this illusionistic decoration unsuited to an imperial apartment and replaced it with their own design featuring discrete geometrical compartments, similar to one they designed for the new bedroom for the emperor (figs 12 & 13). In both cases, the bold ornamentation of their compositions recalled those that Charles Errard and Charles Le Brun had originally disposed elsewhere in the palace.39 Fontaine records in his journal how

39 On these decorative schemes, see Nicolas Sainte Fare Garnot, Le décor des Tuileries sous le règne de Louis xiv, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988.
their pastiche of the *grand siècle* displeased Empress Joséphine. A fashionable woman, she reproached the architects because ‘instead of the pretty things she had ordered done, [they] had cluttered the walls and ceilings with heavy, outmoded ornaments’. The empress completely misunderstood the political vision the architects sought to realize. They and their patron must have reasoned that if the Empire was to be a new golden age for France, it needed to be even more brilliant than the century of Louis XIV. Only a perfected version of seventeenth-century décor, filtered through the best models of antiquity, could achieve that goal.

Figure 13 Charles Percier (1764-1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853), architects. Ceiling of the Emperor’s bedroom, Palace of the Tuileries under the Empire, Paris (1799-1814). Plate 13 of the Texte explicatif joint aux numéros du journal des Monuments de Paris envoyés à l’Empereur de Russie dans les années 1809, 1810, 1811, 1814 et 1815 (Paris, s.d.). Collection Canadian Centre for Architecture / Centre Canadien d’Architecture, Montréal, Library, Cage M ID90B661. Photo credit: Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

**Conclusion**

In Napoleon’s service, Percier and Fontaine renewed the layout, decoration, and furnishings of French palaces. They did so by pursuing an exotic and archaic formal

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40 Fontaine, *Journal*, 218.
agenda inspired by their master, Antoine-François Peyre. Breaking with earlier eighteenth-century practice, Peyre the Younger had proposed schemes for the reconstruction of Versailles in which he implemented new and foreign understandings of royal ceremonials. Unlike traditional French courtly usage, which stressed temporal marks of distinction, a spatial measure of social rank emerged in Peyre’s proposals. He laid out long enfilades to establish as many spatial markings of privilege as possible. To Versailles’s courtiers, accustomed to constant visual contact with their king, these interminable apartments and galleries would have appeared as foreign as the unusual rooms Peyre included prominently in his plans, such as a banqueting hall and an imposing throne room. Peyre paired the exoticism of his plan with archaic forms. Although he intended to destroy most of Louis XIV’s palace, he preserved crucial portions of the seventeenth-century décor, such as the Hall of Mirrors. This he combined with elements derived from his sober, if not primitivist, reading of antiquity, a taste he shared with the other so-called French Piranesians and that he imparted to his pupils Percier and Fontaine.

On a more modest level, Percier and Fontaine implemented the same formal strategy at the Tuileries as Peyre the Younger had pursued at Versailles. Following their teacher, but also to comply with the imperial protocol codified in the Étiquette du Palais Impérial, they reworked this palace’s plan to provide longer apartment sequences. They also planned unconventional rooms, similar to those Peyre had devised, notably a spectacular throne room. The stark geometry of the throne they designed for the Tuileries exemplifies the archaic sensibility they explored elsewhere in their decoration of that palace. Wishing to preserve as many seventeenth-century fragments as possible, but also committed to the severe forms promoted by their master, Percier and Fontaine fused the two in a sublimation of the grand siècle. Insofar as the exoticism and archaism implemented by Percier and Fontaine at the Tuileries had been anticipated by their master, it was paradoxically the ancien régime and not the Empire, Louis XVI and not Napoleon I, that brought about a revolution in the buildings and objects that defined French aulic space.

Jean-François Bédard – The architect and art historian Jean-François Bédard is Associate Professor and Chair of the Graduate Program at the School of Architecture of Syracuse University. His research centres on the socio-politics of eighteenth-century French court society as they are manifested in architecture and material culture. Decorative Games: Ornament, Rhetoric, and Noble Culture in the Work of Gilles-Marie Oppenord, a book derived from his dissertation research at Columbia University, was published in 2011 by the University of Delaware Press.
Appendix: Table I

Table of contents of the different editions of the *Étiquette du Palais Impérial*

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— — Des Aumôniers ordinaires.
— — Des Chapelains.
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— — Des Clercs de la Chapelle.
— — Du Sacristain, du Sommier, &c.
— — Du Secrétaire.
— — Des Officiers de la Chapelle de l’Impératrice et des Princes, et
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de leurs attributions.

— — Des Chapelles des Princes.

| — — Gouverneurs des Palais. | — — Sous-gouverneur. |
| — — Adjudant |
| — — Préfets du Palais |

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| — — Premier |

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Chambellan

— —

Chambellans

— —

Chambellans de l’Impératrice

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Lieutenant de la Vénerie.

Lieutenant des Chasses de service près l’Empereur.

Porte-arquebuse.

Secrétaire général de la Vénerie.

Administrateur général des
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— Chap. VI. Fonctions et attributions du grand Maître des cérémonies, et des Officiers et autres personnes employées dans le département des cérémonies.

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