



PRESS RELEASE
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Mistresses, Milkmaids and Emperors: Influences on the furnishing of French châteaux. A special display at the Winter Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair, 23-28 January 2007

Madame de Pompadour and Queen Marie-Antoinette both exerted a profound influence on the design of 18th century French interiors, and Napoleon on the 19th century. A special display and selling exhibition featuring a typical French château room setting and interior accessories, will be part of the Winter Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair, 23-28 January 2007, held in The Marquee, Battersea Park, London SW11.



Since the Decorative Fair launched in 1985, it has proved to be a rich source to interior designers and private buyers of French furniture and accessories of the 18th and 19th centuries. The French château foyer display aims to inspire and educate visitors in the styles of that period. In the UK, we are familiar with Georgian, Regency and Victorian design: at the Winter Decorative Fair, visitors will be able to see and learn

about comparative styles in France.

Madame de Pompadour, paramour of Louis XV (whose period, 1715-1774, is commonly referred to as *Louis Quinze* by antiques dealers and designers), encouraged the King to promote the fine arts of architecture, furniture and furnishings – it was the age of rococo (curvaceous, asymmetrical, organic style using natural motifs such as scrolls, floral and shell designs) and chinoiserie. Decorating colours were delicate, although the carved furniture was often gilded. La Pompadour even urged Louis XV to take control of the Sèvres porcelain factory; in the early 18th century, porcelain was valued more than its weight in gold. The brilliantly coloured and lavishly gilded artefacts produced by Sèvres were incorporated in furniture designs as inset plaques and table tops.



Marie-Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI (*Louis Seize*, 1774-1793), has been given a great deal of credit for the rise of neo-classical design in the late 18th century; her extravagant additions in decoration and furniture to Versailles, and her own milkmaid fantasy at *Le Petit Trianon*, combined neo-classical straightness of line with the most luxurious of damask wall-coverings, silk hangings and painted furniture. Pastoral scenes adorned walls and accessories. All soon

found their way in to the châteaux of the aristocracy.

The Revolution brought restraint and simplification to French design. A transitional period, termed The Directoire (after the government of the day) in the 1790s, continued the geometric influences of neo-classicism on a less extravagant theme. Napoleon's meteoric rise, and his desire for imperial association with the cæsars of Rome, led the theme of The Empire style, which roughly spanned 1804 to 1830. Marquetry and carving all but disappeared. Columns and pillars came in. The plain veneered surfaces of furniture were decorated with ormolu (carved bronze) mounts and design features such as the wreath, the bee (the Empress Josephine's monogram), Roman eagles, Egyptian sphinxes and Greek symbols. Classical curves, from the Roman and Etruscan models, created the '*gondole*', or *bateau*-style bed and '*lit repose*' (day bed).

After 1830, the restored kings of France had matters other than architecture and furnishings to occupy their money and energies, and French cabinet-making, whilst maintaining its quality, became in design terms a revivalist competition: Cathedral and Gothic style, Italian Renaissance, baroque and Boulle, rococo and neo-classical all saw themselves re-made in the era before Art Nouveau arrived.

At the Decorative Fair, French furnishings sit happily with traditional English furniture and design of all periods including 20th century. The Fair is a wonderful place to find imaginative period interior decoration and design, and keep up with current trends in antiques. Its relaxed atmosphere and convenient location (including a free shuttle service to and from Sloane Square) attract international designers and wealthy private buyers 'in the know', whose main criteria when shopping here is to find the individual and the unusual, to complement their interior design ideas.

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A Fact Sheet on 18th and 19th century French design periods and styles, with specific reference to châteaux, is available on request.

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Notes to Editors

Event: **The Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair**
Date: Tuesday 23rd – Sunday 28th January 2007
Venue: The Marquee, Battersea Park, London SW11
Entry: £8.00 including catalogue (for free return visits)
Transport: Sloane Square Tube – a complimentary shuttle service runs from the Sloane Square Hotel to the Marquee every 10-15 minutes during opening hours.
Open: Tuesday 12pm – 8pm
Wednesday, Thursday 11am – 8pm
Friday & Saturday 11am – 7pm
Sunday 11am – 6pm
Organisers: Harvey (Management Services) Ltd
Enquiries: +44 (0)20 7624 5173
Website: www.decorativefair.com