

Dauphin's Armchair



The palace of Versailles could acquire in 2010 a library armchair delivered for the Dauphin's apartment in Fontainebleau, identical to another one delivered the same year for the prince at Versailles. Unfortunately the seat had suffered important damages, not to mention the loss of its original padding. To be able to display it in the Dauphin's apartment with the very desk of the same delivery, recovered from the Mobilier National, a delicate conservation/restoration project was started. Its aim is to conserve as much as possible of the original gilding while completing the missing structural elements and adapting new upholstery according to archival documents.

Armchair
Paris, Mid 18th Century
Birch, gilding, unoriginal upholstery
Mr Scott Linsday
Kansas City, Missouri



Inside the seat rail, the number crowned F N° 723

This number refers to the inventory of the château of Fontainebleau drawn in 1787. This late inventory mentions the original accession number 3145.

This number refers to the *Journal d'entrée du Garde-Meuble de la Couronne*:

20 September 1745, delivered by Sallior, upholsterer to the King:

« Un fauteuil de bureau couvert de maroquin rouge, garni de galon d'or cloué de clous dorés, le dossier cintré, les bras reculés et à manchettes, les bois sculptés et dorés » (Paris, Archives nationales, O1 3313)

A similar seat had been delivered by Sallior for the Dauphin's Inner Cabinet at Versailles on February 13th the same year.

Sold during the Revolution, the Fontainebleau's armchair reappeared at the end of the 19th Century in the famous collection of decorator Georges Hoentschell in Paris



Hoentschel's Gallery
Paris, 58 Boulevard Flandrin
Ca 1900

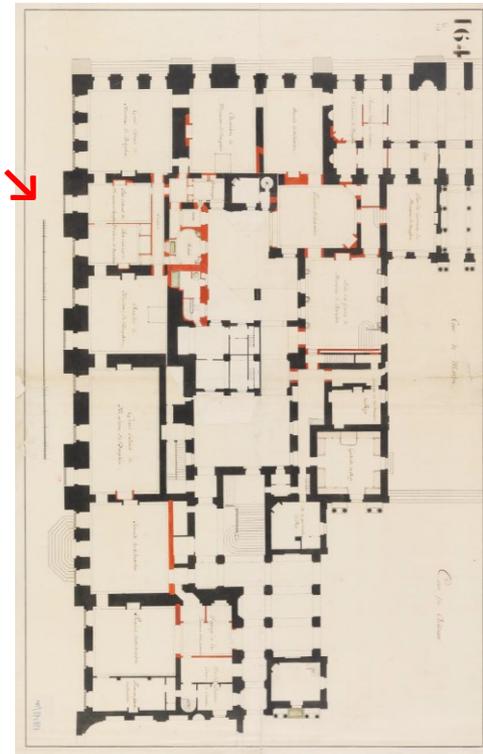
This collection was acquired en bloc by banker and philanthropist John Pierpont Morgan who gave it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1910. Eventually, due to its poor condition, it was sold by the museum, in the 1950's, and remained in the American art market until its purchase by the château de Versailles in 2010.



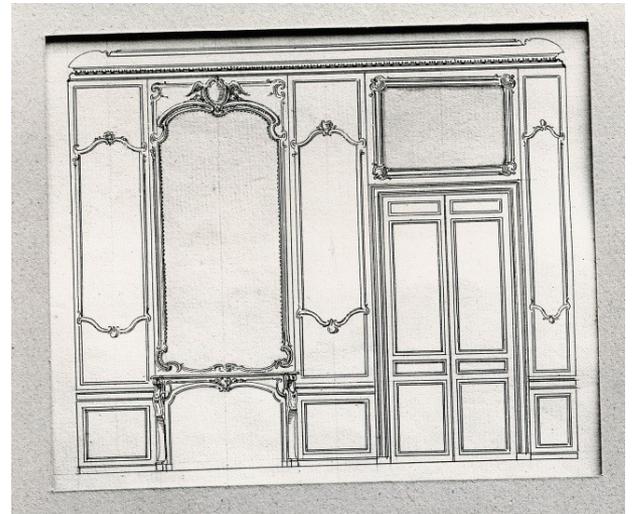
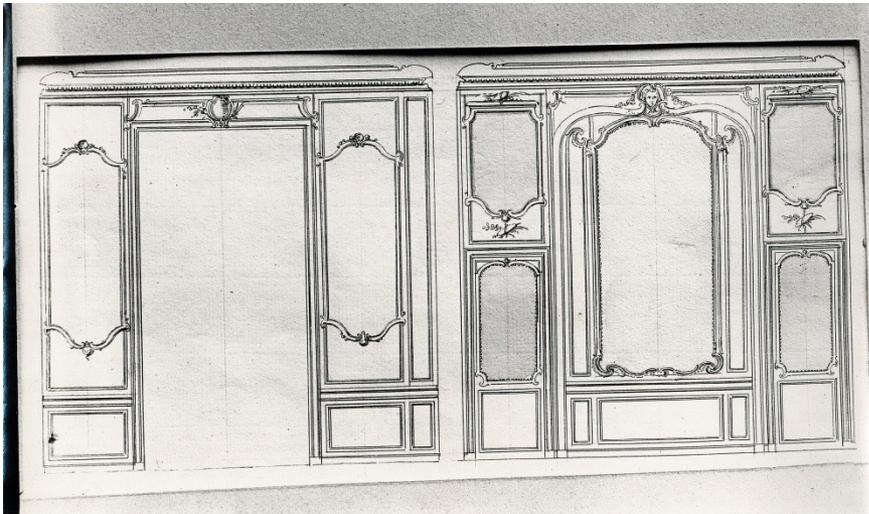
Antoine Robert Gaudreaus, desk, 1745
Château de Versailles, inv. GME 17810

Around the same time, the château de Versailles was given, on long term loan by the Mobilier National in Paris, the very desk that was delivered in August 1745 to accompany the armchair. The similar set was delivered in February for the new appartement of the Dauphin, created in 1745 for the prince and his wife, the Infanta Maria-Teresia Raphaëlle of Spain. Unfortunately, this princess died in 1746, and the Dauphin married Maria-Josefa pf Saxony in February 1747 and moved to a new apartment a few months later.

Scan of the current Dauphin's cabinet



The wainscoting of the new Inner Cabinet of the Dauphin was created according to the drawings of the King's architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel



Since the armchair was reunited to its desk in fairly good condition, it was not possible to keep it as an archeological piece, it had to be restored and not only conserved.

This would have been different if it had not found a place in the refurbishment of the princely apartments.

Another possibility is shown with the conservation of a chair delivered for the apartment of Madame Henriette, one of the daughters of Louis XV, in Versailles. Due to its condition, a painstaking work was done to reveal its original gilding, but without any further intervention.



Madame Henriette's chair
After conservation



With a sense of conservation, the antique dealer had a special structure in plywood built to hold the upholstery without having to nail in the seat rail.

The removing of 20th Century additions



The armchair rid of its 20th Century upholstery

The complement of the legs



The four legs have been cut in the 19th Century and replaced by crude terminations, with the mouldings recarved.



New models for legs terminations had to be found in contemporary chairs



Front foot : with leaf in polymere, for it would have been too difficult to carve the motif in wood, due to the space left on the lower part of the leg

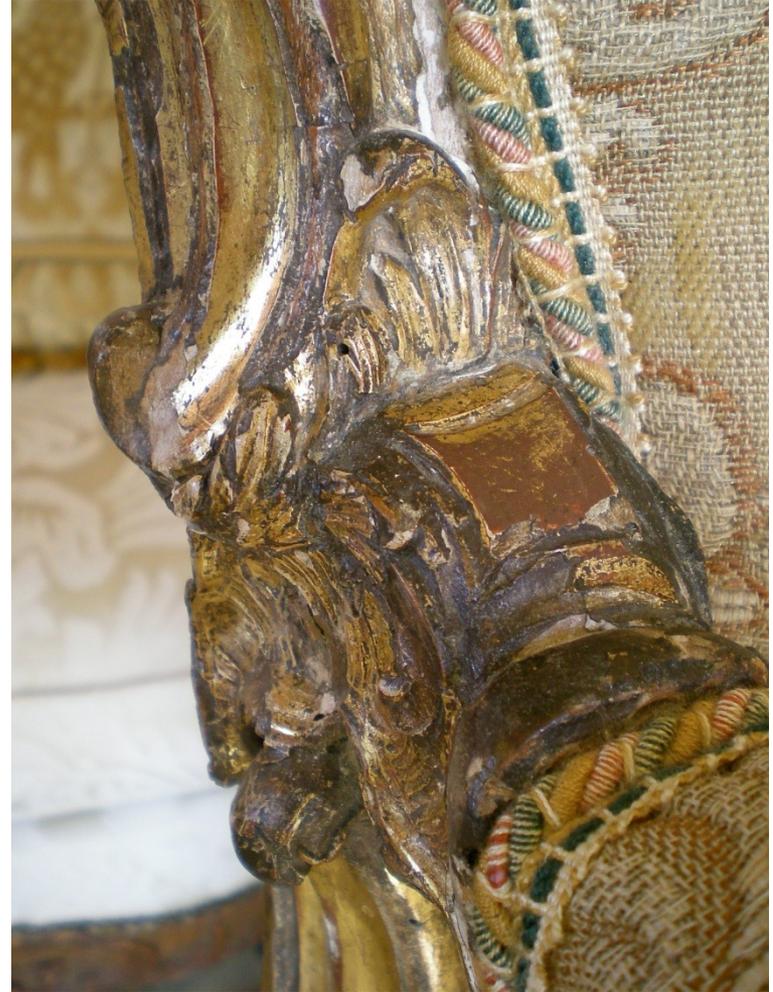
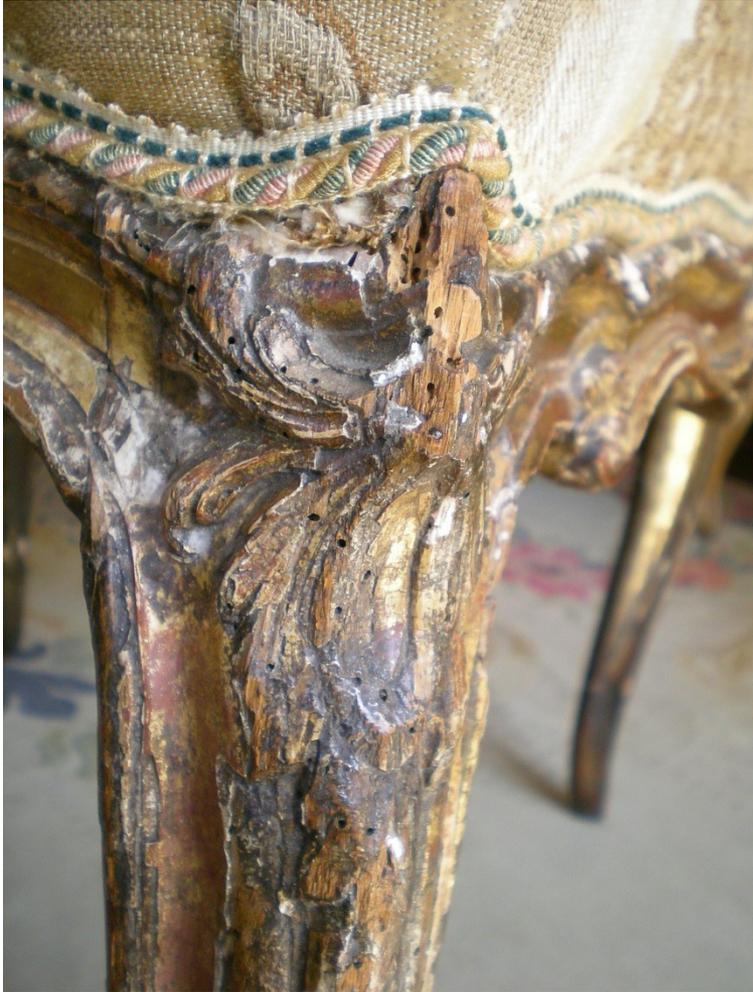


Rear foot : the absence of the leaf motif made it possible to carve the complement in wood



The legs terminations completed with a scroll and a leaf according to contemporary models

The conservation and complementation of the gilding



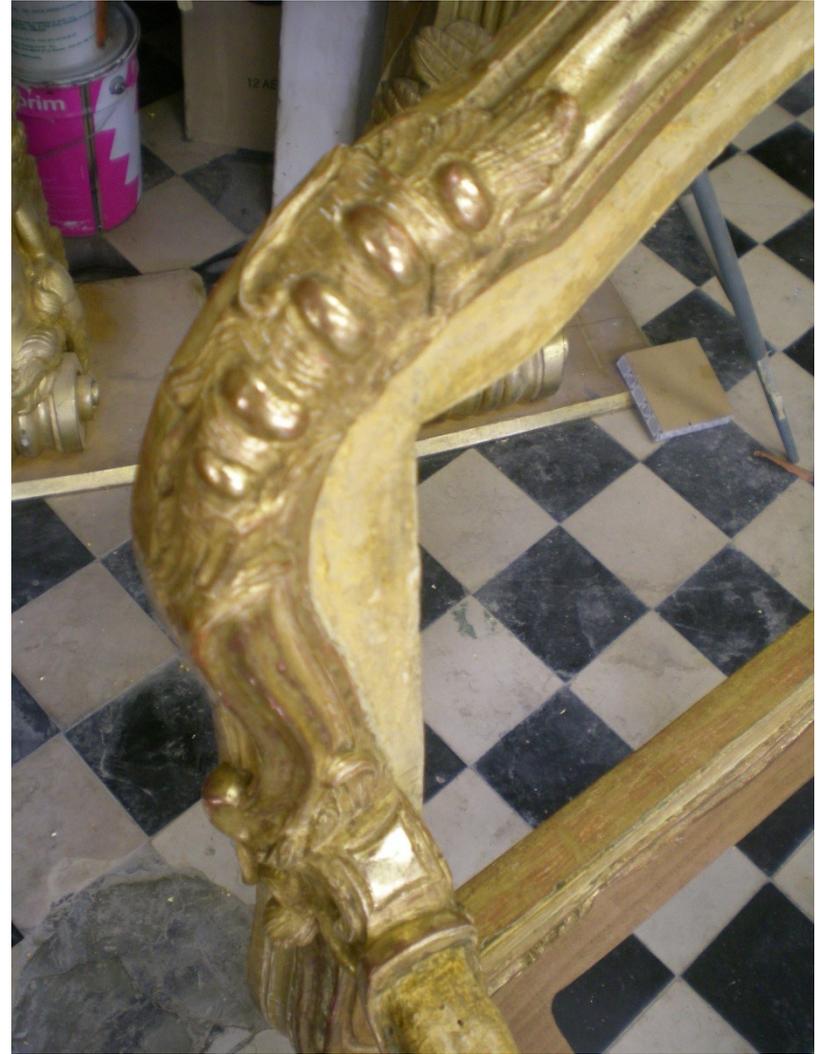
Examples of the fragmentary state of the gilding

It reveals the original quality and repairs in the gesso, important is that not all the ornaments are carved in wood but some of them are defined in the gesso.



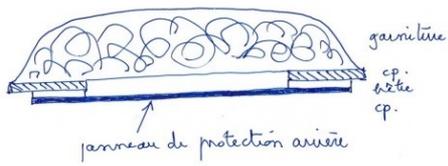
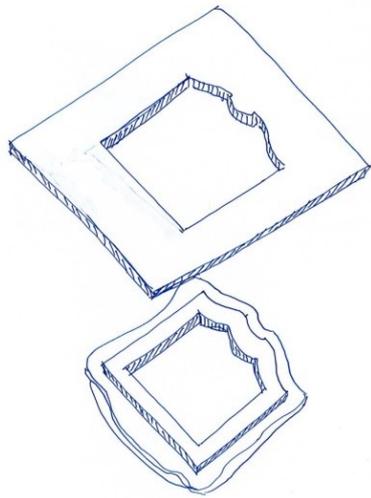
The gilding had been kept only very partially. To be able to display the armchair, it was decided to complete the gilding in a traditional way, keeping the original remnants and to intergrate them in the new gesso





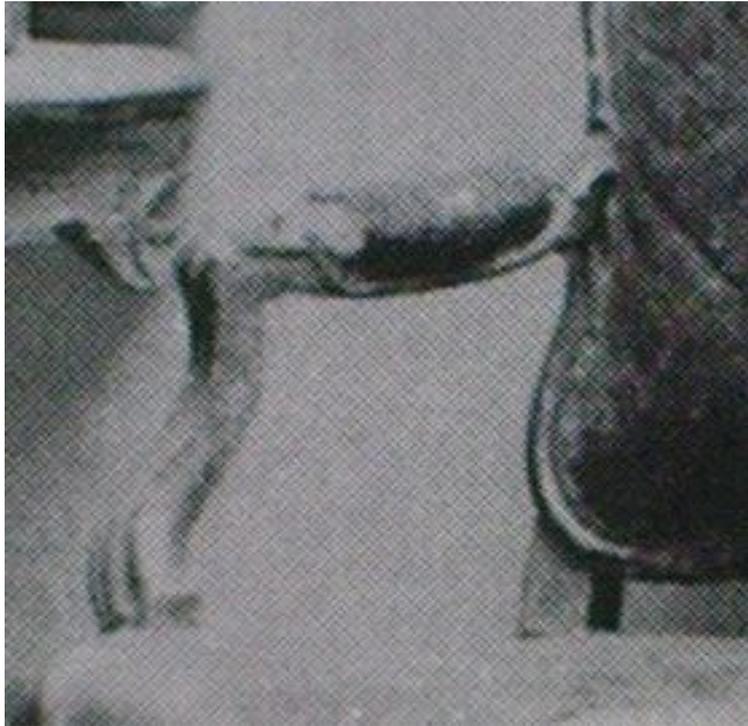
The process follows the traditional phases





Two frames have been adapted in the structure of the seat rail and the back rail





This image of the armchair in the Hoentschel Gallery in Paris reveals the original upholstery and leather cover



The new upholstery is nailed on the new frames and not on the original wood





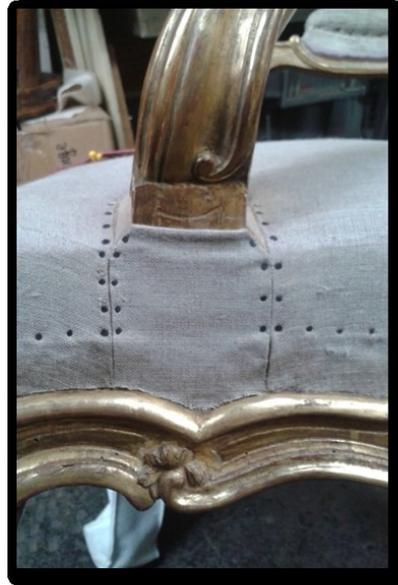
The choice of the leather maroquin





Armchair with original leather cover
Paris, circa 1710-1720
Musée du Louvre

Fauteuil du Dauphin

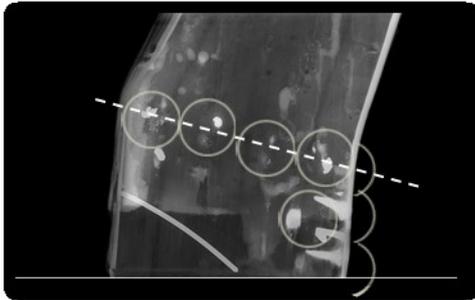


Radiographie



Exemple rencontré

The analysis of the nails traces to determine the original position of gilded nails



Radiographic

