A SPACE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

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The French design style of 'Rococo' is recognizable by its elaborate ornamentalism often marked by the use of scrolls and motifs, and there are few better period rooms in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that better exemplify this style of decoration than the *Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon* (Accession No. 44.128) by Pierre-Adrien Pâris.[1] While the museum has myriads of far larger European period rooms just steps away, I was attracted to this boudoir as a topic of research after learning about its interesting history and its ability to serve as a mechanism for understanding the gradual shift towards comfort in eighteenth century France.

Despite its rather modest size at just 9 ft. 3 ½ in. by 15 ft. 5 ½ in. by 14 ft. 3 ½ in. as well as its rather covert location within Gallery 546 of the European Sculpture and Decorative Arts department, the shining gilded moldings and abundant 'sunlight' of the boudoir (as seen in Figure 1) beckon viewers to approach and spend time examining the space.[2] This is rather reflective of the original intention for the space, which, according to research, is a space in which extensive amounts of time can be spent, whether that time is spent self-reflecting, escaping the burdens of public life, or entertaining private guests.

In order to understand the use and design of this specific boudoir, it is important to give the space context by examining the conception of boudoirs and the manner in which their purpose has evolved. In Section 1 of *Designing the French Interior: The Modern Home and Mass Media*, Georgina Downey and Mark Taylor state, "Named for a mood and purposed for retreat or solitude, the boudoir as a category of modern domestic space was one of the first to be

[1] "Rococo," *Oxford Dictionary of Art,* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rococo
[2] "Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199496

set aside purely for the individual, rather than for socializing-." [3] When boudoirs were first introduced, then called *médienne* (a French term for 'taking a midday siesta'), they were answering to a need for a quiet place for the men and women often featured in French novels to sulk, hence the name change to boudoir, adapted from *bouder,* or to pout.[4] As described in *The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual- and the Modern Home Began,* Joan DeJean determines that the space was first seen in the 1715 architectural plans for a bedroom suite in the Hôtel d'Humières, where it was marketed a space "reserved for the inner life."[5] As a reflection of their initial purpose of privacy, ease, and relaxation, early boudoirs featured understated decor, such as the simple flowered cotton fabric of the boudoir of Madame la Duchesse of Bourbon (1673-1743) or the pastel shades of Emilie du Châtelet's boudoir (1706-1749).[6] The very meaning and use of boudoirs was changed with the space of Marie-Anne Deschamps, a brothel-worker turned dancer known for a series of wealthy lovers. Located in a Parisian mansion near The Louvre, her pink and silver mirror-plastered boudoir became notorious as being constructed from "the wages of debauchery and prostitution" following its completion in November 1757.[7] DeJean states that this very room "succeeded in transforming one of the original small spaces reserved for private life into a blatant advertisement for exhibtionistic sexual display."[8] Despite its initial infamy and backlash, the boudoir of Deschamps launched a lifestyle revolution that transformed once-private boudoirs into spaces of seduction, which is in

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[3] Georgina Downey and Mark Taylor, "Impolite Readings and Erotic Interiors in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Designing the French Interior: The Modern Home and Mass Media*, ed. Anca I. Lasc (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 20.
[4] Joan DeJean, *The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual- and the Modern Home Began*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), 179.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, 180.
[7] Ibid, 181.
[8] Ibid, 182.

no small part the reason for the excessive display of this particular boudoir, originally located next to the bedchamber in the Parisian townhouse of Louis-Marie-Augustin, fifth duc d'Aumont.

The Duke's residence itself has an extensive history as it was located on what was formerly the royal property (seen in Figure 2) of King of France Louis XV (1710-1774) that was transitioned into a public square in 1748 after the King needed a location in which to display an oversized bronze statue that was offered to him by the city of Paris.[9] Designed by royal architect Jacques Ange Gabriel (1698-1782), the Neoclassical structure was left as a facade to allow for customizable construction based on the needs of the land developers.[10] In 1775, builder and entrepreneur Louis-François Trouard (1729–1794) purchased the largest lot, on which he built the townhome that housed this boudoir.[11] In 1776, the unfinished home was rented to the Duke, who was always one to stay on top of trends as he often moved in search of increasingly popular addresses.[12] It is rather fitting that the Duke ended up living on land once owned by Louis XV as he spent much of his post-military life as gentleman of the bedchamber, or close attendant, to the King, who was also a childhood friend.[13]

As gentleman of the bedchamber, the Duke was tasked with "managing widespread estates, and … forming a collection of French decorative arts, mainly contemporary, considered unique at the time."[14] Because he was constantly surrounded with fine furnishings and pieces of

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[9] James Parker, "The Crillon Room," in *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 118.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon."
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

art, it is not surprising that the Duke would want only the best in decoration for his own abode, for which he appointed architect Pierre-Adrien Pâris (1745-1819) to finish the shell of a home.[15] As quoted in *The Rococo Interior* by Kelly Scott, French writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740-1840) describes the lengthy process of furnishing homes, as evident in the line, "Completely decorating the inside [of a home] takes three times the time employed by the bricklayers on the construction; antechambers, staircases, corridors, *commodités*, all of it is never ending."[16] It is clear that homes in the style of Rococo are not quick in composition, so the Duke likely put a lot of thought into whom to use as the architect of his interiors. Pâris, son of the royal architect of the Prince-Bishop of Basel and pupil of French architect Louis-François Trouard; spent an extensive amount of time working on this boudoir in particular, work that included a research trip to Rome that was partially funded by the Duke. [17] [18] It was in Rome that Pâris discovered the sixteenth-century 'grotesque' Vatican wall paintings by Raphael (1483-1520), an admired painter during the Italian Renaissance.[19]

Drawing inspiration from the decorative work of Raphael, Pâris had an unknown artist paint the many faceted walls that form the small polyhedral boudoir in the home of the Duke. During this time period, wall painting was seen as both a necessary and luxury measure, as it offered an beautiful way to preserve and increase the durability of structures while covering materials that might be less than attractive.[20] The elaborate paintings of this boudoir go above and beyond merely protecting the oak walls, which was likely a result of the close

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[15] "Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon."
[16] Quoted in Kelly Scott, *The Rococo Interior* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 14.
[17] "Pierre-Adrien Pâris," *The J. Paul Getty Museum,* http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/537/pierre-adrien-pris-french-1745-1819/
[18] "Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon."
[19] Parker, 119.
[20] Scott, 21.

communication between woodworkers and house-painters that was necessary in order to achieve successful boiserie.[21] The walls are adorned with garlands, scrolls, and small animals of subdued yet rich pinks, blues, yellows, and greens; in contrast to the walls and doors of a light, minty blue base, a close-up photograph of which is seen in Figure 3. The delicately-painted animals, such as mice and snails, balance on scrolls of acanthus, a plant commonly used in foliage ornamentation. There are symbols painted throughout the room, including a 'sun face' above the rear door of the room. This was a widely-used representation of Louis XV, known as 'The Sun God'; the use of which here is perhaps in homage to the former owner of the land and advisee of the Duke. During this period, and arguably continuing throughout the history of decoration, colors rapidly went in and out of favor which resulted in the need for consultants with 'colourmen' who advised house-painters and clients on favorable colors for specific rooms, in this case, the minty blue base color.[22] Framing the wall-paintings is a series of gilded oak moldings that form concentrically-arranged rectangles that recur from wall to wall. In the innermost rectangle of many of these panels, the corners are inverted to make room for gilded rosette decorations that were commonly used during the Rococo period. As described in *The Rococo Interior,* "various woods were used for such panelling- chestnut, lime, pine … or a combination of several- but for high-cost schemes oak was preferred-."[23] The use of costly, luxurious oak, paired with the placement of these detailed wall paintings in this particular room rather than a pass-through space such as a hall, enforces the idea that boudoirs were spaces in which extensive time could be spent.

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 14.

In addition to self reflection, reflection of the literal sense occurred in the space as well, which was a result of four mirrored wall panels angled with the intent of reflecting the painted panels. As described in *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century,* a catalog highlighting a 2004 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit of the same name, "While many materials were used for inserts to boiserie in the eighteenth century, such as velvets, brocades, and tapestries, mirrors held a unique position because of their ability to augment a room's spatial, ornamental, and luminescent arrangement."[24]

The wall paintings aren't the only things reflected by the mirrors, as the room is filled with natural light as the result of a set of glass-laden glass doors. The doors, framed by a set of carefully-draped ribbed silk *gros de Tours* curtains, would have opened up onto a balcony facing the courtyard that housed the bronze statue of Louis XV that prompted the development of this very townhome.[25] The curtains, of a light blue color that blends the walls and their respective paintings, are held back with a pair of coordinating gold swags and medallions that reference the gilded moldings. When the curtains were open, natural light streamed in and allowed the metallic molding to shine, however it may not have been as enhancing of the wall paintings. According to painter Girard, "Decorative painting is easily prone to losing its freshness, and if neglected, it soon deteriorates; sun, fresh-air, and damp together conspire to destroy such works-."[26] While a beautiful and softening addition to the otherwise hard lines of the polyhedral boudoir, the curtains serve the important purpose of protecting the walls from the harsh sun.

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[24] Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda, "The Late Supper: The Memento: Crillon Room (Paris ca. 1777-80)," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 109.
[25] Parker, 120.
[26] Scott, 21.

Like the curtains, the furniture of the room also serves a purpose, not only within the space but also as an apparatus to allow for better understanding of the shift towards comfort within eighteenth century France. The idea of comfort was not all that common in France prior to the introduction of the boudoir, which became a space in which architects could ease clients into the idea of comfort and function meeting form before introducing it to more-populated spaces of the home, such as a salon. As described in *The Age of Comfort*, "The [boudoir] was more relaxed and private than other rooms, the place where you went to get away from everything- even the already intimate and stress-free socializing in private and semiprivate rooms."[27] The boudoir of the Duke was no exception to this, as evident in the furniture carefully curated by Pâris. An inventory list drafted after the Duke's death in 1782 states that the room housed four stools, two armchairs, and a sofa, all of which were upholstered in the same blue moiré silk as the curtains.[28] By swathing all of the furniture in a fabric nearly identical in color to the walls, the focus was cleverly placed on the detailed wall-paintings framed in gilt. Each of the four stools was placed under the four mirrored wall panels while the sofa resided in the right-wall niche that faced the balcony doors on the opposite wall. While little information on the original furniture exists, inferences can be made based on the furniture of the Rococo period. Despite the fact that there are many different seating option within this space, the sofa is of particular note as it was of relatively new invention, and, according to DeJean, allowed "even the grandest lady [to become] carefree and at ease."[29] As described in *The History of Interior Design* by John Pile, the upholstered sofa was "developed in response to a new concern for informality and comfort"[30],

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[27] DeJean, 180.
[28] "Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon."
[29] DeJean, 115.
[30] John Pile, "Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo in France and Spain," in *The History of Interior Design* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 181.

which is evident in its versatility. Sofas provide the options of sitting or lying, and are therefore an ideal space-saving solution for a room like a boudoir that might not have space for both a Bergère armchair and a Chaise longue. Because the purpose of boudoirs changed over time, and likely varied from home to home, versatility in seating was common and interior architects increasingly found this versatility through the use of sofas.

In *The Age of Comfort,* it is stated, "The boudoir was thus in a sense the ultimate interior room, a place where architecture, furniture, and interior decoration made absolute privacy absolutely comfortable."[31] All of these elements came together in the boudoir of the Duke, of which the decorative elements, including the walls and furnishings, require time spent in, if not self-reflecting or entertaining; appreciation for the space.

[31] Ibid, 178.

Identification Label:

Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon

French, Paris, ca. 1777-1780

[Arabesques] are an inexhaustible source of ways to decorate in a beautiful style the interior and exterior of modern buildings, furniture, and even clothes.
— Charles-Louis Clérisseau, 1779

Delightful arabesques painted in pastel colors on a soft blue ground form the chief decoration of this paneling, which once lined the walls of a boudoir located next to the bedroom of Louis-Marie-Augustin, fifth duc d'Aumont (1709–1782), one of the four First Gentlemen of the King's Bedchamber. In 1776 he rented an unfinished town house that had been constructed for the builder and entrepreneur Louis-François Trouard (1729–1794). It was one of several private mansions erected behind a facade built in a grand Neoclassical style by Jacques-Ange Gabriel (1698–1782) on the place Louis XV, now the place de la Concorde.

A man of taste as well as a significant art collector, the duc d'Aumont engaged the architect Pierre-Adrien Pâris to design the interior decoration for his new abode. Having studied in Rome, partly at the duke's expense, Pâris would have been familiar with the early sixteenth-century decorative wall paintings executed by Raphael and his assistants in the Vatican loggias. Raphael's work clearly served as inspiration for the embellishment of the Museum's paneling, as it shows similar charming and lighthearted motifs, such as small animals balancing on garlands and rolling acanthus scrolls. The exterior windows of this intimate polyhedral boudoir, which was painted by an unknown artist, gave access to a balcony with views toward the rue des Champs-Élysées (now the rue Boissy d'Anglas). Set into the wall paneling are four mirrors angled to reflect the arabesque decoration. (The mirror inside the niche is a replacement for the original pane of clear glass that allowed light to shine into the stairwell behind the room.) According to the 1782 inventory drawn up after the duke's death, the boudoir was furnished with four stools, two armchairs, and an ottomane, or comfortable sofa, described as having three backs. Each stool was most likely placed under one of the mirrors, and the ottomane, complete with cushions, pillows, and bolsters, must have stood inside the niche. All the seat furniture was upholstered in blue moiré silk, the same color as that of the gros de Tours (ribbed silk) curtains. Although most of the furnishings and collections of the duc d'Aumont were sold at a celebrated auction that took place in the house in 1782, the woodwork of this room stayed in the building. The hôtel was acquired six years later by François-Félix-Dorothée des Balbes de Berton, comte de Crillon (1748–1820), and it remained the property of his descendants until the early twentieth century.

Bibliography

Bolton, Andrew and Harold Koda. "The Late Supper: The Memento: Crillon Room (Paris, ca. 1777-80)." In *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century*, 109-116. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. (accessed April 29, 2017).

This book, a catalog highlighting the 2004 *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century* exhibit at The Metropolitan Museum of Art was useful in that it included the boudoir that was under study. By placing period clothing and accessories on human forms within the spaces, the museum not only gave context of historical time period, but also the manner in which the rooms were used.

"Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art.* http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199496 (accessed April 6, 2017).

As the official website for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, this source was extremely reliable and helpful in that it was specific in its description of this space. The source provided information on the space analyzed in this report and included links to other helpful sources, including *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century.*

DeJean, Joan. *The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual- And the Modern Home Began.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2009. (accessed April 20, 2017).

While this source does not reference the boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon specifically, it discusses boudoirs in the time period from the slightly different lense of comfort, which is beneficial because that is one of the aspects that this report addresses. The book compares and contrasts this space with other types and examples of spaces in eighteenth-century France while also highlighting types of furniture, some of which was used in the boudoir.

Downey, Georgina and Mark Taylor. "Impolite Reading and Erotic Interiors in Eighteenth Century France." In *Designing the French Interior: The Modern Home and Mass Media*, ch. 1, 13-28, ed. Anca I. Lasc. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. https://books.google.com/books?id=03FqCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA23&lpg=PA23&dq=boudoir+french+purpose&source=bl&ots=Vj3F6soJOC&sig=gqLyAawVZOmTQ-ivVfDUJ5Ohens&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjWxIKAwcrTAhUHbSYKHV3kDCQQ6AEIggEwFQ#v=onepage&q=boudoir%20panels&f=false (accessed April 29, 2017).

While, again, this book does not address the boudoir under study in this report, it approaches eighteenth-century French rooms with a lense from which institutions like, and publications of, The Metropolitan Museum of Art would shy away. This provides a unique perspective that allowed me to complete well-rounded, multifaceted research.

Parker, James. "The Crillon Room." In *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* 117-125. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996. (accessed April 6, 2017).

This book not only addresses the boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon, but it puts the space in a context with other period rooms from Europe and elsewhere. This source, published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, provided more information on the boudoir than any other source, which was extremely beneficial to my research.

"Pierre-Adrien Pâris." *The J. Paul Getty Museum.* http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/537/pierre-adrien-pris-french-1745-1819/ (accessed April 29, 2017).

While the other sources briefly mention the architect and designer behind the boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon, Pierre-Adrien Pâris, this source provided information on him that was not blurred by the lense of one particular project.

Pile, John. "Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo in France and Spain" in *The History of Interior Design,* 165-188. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000. (accessed May 1, 2017).

Providing a chronological overview on the Rococo period within France, this source allowed me to garner information on the period in the order in which it occurred. This was helpful as it made it possible to see the progression of certain decorative elements, including seating, which was relevant to the comfort aspect.

"Rococo." *The Oxford Dictionary of Art.* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rococo (accessed May 2, 2017).

This source provided a concise and basic definition of the artistic period of Rococo that was beneficial in identifying some of the key decorative elements of the style.

Scott, Katie. *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. (accessed May 1, 2017).

Like some of the other sources, this book focuses on the progression of decor in eighteenth century France, however this source is unique in that its entire focus is on the Rococo period, rather than just a chapter or section. Rather than concentrating on furnishings, there are detailed accounts of the walls and shells that make up spaces, which is helpful as the shell is all that 'remains' in this boudoir.

Figures

Figure 1

The boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon.
Pierre-Adrien Pâris, *Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon,* 1777-1780, oak, painted and gilded, 9 ft. 3 ½ in. by 15 ft. 5 ½ in. by 14 ft. 3 ½ in., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199496

Figure 2

A view of 'Place Louis XV' (later 'Place de la Concorde') facades, the extreme left of which housed the townhouse of Louis-Marie-Augustin, fifth duc d'Aumont.
Alexandre Jean Nöel, *Untitled,* 1780, in James Parker, et al., *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996). 177.

Figure 3

Pierre-Adrien Pâris, *Boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon,* 1777-1780, oak, painted and gilded, 9 ft. 3 ½ in. by 15 ft. 5 ½ in. by 14 ft. 3 ½ in., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199496