

The Gilded Interior: French Style and American Renaissance

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ABSTRACT

In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, New York was seized by a passion for things French in interior decoration. The influx of French eighteenth-century decorative arts from London and Paris exerted a powerful influence over the imaginations of a new millionaire class, while the emergence of the professional dealer-decorator established channels for the incorporation of these materials into the luxury residence. While these interiors were developed in collaboration with leading US architects such as Richard Morris Hunt and George B. Post, they also posed a subtle challenge to the discourse of intellectualism developed on architects' behalf. Governed by issues of taste and commerce as well as by artistic judgement, these French interiors presented a compelling vision of aristocratic stature that was at once in keeping, and in conflict, with the aspirations of an American Renaissance. This article considers the role of eighteenth-century French-style interiors in the articulation of a 'civilised' architectural tradition in the United States during the so-called Gilded Age. Focusing on the private mansion, it reconsiders the notion of the American Renaissance as a principally academic movement by calling attention to the ways in which it also responded to the requirements of the elite class as well as the commercial marketplace.

In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, eighteenth-century French decorative arts and interiors played an important role in the stylistic assertion of progress and civilisation in the United States, particularly in New York. From the 1880s, the introduction of high-style 'Louis' rooms helped to distinguish the private mansion as an elite domestic type, promoting a noble privacy that, in conjunction with a dignified public, was construed as a hallmark of the prosperous empire.¹ In 1897, *The Decoration of Houses* by Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr celebrated a maturation of US architectural practice in which the handling of the interior was consummated with that of the exterior, placing US architects and decorators on a par with great eighteenth-century predecessors such as Jacques-François Blondel (1705–74) and Charles-Étienne Briseux (1680–1754).² And by 1910, following the acquisition of the Hoentschel collection for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the nation boasted its first public gallery with holdings in French decorative arts and interiors to rival European counterparts such as the Louvre in Paris and the Wallace Collection in London.³ Despite their significance, however, French-style interiors remain on the margins of a scholarly discussion that prioritises architect over patron, exterior over interior, public over private and spatial over decorative.⁴

This article examines the fashion for and fabrication of American Gilded Age mansions in the 'styles' of France during the *ancien régime*. Focusing on New York City and its summer satellite of Newport, Rhode Island, it endeavours to enrich the discussion of US architectural history by focusing on the interior decorator and the interior occupant. Like the great opera houses and railway stations, museums and clubhouses that rose alongside them, elegantly appointed private residences were, as Sven Beckert has observed, part of the civilisation of the City of New York at the end of the nineteenth century — part of the means by which the new metropolis competed with European capitals for cultural stature and hegemony.⁵ They were also part of the means by which its wealthiest citizens negotiated a social status akin to the most powerful aristocratic circles of Europe: through the creation of new architectural spaces, new social spaces were articulated and defined.⁶ While these residences relied on the historical expertise of US architects such as Richard Morris Hunt (1827–95) and George B. Post (1837–1913), they were also the work of international decorators and dealers such as Jules Allard (1832–1907) and Joseph Duveen (1869–1939), and were influenced by the personal tastes and social aspirations of millionaire clients such as Alva Vanderbilt Belmont and J. Pierpont Morgan, both of whom were instrumental in the establishment of a US market for eighteenth-century France.

Barriers to studying the so-called Louis styles in the context of US architectural history, and the tendency towards an architect-driven history of Gilded Age mansions more broadly, can be traced in the language used to describe them. As Richard Guy Wilson observed in his landmark essay of 1983, the term American Renaissance first appeared around 1880 as a laudatory reference that singled out a moment of prosperity and ingenuity when artistic production, from painting and sculpture to furniture and architecture, flourished as a 'unified' intellectual and aesthetic pursuit.⁷ From the outset, this movement, much like the Renaissance itself, enjoyed the critical prestige of a deeply rooted academicism — as is suggested by the positions of its leading figures. Among those cited by Wilson are William C. Brownell (1851–1928), the distinguished art and literary critic and member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Kenyon Cox (1856–1919), the classical muralist and former pupil of Jean-Léon Gérôme; Clarence Cook (1828–1900), the Harvard graduate and author of the 1878 *House Beautiful*; and George William Sheldon (1843–1914), the author and photographer whose *Artistic Country Seats* of 1886–87 would be refashioned as *American Country Houses of the Gilded Age* by Arnold Lewis in 1982.⁸ The acceptably decorative in the American Renaissance, canonised in US scholarship of the 1980s, was primarily that which pertained to the architectural: the grand-scale mural paintings, stained-glass windows and major sculptural programmes executed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, John La Farge and Karl Bitter, whose names continue to define the movement today.⁹

The Gilded Age, a satirical term coined by the 1873 novel of that name by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, has come to refer to the ultra-wealthy few who sparkled atop a divided society while masking their origins in labour and their roles in the suppression of the labouring classes.¹⁰ The term has also taken in the elaborate and exclusive interiors in which these elite few dwelt, and the gilt-wood and ormolu furnishings that characterised those interiors, many of which were imported from aristocratic houses in France and therefore offended nationalist sentiment as well as republican manners.¹¹ Contrasted

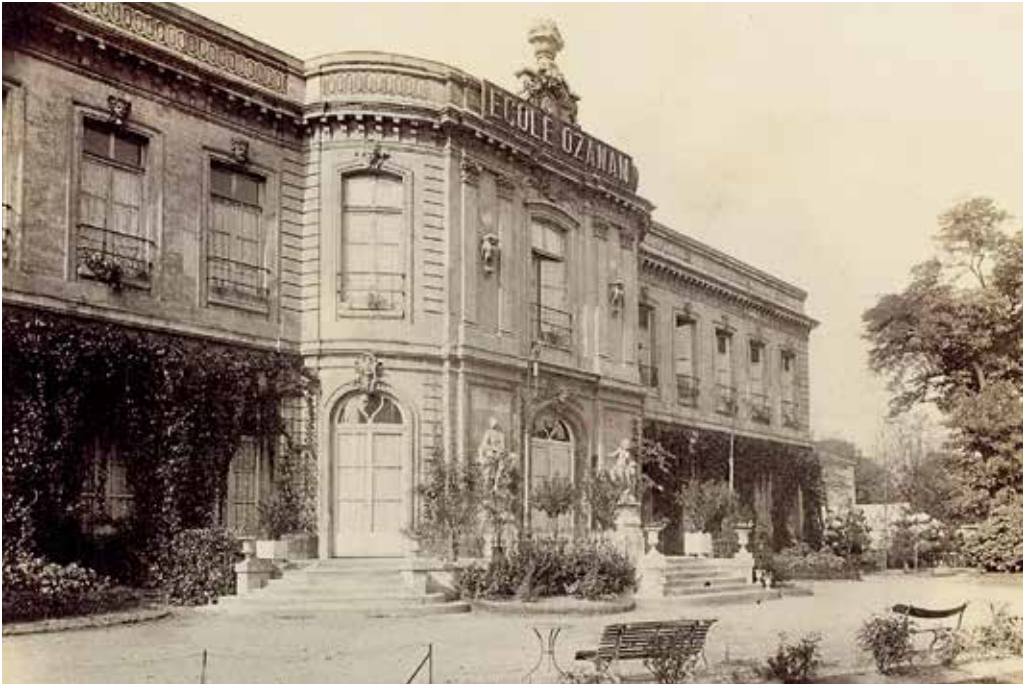


Fig. 1. *Château d'Asnières, Asnières-sur-Seine, Île-de-France, garden facade, 1750–52, photograph by Eugène Atget, 1901 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)*

with the artistry of the exterior — the purview of the scholar-craftsman — these interiors were denigrated as the stuff of the predacious consumer, the products of a commodity aesthetic and, worse, a commodity appetite.¹² Gilding, as a surface treatment applied to base material, thus became a euphemism for deceptive ostentation: while the golden was grand, genius, monumental, the gilded was ephemeral, imitative and essentially ignoble.¹³

Partly explained by such biases of discourse, the absence of an inclusive interiors study may also be seen as the result of disciplinary trajectories that have placed *meubles* (furniture) and *immeubles* (buildings) in separate categories of research and significance. From the 1920s, when the majority of urban mansions were torn down to make way for taller buildings, extant mansions entered into early conversations about the architectural preservation of New York, largely in terms of their exterior contributions to a City Beautiful. At the same time, the contents of mansions — which included anything that could effectively be removed, from large ceiling paintings to suites of carved boiserie — were taken out and dispersed: either discarded, transferred to other residences, sold and incorporated into new building types or, most pertinently in the case of eighteenth-century French pieces, bequeathed to major museums. In the latter context, Beauvais tapestries, enamelled vases, upholstered seat furniture and other relics of 'Frenchness' in the interior were largely divorced from their nineteenth/twentieth-century settings and used instead to retrieve an eighteenth century that operated, in the wake of Wilhelm von Bode, William (Wilhelm) R. Valentiner and Fiske Kimball, under the formal 'sign of the rococo'.¹⁴

Transformed from mere decoration into academically sanctioned ‘decorative art’, these objects and materials have only recently begun to come under scrutiny as parts of a taste and trade particular to the social, institutional and market conditions of the 1880s to early 1900s.¹⁵ The development of an interior decorating profession, the influence of US (as well as French and British) legislation and the rise of the dealer-decorator as tastemaker have garnered particular attention in recent scholarship and helped to complete the picture of an ‘American’ architecture made up in large part of European things.¹⁶ More research is needed, however, to assess the impact of these things on built environments and social milieux. Bringing together architectural, social and collections research, this article aims to expand the discussion of the significance of ‘Louis’ styles by exploring the ways in which they variously fitted into, and flouted, the ideal of an architectural history proposed by American Renaissance practitioners at the time and by scholars since. Drawing on three themes central to its academic conception — unity, continuity and creativity — this study considers ‘American Renaissance’ from the perspective of Franco-centric mansions and interior decorating practices, to reflect on both its usefulness and its limitations as a metaphor for the artistic and cultural production of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the US.

IN PURSUIT OF UNITY

Unity was a central theme of the American Renaissance outlined by Wilson and others.¹⁷ In addition to drawing on Renaissance forms, US artists and architects demonstrated affinity with Renaissance practitioners through professional collaboration that prioritised a cohesive aesthetic, where cohesion was understood as the product of both formal consideration and intellectual flair. In the context of the eighteenth-century French styles, the achievement of unity is often attributed to the decades after the turn of the twentieth century, during which the neoclassical Trianon superseded the Renaissance chateau as the coveted domestic type and what was previously treated as a discrete interior taste became the dominant architectural idiom. In her study of the patron-collectors Henry and Arabella Huntington, Shelley M. Bennett identified the period 1915–25 as the culmination of ‘the French eighteenth-century style’ in America, ‘where it became one of the leading expressions of interior decoration and furnishings’.¹⁸ In her recent volume on Duveen Brothers, Charlotte Vignon emphasised the years 1910–39 (roughly encompassing Joseph Duveen’s directorship at the firm) as those in which a preference for ‘homogenous’ spaces properly emerged and a ‘quest for stylistic unity’ was undertaken in earnest.¹⁹ Born out of the antiques dealings of the brothers Joel Joseph Duveen (1843–1908) and Henri H. Duveen (d. 1877) in the 1860s and 1870s, the firm Duveen Brothers was established in 1890 as a partnership between Joel Duveen and his younger brother Henry Joseph Duveen (1854–1919), with galleries in London, New York and Paris.²⁰ Following Joel Duveen’s death, management passed to his son, Joseph Duveen (first Baron Duveen, 1869–1939), whose integration of art sales and interior decorating services significantly advanced the cause of stylistic homogeneity.²¹ While such homogeneity seemed to attest to a closer study of the ‘best models’ on the part of US architects, encouraged by Wharton and Codman, it was also the product — as both Bennett and Vignon demonstrate — of an increasingly internationalised contemporary



Fig. 2. *The Elms*, Newport, Rhode Island, garden facade, Horace Trumbauer, 1899–1901, photograph by Historic American Buildings Survey, after 1933 (Library of Congress, Washington DC)

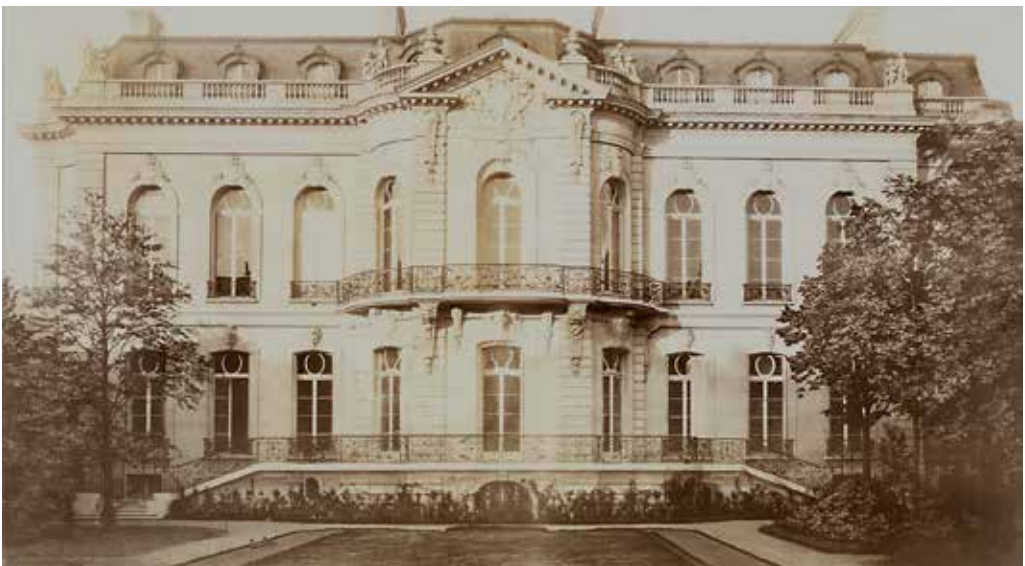


Fig. 3. *Hôtel Porgès*, Paris, garden facade, Ernest Sanson, begun 1892 (Archives Nationales, Paris)



Fig. 4. *The Breakers*, Newport, Rhode Island, Richard Morris Hunt and Jules Allard, 1893–95, Ladies' Reception Room, photograph, c. 1970–90 (Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, RI)

trade and relied on a network of architects, dealers, decorators and patrons, working in particular in New York, Paris and London.²²

The importance of a professional network is evident in the work of US architects such as Horace Trumbauer (1868–1938), whose projects in New York and Newport have been credited with ushering in a reign of pure French classicism in residential building.²³ At *The Elms*, the Newport residence of Edward J. Berwind built between 1899 and 1901, Trumbauer created what is generally regarded as a faithful recreation of the eighteenth-century *Château d'Asnières* (1750–52) and one of the fullest expressions in the US of an eighteenth-century *maison de plaisance*.²⁴ While Trumbauer drew inspiration directly from the structure of *Asnières*, he was also influenced by the *hôtel particulier* designed by Ernest Sanson (1836–1918) for the diamond magnate Jules Porgès on the Avenue Montaigne in Paris, begun in 1892 and based on the same model (Fig. 1).²⁵ Trained at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, Sanson established a reputation as the architect to the French capital's *haute bourgeoisie* at the end of the nineteenth century, although his earlier clients also included Auguste Louis Albéric, prince of Arenberg, and the British baronet and art collector Sir Richard Wallace.²⁶ Notably, the central bay of the garden facade of *The*

Elms, the principal homage to Asnières, featured a triangular pediment similar to that of the Hôtel Porgès (Figs 2 and 3).²⁷

In 1906–08, Trumbauer collaborated with Sanson on the Perry Belmont residence in Washington DC, part of a growing trend for US architects to act as supervisors of the work of French architects in America.²⁸ Around 1912, he supervised the construction of the new Duveen gallery at 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, designed by the French architect René Sergent (1865–1927), who was likewise responsible for Duveen's *petit palais* on the Place Vendôme in Paris.²⁹ Sergent, who had worked under Sanson from around 1884 to 1899, was responsible for the *hôtels* of the brothers Maurice and Rodolphe Kann, which in 1907 became the setting of one of Duveen's most spectacular sales of eighteenth-century French works, and also for the Palais Rose, the Parisian residence of Marquis 'Boni' de Castellane (and Anna Gould), from whom J. P. Morgan purchased, among other things, two tapestries from François Boucher's *Noble Pastorale* series, subsequently acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Cleveland Museum of Art.³⁰ Morgan, whose Renaissance-style library on New York's Madison Avenue designed by Charles McKim (1847–1909) has long been held to demonstrate a preference for medieval and Renaissance works, is one of the figures being reinterpreted in the light of new research into the collection and display of French antiques.³¹

While exchange among architects internationally fostered a synthesis in architectural style, unity in the sense of a preference for more complete rooms and homogeneous period styles was also a product of the commercial strategy of the interior decorator. As a growing influence in the residential design and construction process, the internationally based dealer-decorator was particularly well positioned to profit from the exodus of materials from aristocratic estates during the 1870s, 1880s and onwards. Advertising these to American buyers as valuable 'antiques', trusted agents such as Allard and Duveen redefined the traditional market associations between the luxury and the new, paving the way for a 'period' room that was composed of historical items as well as historical motifs.³² Allard, who oversaw much of the design at The Elms, was also involved first-hand in the dispersal of the decorative items from Asnières.³³ Having established a branch office in New York in 1885, Allard rose quickly to prominence as the favourite of the Vanderbilt family in particular. While his commissions during the 1880s were typically limited to a single room or a series of rooms, by the end of the century his company Allard and Sons was executing formal interiors practically in their entirety, working in collaboration with Duveen as well as Carlhian & Beaumetz (1867–1905; Carlhian et Cie, 1905–75) and Lucien Alavoine (opened 1893), among others.³⁴

In 1897, Allard sold the panelling of the *grand salon* from Asnières to the American expatriate William Waldorf Astor, first Viscount Astor, for whom he reinstalled it as part of the 'rococo' dining room at Cliveden in Buckinghamshire.³⁵ Some three years earlier Allard had overseen the installation of the first 'complete' eighteenth-century room in an American residence, at Cornelius Vanderbilt II's The Breakers (1893–95), located a short distance from The Elms.³⁶ Taken from the Hôtel Mégret de Sérilly, then occupied by the Parisian cabinetmaker Henry Dasson (1825–1896), the neoclassical room was the only one of its kind among the main reception rooms in a predominantly Italianate residence (Fig. 4).³⁷ As John Harris suggests, it was Allard who influenced the decision to include the room at The Breakers, and it was likewise Allard who set much of the tone



Fig. 5. *The Breakers, Newport, Rhode Island, Richard Morris Hunt and Jules Allard, 1893–95, Breakfast Room, photograph by Historic American Buildings Survey, after 1933 (Library of Congress, Washington DC)*



Fig. 6. *The Elms*, Newport, Rhode Island, Horace Trumbauer and Jules Allard, 1899–1901, Ballroom, photograph by Historic American Buildings Survey, after 1933 (Library of Congress, Washington DC)

at *The Elms*.³⁸ However, whereas the *Breakers* commission included only two French-style rooms (the breakfast room was executed in a Louis XV style characteristic of the firm), at *The Elms* Allard was granted charge of the interiors in full and their design was executed according to a thoroughly French-inspired plan and aesthetic (Figs 5 and 6).

The discrete nature of the *Sérilly* room at *The Breakers* points to another factor in the formation of US taste for French eighteenth-century interiors. While formal unity may be seen to rely on conditions particular to the twentieth century — the triumph of (French) classicism in architectural discourse, the increased standardisation of commercial interior decorating practices and a growing institutional interest that prioritised historical accuracy and completeness — concern for a different type of unity was also expressed from the 1880s and 1890s as a desired harmony between rooms and their inhabitants. Drawing on the social agency of ornament, this harmony promoted an unmediated relationship between person and setting that imbued the interior itself with a sense of identity and *caractère*.³⁹ Notably, this character not only informed Americans' interpretations of past cultures, but also guided their presentation of contemporary culture. Rooms were construed as discrete images through which identity could be projected and performed, with the result that the mansion as a whole — that is, the whole of elite adult space — comprised an eclectic revue of variously operable social 'sets'.⁴⁰

Writing in the *Architectural Record* in 1897, Jean Schopfer (also known by his pseudonym Claude Anet) likened the relationship between occupant and interior to that of subject and frame, locating in their harmonious junction the 'spirit' through which civilisation was revealed:

At the good periods, there has always been harmony between society and its surroundings — between the picture and the frame [...] In this manner, proceeding on parallel lines, we might, by consulting the furniture and apartments of past times, compile a philosophy of decoration and furnishing, for the harmony between society and the frame which surrounds it is so perfect that the latter leads up to the former and reveals to us its life and spirit.⁴¹

While Schopfer's 'character' referred to society in terms of totality, in the Gilded Age character also revealed differences between members of the same society.⁴² Steeped in the symbolism of gender and rank, 'Louis Quinze' and 'Louis Seize' became synonymous with the *joli* and the 'dainty', and as such were recommended for the decoration of salons, boudoirs and other rooms occupied principally by women.⁴³ Masculine character, meanwhile, was mapped on to the 'strong' and 'vigorous', which meant the typically unpainted woodwork of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English, prescribed for libraries, offices and other enclaves of gentlemanly labour and leisure.⁴⁴ That the Sérilly cabinet became the Ladies' Reception Room at The Breakers is therefore socially as well as artistically significant: situated on an intermediate entrance level adjacent to a den or Gentlemen's Reception Room (in unpainted panelled oak), what was for some a 'masterpiece' of French craft was here also a medium for American identity-making and part of the transition from 'placeless' outsider to 'ordered' insider.⁴⁵ Unity was thus pursued on two fronts: as formal cohesion, exhibited in the assemblage of 'authentic' and period-compatible artistic materials; and as social congruity, evidenced in the decorous disposal and usage of interior space.

AN ANCESTRY OF STYLE

Closely related to the notion of unity in stylistic reinterpretation of the past during the American Gilded Age was that of continuity. For a bourgeois elite whose influence derived from its wealth, demonstrable connection to a noble European past, as part of an ongoing history, was a way of legitimising claims of cultural authority and solidifying boundaries of social class.⁴⁶ For a budding 'global' economic power and professional architectural field, it was also instrumental in materialising for the nation a foundation of cultural refinement that was international in scope and consequence. According to one writer, 'American tradition must be founded upon an antecedent European tradition, because acceptable architectural forms must be served up with a garniture of splendid associations and of unimpeachable authority'.⁴⁷ In the interior, this was principally achieved in two ways. The first of these, advanced by architects and writers, was through form, in which the vital and intrinsic 'spirit' of refinement was carried forth through worthy civilisations over time — irrespective of birth and transfers of hereditary power. The second, celebrated by patrons and collectors, was through provenance, the biographical nature of which gave credence to a kind of stylistic pedigree that was attainable through the exchange of material property. In both cases, continuity depended on the creation of a traceable line between the Gilded Age and the *ancien régime*. In neither case, however, was this line singular, uninterrupted or unmediated by other entities.

In the introductory chapter on 'The Historical Tradition' in their 1897 book, Wharton and Codman enlisted furniture as the evidence of a Franco-American kinship, linking qualities of form and material to particular 'social conditions' under which they flourished.⁴⁸ According to the authors, 'a comfortable chair, in our self-indulgent modern sense, did not exist before the Louis XIV armchair; and the cushioned *bergère*, the ancestor of our upholstered easy-chair, cannot be traced back further than the [French] Regency'.⁴⁹ 'Straight' and 'angular' seat backs were replaced by 'cushioned' (and therefore curving)



Fig. 7. Jean-Henri Riesener, commode (secrétaire à abattant), 1783 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)



Fig. 8. Jean-Henri Riesener, drop-front secretaire (secrétaire en armoire), 1783 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

bergères, along with fire screens, Savonnerie carpets and chimneypieces.⁵⁰ Modern comfort — that is, comfort construed as one of ‘the requirements of modern life’ — was framed as distinct from eighteenth-century comfort, but its relation to the latter was posed as that of heir to ancestor.⁵¹ Any conflict, discursive or otherwise, that might have arisen in the transferral of one ‘tradition’ into the other was thus neutralised, and the eighteenth century, represented by the court and Paris from the reign of Louis XIV onwards, was located as the natural origin of a self-professedly ‘modern’ civilisation.⁵²

This argument was echoed in architectural criticism of the early twentieth century in which the ‘style [...] of France toward the middle of the eighteenth century’, epitomised by its domestic architecture, was defined as a ‘Renaissance sub-style’ — as the point after which the ‘thread of Renaissance architectural development’ had been dropped, and from which it must be resumed.⁵³

It may be emphatically asserted [...] that American architects could not select any one Renaissance sub-style better adapted to their needs than that of eighteenth-century French. It contains in a peculiar degree the combination of being both modern and traditional, and of being both charming and dignified [...] Its manners, that is, are perfect; and good manners are, of course, precisely the great need of American architecture.⁵⁴

Here, as elsewhere, the ‘eighteenth-century French’ became a metonym for good taste and gracious comportment, qualities of the socially as well as artistically ‘adapted’ or evolved.⁵⁵ While their inflections were decidedly social, however, the measure of these qualities was principally formal — based on observable (and therefore amenable) characteristics of light, colour, proportion and finish.

Provenance locates value not in the aesthetic but in the fabric of objects themselves as exchangeable goods. As both Yuriko Jackall and Charlotte Vignon have observed, secure royal provenance provided wealthy Americans with a guarantee of quality and authenticity: in a market saturated with expert reproductions and embellished histories, those items that passed through royal or imperial collections bore both the literal and the figurative stamps of excellence and ownership.⁵⁶ It also, however, appealed greatly to their aristocratic imaginations as it created a direct connection, a sort of decorative lineage, between royals for whom works were commissioned and themselves, further substantiating their position as the inheritors of western civilisation. Through the transfer of cultural capital, social capital was accumulated and conferred.⁵⁷

In the salon of the William K. and Alva Vanderbilt residence at 660 Fifth Avenue in New York, decorated by Allard, two pieces of furniture by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806) provided a vital link to the old world. Commissioned in 1783 for Marie Antoinette’s Grand Cabinet Intérieur at Versailles, the now-famous commode (Fig. 7) and secrétaire (Fig. 8) were acquired for the Vanderbilts from the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882, for what was then the highest price paid for a piece of furniture at auction.⁵⁸ Since 1920, when both were bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, their ‘magnificent character’ — which, according to the museum *Bulletin*, was ‘comparable to the greatest treasures of *mobilier* in the Louvre and the Wallace Collection’ — has served as a testament both to the skill of this particular *ébéniste* and to the quality of the American collection.⁵⁹ In accounts from the 1880s, however, value was largely attached

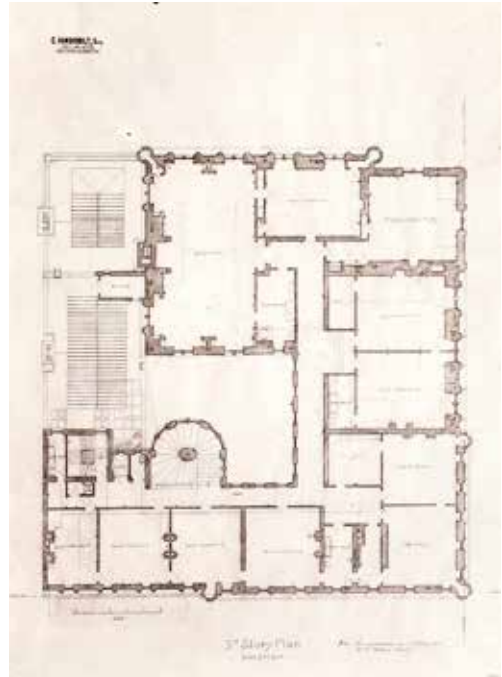
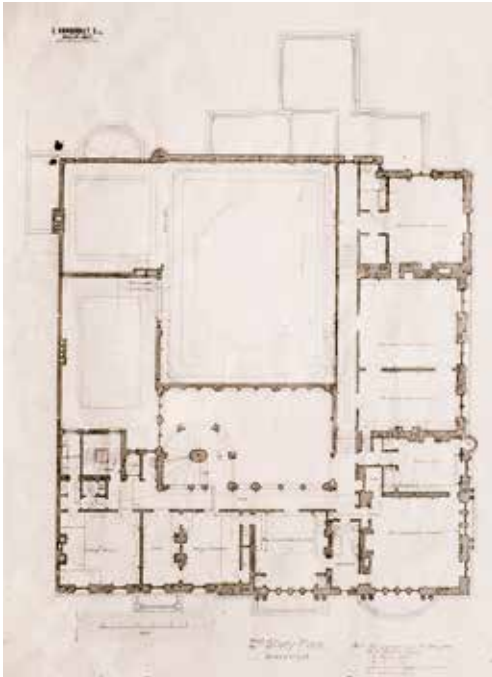


Fig. 9. William K. Vanderbilt residence, New York, east facade, Richard Morris Hunt, opened 1883, photograph c. 1885 (Library of Congress, Washington DC)

to the queen whose interiors the items once adorned, and to the 'exquisite' mounts, attributed to Pierre Gouthière (1732–1813), in which her royal cipher was embedded.⁶⁰ In the catalogue of the 1882 sale, the two pieces of furniture were described as 'exquisitely mounted with ormolu by Gouthière, with the monogram of Marie Antoinette'.⁶¹ The *Art Amateur*, reporting the sale, echoed this description, lauding the 'elegant secretary [...] of ebony, inlaid with slabs of black and gold lacquer, exquisitely mounted with ormolu, with the Queen's monogram in the frieze'.⁶² This was also how Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, daughter of William and Alva, remembered the piece, writing in her 1952 memoir of 'the beautiful lacquer [...] commode, with bronzes chiselled by Gouthière, made for Marie Antoinette'.⁶³

INNOVATION AND AMERICANNES

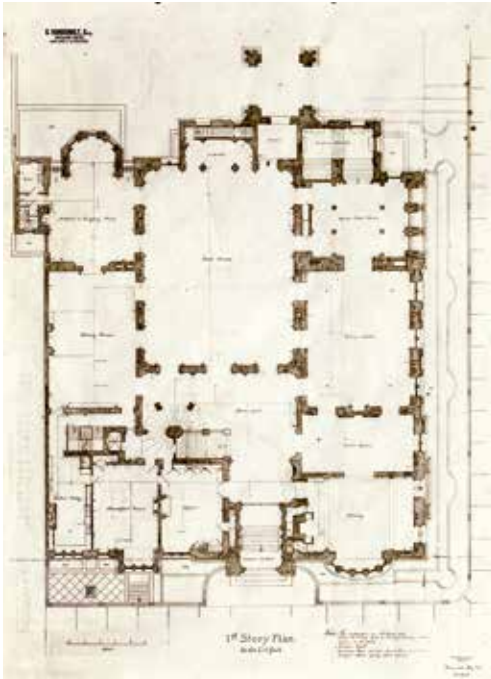
Despite the value placed on historical continuity, interest in the French eighteenth century during the Gilded Age did not amount to a wholesale endorsement of either its architecture or its customs. Rather, continuity was balanced in both practice and discourse by creativity, which was linked to the idea of progress. For Gilded Age Americans, the customisation of historical forms and conventions provided a way of taking ownership over the decorative traditions of the past. It was also a means by which those traditions could be updated, improved and integrated into a narrative of modern identity: through



the exercise of authorship, the old was successfully incorporated into the language of the new, the 'French' into the 'American'. From an architectural perspective, Wharton and Codman likened this process to the work of the poet who, in composing his verses, does not discard the 'necessary laws of rhythm', but uses them to find 'new rhythms within the limits of those laws'.⁶⁴ In his *American Architecture* of 1892, the critic Montgomery Schuyler similarly purported that 'one cannot neologize with any promise of success unless he knows what is already in the dictionary'.⁶⁵ 'Imitiveness' was thus tempered by the more praiseworthy 'originality', propelling an 'advance' in 'taste and knowledge'.⁶⁶

In addition to demonstrating the expertise of Gilded Age architects, innovation and originality also expressed the individuality and distinction of Gilded Age patrons. By embracing, editing and redefining certain aspects of historicity in their homes, wealthy Americans asserted control over the visual languages of power and (sometimes literally) rewrote the rules of elite housing and representation. A common way of doing this was through blending ornament with technology: scrolling wall appliques fitted with electric candles, bathroom taps in the form of silver and gilt *dauphins*, passenger elevator cars in the style of bijou boudoirs, and baroque-inspired ballrooms supplied with industrial heating and ventilation systems. Drawing on the vast resources from which many of the mansion owners derived their fortunes — electricity, steel, transportation, coal — these combinations both added convenience to antiquated domestic systems and integrated American technology into the ennobling order of the tasteful in interior decoration.⁶⁷

Strategic adjustments were also made, however, in the arrangement and use of interior space. At the Vanderbilt residence at 660 Fifth Avenue, designed by Richard



Figs. 10, 11 (opposite page) and 12 (this page). Cornelius Vanderbilt II residence, New York, George B. Post, floor plans as expanded in 1892–94 (New-York Historical Society). From left to right: second floor (ground + 2); third floor (ground + 3); first floor (ground + 1)

Morris Hunt and opened in 1883, the inclusion of a cleverly housed spiral staircase recalled the interior machinations of Louis XV's Versailles. Enclosed within a tourelle which was the dominant feature of the mansion's east (main) façade (Fig. 9), the stair connected Alva Vanderbilt's bedroom on the south-east corner of the first floor (that is, ground + 1) to the corresponding chamber on the floor above, the room that became Consuelo Vanderbilt's on her graduation from the nursery.⁶⁸ As a space of *dégagement*, 'backstairs' appeared in eighteenth-century plans and architectural manuals as a means of quick and unobtrusive passage for servants, in contrast to the formal grand stairs that were employed in ceremonies of state.⁶⁹ As Katie Scott has shown, at Versailles backstairs were also used by members of the court, for whom they provided a potential detour or shortcut through the social and architectural ranks: by appropriating the 'quickened pace' of the backstairs, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson (1721–64), marquise de Pompadour and official mistress of Louis XV from 1745, 'reconfigured the settled order of the castle' while preserving the appearance of propriety.⁷⁰

In the Vanderbilt residence, the back staircase permitted a similarly 'rococo' circumvention in that it accommodated what Abigail A. Van Slyck identified as the conflicting demands of elite nineteenth-century parenthood: to attend to children and to keep them out of the spaces of adult sociability.⁷¹ We find a similar arrangement in the residence of Cornelius II and Alice Vanderbilt on West 57th Street, designed by George B. Post, which was built in 1881–82 and substantially expanded between 1892 and 1894. In the plans of the expanded residence a spiral staircase, also contained within a projecting turret, connects the dressing room located between Mr and Mrs Vanderbilt's



Fig. 13. *Cornelius Vanderbilt II residence, New York, George B. Post, north entrance staircase, photograph by C. M. Darling, c. 1894 (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC)*

bedrooms to the 'night nursery' above (Figs 10 and 11).⁷² As at 660 Fifth Avenue, this staircase was inaccessible from the main floor and opened directly on to the rooms that it was intended to adjoin, linking the vertical space of the mansion in a way that seemed to defy or divert the formal logic of the Beaux-Arts plan.⁷³ While the Renaissance-style turrets added a romantic dimension to the exteriors of both Vanderbilt residences, their interior implications were of even greater importance. By creating a communication between children's and parents' rooms without interrupting the hierarchy of the mansion, potentially contentious spaces were navigated with frictionless movement, reconciling in their turn architectural picturesqueness and interior politics, French past and American present.

If the turret staircase seemed to bypass the formal relationships of the 57th Street interior, another staircase, this time leading from the ground to first floor, was crucial in defining those relationships (Fig. 12). Housed within a projecting section of the north (58th Street) facade, this staircase was added during the 1892–94 renovation as part of the entrance to the mansion's new gala suite, the central features of which were

the Louis XIV ballroom and adjoining Louis XV salon, both executed by the Parisian interior decorator Gilbert Cuel.⁷⁴ A contemporary photograph of the staircase shows a richly carved stone space enclosed beneath a series of groin vaults, climbing in landings and featuring an ornate cartouche that perhaps bore the Vanderbilt family coat of arms (Fig. 13). At the base, according to the account of an 1899 ball published in the *New York Times*, the 'spacious marble hall' was 'filled with divans and chairs for those who were waiting to ascend [...] to greet the hostess' and featured 'a large and commodious cloakroom, fitted up in white and gold' for ladies and, opposite, a gentlemen's cloakroom 'very handsomely fitted in dark woods'.⁷⁵ At the top, the final flight of stairs opened on to a large vestibule or '*petite galerie*' that had been created using relocated elements from the so-called Watercolor Room of 1882.⁷⁶ Enlarged on either side to create a nave-like central alley, this space proceeded directly into the grand salon, where guests were met by Mrs Vanderbilt before advancing to the 'state apartments' beyond.⁷⁷

As a space of ceremony, the entrance staircase served to mediate a transition between two important thresholds: the exterior door, through which only those invited to a Vanderbilt ball could pass, and the salon door, where the social rite of reception was officially performed. Successful ascent required not only that guests be properly costumed — 'divested of their cloaks and wraps' — but also that they be sufficiently versed in the rules of etiquette that governed such formal occasions, including how long to wait before presenting oneself to the mistress of the house.⁷⁸

If the emphasis of the backstairs was on abbreviation — on the expedient communication between one space and another — that of the entrance staircase was rather on elaboration, on the unfolding of identity across a series of specifically designated and specially equipped and ornamented rooms. Drawing on the rhetoric of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ceremony or *parade*, the entrance staircase raised mansion occupants to the level of the noble (*nobile*), spatialising their distinction as members of a superior class.⁷⁹ Patterns of courtly movement were thus repeated in the American residence, adjusted and reanimated for a nineteenth-century moneyed elite.

CONCLUSION

In the words of Katie Scott, eighteenth-century French decorative arts 'labour under a double indictment: by their place of destination [in the private residence] and by the structures of hereditary privilege and habits of extravagance that under the *ancien régime* supposedly gave them life'.⁸⁰ Insofar as it depended on and clearly bespoke the possession and expenditure of great sums of money, the building and furnishing of American residences in the manner of Bourbon kings and Parisian aristocrats invites the accusations of ostentation and conspicuous consumption that have so frequently been levied at it. However, beyond the parade of mere quantity, these residences, and the sumptuous rooms that comprised them, also served to delineate the more qualitative boundaries of a polite society whose shared investment in the rituals of a particular past signalled and consolidated its status as a distinct social group — boundaries which, for all their outward claims of permanence and stability, were neither fixed nor faultless. While the values attached to French style were often antithetical to those espoused by

the American Renaissance, the two nevertheless pursued many of the same goals: a cohesive image, a credible cultural foundation, and an expression of individuality writ large on the international stage. The result was an architecture that was responsive not only to the aesthetic or scholarly judgements of artists, but also to the pressures of both social life and the commercial marketplace.

What is the legacy of the gilded interior in the twenty-first century? The continued relevance of figures such as Ogden Codman and Georges Hoentschel to American interiors is easy to spot, even where not plainly announced; in an interesting marriage of the two, the 2008 reprint of Wharton and Codman's classic *The Decoration of Houses* replaced many of the images of furniture contained in the original with examples from the Hoentschel collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁸¹ In terms of American society more broadly, the recent spotlight on the former residence of Marjorie Merriweather Post, Mar-a-Lago in Florida, built between 1924 and 1927, has raised questions about the nature and structures of power embedded in such architectural 'fantasies of aristocracy'.⁸² One of the benefits of a growing interest in the interiors and collections of the Gilded Age, supported by the research and digitisation efforts of such institutions as the Getty Research Institute and the Frick Center for the History of Collecting, is an increased capacity to debunk, through practical understanding and critical interpretation, the myths of naturalness and exceptionalism that surround this glittering era and, by extension, its subsequent reappearances in the twentieth and twenty-first century. This requires, however, going beyond the facade to populate places — of residence, business, leisure, commerce, worship — with the things, people and practices that at any moment and over time rendered them powerful and gave them their *raison d'être*.

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BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

- 1 On the 'empire' of New York, see David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).
- 2 Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr, *The Decoration of Houses* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897).

- 3 Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, Deborah L. Krohn and Ulrich Leben, eds, *Salvaging the Past: George Hoentschel and French Decorative Arts from the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2013).
- 4 Around-table convened by Paula Lupkin, Mark Hinchman and Anca I. Lasc at the 72nd Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians in 2019 led to the formation in 2020 of the society's first affiliate group dedicated to the study of the historic interior.
- 5 Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Clifton Hood, *In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York City's Upper Class and the Making of a Metropolis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).
- 6 On social space, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 68–168.
- 7 Richard Guy Wilson, 'Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past in the American Renaissance', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 18, no. 1 (1983), pp. 69–87 (p. 80).
- 8 See Wilson, 'Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past', p. 72, n. 6.
- 9 See James L. Yarnall, *John La Farge, A Biographical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge, 2012); John H. Dryfhout, 'Augustus Saint-Gaudens: The Portraits in Bas-Relief', *Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*, 4, no. 2 (1972), pp. 84–95; Lois Goldrieck Marcus, 'The "Shaw Memorial" by Augustus Saint-Gaudens: History Painting in Bronze', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 14, no. 1 (1979), pp. 1–23; Sidney Kaplan, 'The Sculptural World of Augustus Saint-Gaudens', *Massachusetts Review*, 3, no. 1 (1989), pp. 16–64; John H. Dryfhout, *The Work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982); Susan Rather, 'Toward a New Language of Form: Karl Bitter and the Beginnings of Archaism in American Sculpture', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 25, no. 1 (1990), pp. 1–19.
- 10 Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1873).
- 11 On nationalism in the American art market, see Kimberly Orcutt, 'Buy American? The Debate Over the Art Tariff', *American Art*, 16, no. 3 (2002), pp. 82–91, and Robert E. May, 'Culture Wars: The US Art Lobby and Congressional Tariff Legislation during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 9, no. 1 (2010), pp. 37–91.
- 12 For the 'commodity aesthetic', see Jean-Christophe Agnew, 'A House of Fiction: Domestic Interiors and the Commodity Aesthetic', in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920*, ed. by Simon J. Bronner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989). Studies of American commodity culture responded in large part to Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899).
- 13 Wharton and Codman attributed 'the vulgarity of current decoration' to 'the indifference of the wealthy to architectural fitness': Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. xxii. It was also echoed in Wharton's novels: see Sarah Luria, 'The Architecture of Manners: Henry James, Edith Wharton and the Mount', in *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, ed. by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 187–208 (p. 190).
- 14 Katie Scott, 'Rococo Echo: Style and Temporality', in *Rococo Echo: Art, History and Historiography from Cochin to Coppola*, ed. by Melissa Lee Hyde and Katie Scott (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014), pp. 1–30. On Valentin's role in the display of eighteenth-century French decorative arts, see Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, 'The Hoentschel Collection Comes to New York', in *Salvaging the Past*, pp. 101–17, and Kathleen Curran, *The Invention of the American Art Museum: From Craft to Kulturgeschichte, 1870–1930* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2016).
- 15 See Charlotte Vignon, *Duveen Brothers and the Market for Decorative Arts, 1880–1940* (New York: Frick Collection, 2019); Ulrich Leben, 'French Period Style for a Global Market: Maison Leys Under the Direction of Georges Hoentschel, 1892–1915', *Furniture History*, 50 (2014), pp. 327–49; Shelley M. Bennett, *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 2013); Barbara Lasic, "'Dignity and Graciousness": Mewès and Davis and the Creation of "Tous les Louis" Period Rooms', *Furniture History*, 48 (2012), pp. 193–210; Wayne Craven, *Stanford White: Decorator in Opulence and Dealer in Antiques* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and Charissa Bremer-David, 'French & Company and American Collections of Tapestries, 1907–1959', *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 11, no. 1 (2004), pp. 38–68. On the development of the interior as an industry, see also Paula Lupkin and Penny Sparke, eds, *Shaping the American Interior: Structures, Contexts and Practices* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2018).
- 16 On the decorator as tastemaker, see Diana Davis, *The Tastemakers: British Dealers and the Anglo-Gallic Interior, 1785–1865* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2020). Among the most influential legislation were

- the Settled Land Act of 1882 (UK), which allowed for the sale and acquisition of historic property from British estates, and the Payne-Aldrich Tariff of 1909 (US), which eliminated duties on art objects older than one hundred years.
- 17 Wilson, 'Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past'; Richard N. Murray, Dianne H. Pilgrim and Richard Guy Wilson, eds, *The American Renaissance 1876–1917*, exhibition catalogue, Brooklyn Museum (New York, 1979).
 - 18 Bennett, *The Art of Wealth*, p. 6.
 - 19 Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, p. 90.
 - 20 On the early years of the Duveens' trade, see Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, pp. 29–35.
 - 21 See Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, pp. 42–97.
 - 22 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 2.
 - 23 See Michael C. Kathrens, *American Splendor: The Residential Architecture of Horace Trumbauer* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2002).
 - 24 For The Elms, see Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), pp. 303–05; Kathrens, *American Splendor*, pp. 69–79; and James L. Yarnall, *Newport Through Its Architecture: A History of Styles from Postmedieval to Postmodern* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), pp. 154–55.
 - 25 For the Hôtel Porgès, see Gérard Rousset-Charny, *Les Palais Parisiens de la Belle Époque* (Paris: Délégation à l'action artistique de la ville de Paris, 1990). The interiors were the work of Maison Leys: see Leben, 'French Period Style for a Global Market', p. 342; Ulrich Leben, 'Interiors by Georges Hoentschel: Salvaging Fragments of a Lost World', in *Salvaging the Past*, pp. 43–63 (p. 49).
 - 26 Thomas Stammers, 'Old French and New Money: Jews and the Aesthetics of the Old Regime in Transnational Perspective, c. 1860–1910', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 18, no. 4 (2019), pp. 489–512.
 - 27 Rousset-Charny, *Palais Parisiens*. Curiously, a mid-nineteenth-century print of the Parc d'Asnières (A. Provost, lithographer) depicted the garden facade with a triangular pediment in addition to an ornamental sculpture: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, De Vinck 19095. Whether this had any bearing on Trumbauer's or Sanson's decisions is unknown.
 - 28 For a description of the Belmont residence, see Kathrens, *American Splendor*, pp. 121–28.
 - 29 See Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, pp. 40–51, and Nicholas Penny and Karen Serres, 'Duveen and the Decorators', *Burlington Magazine* 149, no. 1251 (2007), pp. 400–06. On the Paris showroom, see also Rousset-Charny, *Palais Parisiens*, pp. 164–67.
 - 30 See Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, pp. 192–95; *Confessions of the Marquis de Castellane* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1924), pp. 145, 261; Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. 40.66; Cleveland, OH, Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of John L. Severance, 1942.822.
 - 31 On Morgan's collection of eighteenth-century French works, see Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, pp. 187–92, and Andrea Bayer, Barbara Drake Boehm and Daniëlle O. Kisluk-Grosheide, 'Princely Aspirations', in *Making the Met: 1870–2020* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2020), pp. 72–93.
 - 32 See Vignon, *Duveen Brothers*, and Davis, *The Tastemakers*.
 - 33 Bruno Pons, *Grands décors français, 1650–1800, reconstitués en Angleterre, aux Etats-Unis, en Amérique du Sud et en France* (Dijon: Éditions Faton, 1995), pp. 270–82.
 - 34 Alavoine acquired the firm of Allard & Fils in 1905 and the two merged into Alavoine et Cie in 1907. For Allard's influence on Stanford White's architectural acquisitions, see Paul F. Miller, "'Handelar's Black Choir' from Château to Mansion", *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 44 (2009), pp. 199–210.
 - 35 Pons, *Grands décors français*, pp. 270–82.
 - 36 See Pons, *Grands décors français*, pp. 364–78, and John Harris, *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 127. As both Pons and Harris note, completeness here only referred to the panelling, and then imperfectly. The acquisition did not include furniture, and the original clock and barometer were replaced by Allard creations.
 - 37 Pons, *Grands décors français*, p. 372; Camille Mestdagh, *L'Ameublement d'art français, 1850–1900* (Paris: Éditions de l'Amateur, 2010), p. 130. Family bedrooms were decorated by Ogden Codman in a neoclassical style using new rather than antique material. Dasson worked closely with Allard on several Vanderbilt projects and supplied furnishings for both Marble House (1892), the Newport residence of William K. and Alva Vanderbilt, and Hyde Park (1899), Frederick W. and Louise Vanderbilt's Hudson River estate. On the latter, see Nina Gray and Pamela Herrick, 'Decoration in the Gilded Age: The Frederick W. Vanderbilt Mansion, Hyde Park, New York', *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 10, no. 1 (2002–03), pp. 98–141. For Codman as decorator, see Pauline C. Metcalf, ed., *Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses* (Boston, MA: Boston Athenæum, 1988).

- 38 Harris, *Moving Rooms*, p. 127. Yarnall called Allard 'the key player in advising on choice of prototype, interior décor, garden sculpture, and even garden design': Yarnall, *Newport Through Its Architecture*, p. 154.
- 39 Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, gout, caractère: théorie et terminologie de l'architecture à l'âge classique 1550–1800* (Paris: Picard, 1986).
- 40 This refers to both the pictorial equipment of the stage and the period practice of organising society into quasi-collectible 'sets'.
- 41 Jean Schopfer, 'Modern Decoration', *Architectural Record*, 6, no. 3 (1897), pp. 245–55 (pp. 245–46).
- 42 Schopfer, 'Modern Decoration', p. 245.
- 43 James Thomson, 'Fashions in Furniture: The Louis Seize and Empire Styles', *Decorator and Furnisher*, 23, no. 1 (October 1893), pp. 5–6; Theodore Child, 'French House Furnishing: The Salon', *Decorator and Furnisher*, 3, no. 2 (November 1883), pp. 48–49; Theodore Child, 'French House Furnishing: The Boudoir', *Decorator and Furnisher*, 2, no. 6 (September 1883), pp. 194, 196.
- 44 Thomson, 'Fashions in Furniture', p. 5; James Thomson, 'Ancient and Modern Furniture: The Ornament', *Decorator and Furnisher*, 4, no. 3 (June 1884), p. 108. This was not the only style recommended for men, but it was one of the most prevalent.
- 45 Pons, *Grands décors français*, p. 378.
- 46 On the precarity of bourgeois social order, see Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis*, pp. 237–72.
- 47 'The Work of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings', *Architectural Record*, 27, no. 1 (1910), p. 39.
- 48 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, pp. 1–16 (p. 8).
- 49 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 7.
- 50 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 7. In this the authors referenced Henry Havard (1838–1921), whose *Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration depuis le XIII^e siècle jusqu'à nos Jours*, 4 vols (Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries Réunies, 1887–90) and *Les Arts de l'Ameublement* (Paris: Librairie Charles Delagrave, c. 1891–97) — unspecified volumes — were among the Books Consulted in the text. Similar arguments could also be found in popular magazines on home furnishing, for example 'Chairs and Sofas. I', *Art Amateur*, 21, no. 1 (June 1889), pp. 16–17.
- 51 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 2.
- 52 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 2.
- 53 'The Work of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings', pp. 39, 44.
- 54 'The Work of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings', p. 44.
- 55 'The Work of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings', p. 44.
- 56 Yuriko Jackall, 'American Visions of Eighteenth-Century France', in *America Collects Eighteenth-Century French Painting*, ed. by Yuriko Jackall, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art (Washington DC, 2017), pp. 7–28; Vignon, *Duween Brothers*, chap. 3.
- 57 On social capital, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 58 'The Hamilton Palace Sale', *London Illustrated News*, 15 July 1882, p. 66. The commode was acquired by Samson Wertheimer, presumably on Vanderbilt's behalf; the secretaire went to Frederick Davis, from whom Wertheimer purchased it.
- 59 'The William K. Vanderbilt Bequest', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 15, no. 12 (1920), pp. 261, 268–71 (p. 270); Daniëlle O. Kisluk-Grosheide, 'French Royal Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 63, no. 3 (2006), pp. 4–48 (pp. 24–27). Francis Watson heralded the purchase of the Riesener set as 'the moment from which the acquisition of French eighteenth-century furniture in the United States began to be regarded as a legitimate branch of art collecting', although he misattributed it to William Henry Vanderbilt. See F. J. B. Watson, introduction to *The Wrightsman Collection*, 5 vols, ed. by F. J. B. Watson, Carl Christian Dauterman and Everett Fahy (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1966–73), I, pp. xix–lxxiii (p. lxxiii).
- 60 *The Hamilton Palace Collection: Illustrated Priced Catalogue* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art; London: Remington & Co., 1882), p. 163. On Gouthière, see Charlotte Vignon and Christian Baulez, *Pierre Gouthière: Virtuoso Gilder at the French Court*, exhibition catalogue, Frick Collection (New York, 2016).
- 61 *Hamilton Palace Collection*, nos 1297 and 1298, p. 163. The Gouthière attribution remained until the 1960s, when it was refuted by Francis Watson: see William Rieder, 'A Royal Commode and Secrétaire by Riesener', *Furniture History*, 38 (2002), pp. 83–96. On the US market for Riesener, see Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, 'Buying from Britain: The Development of a New Market', in *Jean-Henri Riesener: Cabinetmaker to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette*, ed. by Helen Jacobsen, Rufus Bird and Mia Jackson (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 83–89.
- 62 'The Hamilton Palace Collection', *Art Amateur*, 7, no. 5 (October 1882), pp. 98–102 (p. 99).

- 63 Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold* (New York: Harper, 1952; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011), p. 9.
- 64 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, p. 9.
- 65 Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892), p. 210.
- 66 Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, pp. 7, 1.
- 67 Wharton and Codman were particularly critical of the electric light, as a threat to 'privacy and distinction': Wharton and Codman, *Decoration of Houses*, pp. 126–27.
- 68 Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, p. 10. At the time of the mansion's demolition, John Vredenberg Van Pelt described this staircase as connecting the bedrooms of Mr and Mrs Vanderbilt, but he did not distinguish between the first and second Mrs Vanderbilts (Alva Erskine Smith, later Belmont, and Anne Harriman Sands Rutherford, respectively), nor did he account for decorative changes made to Mrs Vanderbilt's bedroom suite over time. According to Hunt's drawings, which were reproduced in the text, William Vanderbilt's bedroom was located on the opposite (northeast) corner of the house. It was possibly relocated during one of several known periods of change, none of which has ever been fully detailed, dating to c. 1888, 1893, 1898 and 1910. J. V. Van Pelt, *A Monograph of the William K. Vanderbilt House* (New York: John Vredenburgh Van Pelt, 1925).
- 69 Katie Scott, 'Framing Ambition: The Interior Politics of Mme de Pompadour', *Art History*, 28, no. 2 (2005), pp. 248–90 (pp. 261–62). On *dégagement*, see Jacques-François Blondel, *De la distribution des maisons des plaisances et de la décoration des édifices en général*, 2 vols (Paris, 1737–38), I, pp. 38–39.
- 70 Scott, 'Framing Ambition', p. 262.
- 71 Scott, 'Framing Ambition', p. 260; Abigail A. Van Slyck, 'The Spatial Practices of Privilege', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 70, no. 2 (June 2011), pp. 210–39.
- 72 See Van Slyck, 'Spatial Practices of Privilege', pp. 219, 221–22.
- 73 At each residence these stairs probably extended also to the third (ground + 3) and fourth (ground + 4) floors, respectively, where they would have connected to maids' rooms. I am grateful to Abigail A. Van Slyck for corresponding with me about 1 West 57th Street.
- 74 'Vanderbilt's New Palace: An Accurate Description of the Most Magnificent Private Residence in this Country', *The World*, 14 January 1894, pp. 14–15 (p. 14). Gilbert Cuel's dates are unknown.
- 75 'Vanderbilts Give a Ball: Return of Mr and Mrs Cornelius Vanderbilt to Social Life', *New York Times*, 7 January 1899, p. 2. For a photograph of the gentleman's cloakroom, see Russell Sturgis, 'Review of the Works of George B. Post', *Architectural Record*, 4 (June 1898), p. 69.
- 76 See Craven, *Gilded Mansions*, p. 142; 'Vanderbilts Give a Ball', p. 2.
- 77 'Vanderbilts Give a Ball', p. 2.
- 78 'Vanderbilts Give a Ball', p. 2.
- 79 On ceremony as an eighteenth-century architectural requirement, see Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 103–17, and Samuel John Klingensmith, *The Utility of Splendor: Ceremony, Social Life, and Architecture at the Court of Bavaria, 1600–1800* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993). For parade in Gilded Age architectural spaces, see also Molly W. Berger, 'The Rich Man's City: Hotels and Mansions of Gilded Age New York', *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 25 (2005), pp. 46–71.
- 80 Katie Scott, 'Introduction: Image–Object–Space', *Art History*, 28, no. 2 (2005), pp. 137–50 (p. 137).
- 81 Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897; New York: Cosimo, 2008).
- 82 See Tamara Morgenstern's article in the present volume.