Political renewal and architectural revival during the French regency: Oppenord's Palais-Royal

Jean-Francois Bedard
jbedard@syr.edu

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Throughout his Mémoires, the duc de Saint-Simon lamented the dissolute lifestyle of his patron, Philippe II, duc d’Orléans, who was regent of France during the minority of Louis XV (1715–23). Full of admiration for the duke’s political skills, indignant at the treacheries fomented by the duke’s enemies, Saint-Simon nevertheless vehemently condemned Orléans’s debauchery and impiety. Saint-Simon felt that Paris was a cause of the duke’s reprehensible conduct. Were the court still at Versailles, Saint-Simon argued, the duke could not be lured by mixed company nor yield to the dubious pleasures of opera balls and private dinner parties. For Saint-Simon as for Louis XIV, Paris—with its ill-defined mixture of nobility, bourgeoisie, and demimonde, its bickering parliament, its world of commerce, its dangerous mobs—was not the proper stage for the court of France, its king, or even its regent.¹

Orléans did not share Saint-Simon’s aversion to Paris. In the early years of the regency, he sought to renew French political institutions by diminishing the importance of the court and marginalizing Versailles. He instituted the system of polysynody, which consisted of seven advisory boards restricted to high-ranking nobles. He thus decreased the influence of courtiers and rendered superfluous their quest for the king’s attention, which had determined much of the spatial configuration of Versailles. The regent insisted that the young Louis XV leave his late uncle’s palace to be installed near Paris in the Château de Vincennes, moving later to the Tuileries, where he remained until his majority in 1722. At that time he returned to Versailles, but for a brief period, Paris was again at the center of French politics.

The regent’s fondness for Paris found architectural expression in his ambitious remodeling of his Parisian residence, the Palais-Royal. The refurbishment of that palace also served to assert his authority against competing factions, most notably that of Louis XIV’s bastard children, whom he had famously excluded from power by breaking the late king’s will. Orléans began the transformation of the Palais-Royal immediately after his father’s death in 1701. His nomination as regent of France sparked even grander architectural ambitions. Beginning in 1713–14 and until his death in 1723, he had his first architect, Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672–1742), remodel large portions of the palace. Oppenord focused on the western portion of the building (Figure 1). On the second floor, he remodeled the grand appartement—which included a gallery depicting the deeds of Aeneas (late 1713–18) and a salon (1719–21), the private appartement (1716), and the petit appartement of the regent (1720–21). On the ground floor, he redecorated the duchess’s apartment located below the gallery (1716). Despite Oppenord’s eighteenth-century detractors, who saw him as a master of the French rocaille—the florid decorative manner best represented by the work of Nicolas Pineau and Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier—little in the architect’s work at the Palais-Royal supports that opinion. The forms Oppenord favored demonstrate rather his command
of the seventeenth-century royal manner. These served perfectly the regent’s political agenda. Orléans sought to stress dynastic continuity as he fostered radical experiments in politics and economics in the early years of the regency. With his evocation of the Italianate style of Louis XIV’s residences in the Palais-Royal’s *appartement de parade* and of the more delicate forms of the king’s private apartment in the regent’s own rooms, Oppenord fulfilled his client’s program. He transformed the Palais-Royal into a surrogate Versailles.

Previous discussions of Orléans’s work at the Palais-Royal have suffered from the paucity of primary sources and visual evidence. The west wing of the palace, which included Oppenord’s celebrated salon, was demolished around 1784 for the redevelopment of the Palais-Royal projected by Louis-Philippe-Joseph d’Orléans, later known as Philippe-Égalité. The archives of the Orléans’ building service have been largely destroyed, and drawings from the regency period are generally scarce. A century ago, in their monumental history of the building, Victor Champier and G.-Roger Sandoz noted the lack of plans datable to between 1700 and 1730. To flesh out their history of changes made to the palace during the regency, they relied on a series of manuscript plans in the Bibliothèque nationale dated 1751. Following these scholars, Fiske Kimball, in a seminal article of 1936 on Oppenord’s remodeling of the palace, associated these plans with a section of the salon (Figure 2, cat. D 10) and the elevation of the bed alcove in the regent’s bedroom (Figure 3, cat. D 5). He published these drawings, both located at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, for the first time.

Kimball established the most complete chronology of Oppenord’s work using the contemporary accounts of Philippe Dangeau, Germain Brice, and Claude-Marie Saugrain. However, Kimball was unaware of other drawings by Oppenord relating to the palace, although these were already accessible in public collections (Figure 4, cat. D 1, D 2, and D 6). More importantly, in 1991 the Musée Carnavalet acquired eight exceptional drawings by Oppenord for this building (see Figures 6, 9, 12–16, cat. D 3, D 4, D 7–D 9, D 11–D 13).
Figure 3  Oppenord, Sectional elevation showing the bed alcove of the first scheme for the regent’s bedroom at the Palais-Royal, Paris (cat. D 5), ca. 1716

Figure 4  Oppenord, Partial plan, elevations and details of the balustrade and columns of the bed alcove of the first scheme for the regent’s bedroom at the Palais-Royal, Paris (cat. D 6), ca. 1716
Most of these are unpublished and unstudied; they provide key information with regard to Oppenord’s work on the duchess’s and the regent’s apartments and document the successive schemes Oppenord considered for the salon. Together with Antoine Schnapper’s 1969 study, which settled the chronology of Antoine Coyppel’s Aeneas cycle in the gallery and reconstructed its original appearance, and Frank Folliot’s synthesis of the palace during the regency, the Caravalet drawings make possible a renewed and expanded discussion of Oppenord’s interventions.6

“Le Le Brun de l’architecture”

As premier architecte (1713) and then directeur des bâtiments et jardins (1719) to the regent, Oppenord was at the forefront of the artistic and architectural circles of the regency.7 Yet, by the end of the eighteenth century, the important role he played had been obscured. Oppenord’s principal engraver, Gabriel Huquier, helped shape Oppenord’s reputation as a brilliant decorator but an indifferent architect. Huquier’s prints after Oppenord were largely concerned with decorative incidents; rarely did the engraver reproduce plans, sections, or elevations of the architect’s designs. Accounts of the architect’s misfortunes in building, amplified and distorted by his adversaries, reinforced this image.8 Even Louis Hautecœur, in his authoritative survey of French architecture, denied him the title of architect. Discussing the Orléans’ building patronage, that author systematically refused to credit Oppenord with any architectural work and erroneously ascribed to Jean-Sylvain Cartaud all enlargements made at the Palais-Royal during the regent’s lifetime.9

The neoclassical propaganda against the decorative arts of the early eighteenth century has also clouded the unique contributions of architects of that period. Critics of the rococo lumped Oppenord together with all artists associated, rightly or wrongly, with this movement.10 Patte, Pingeron, Dezallier d’Argenville, Viel, and Legrand, to name only a few, believed that architects, silversmiths, decorative sculptors, or painters as diverse as Guarino Guarini, Thomas Germain, Nicolas Pineau, Antoine Watteau, Jacques de Lajoüe, and Jules-Aurèle Meissonnier were equally to blame for what they perceived as the decadence of French art.11 Yet, Charles-Nicolas II Cochin, one of the key voices that demonized the rococo, conceded that Oppenord had not been a significant participant in this movement. In one of the most vociferous tracts against the style, the “Lettre à M. L’Abbé R***,” Cochin indicated that Oppenord’s loyalty to the Greco-Roman architectural tradition had hampered his full participation in the new style.12 Indeed, Cochin was perceptive. Oppenord hardly qualified as a master of the rocaille. Far from remodeling the Palais-Royal as a rococo fantasy, as most would have it, Oppenord implemented a series of transformations inspired by the Louis XIV’s first architects and their building service, the Bâtiments du Roi.13

Alexandre-Jean Oppenordt, Oppenord’s father, was ideally situated to introduce his son to that tradition. As échéniste ordinaire du roi, A. J. Oppenordt was employed by the Bâtiments. He specialized in inlaid work and furniture for the decoration of royal residences and had provided several pieces, some in collaboration with the dessinateur ordinaire de la chambre et du cabinet du roi Jean I Bégin, for the petit appartement du roi at Versailles.14 A. J. Oppenordt was also responsible for the elaborate marquetry floor designed by Simon Chuppin for the petite galerie and the two salons in the same apartment.15 Thanks to his father’s acquaintance with the superintendent of the Bâtiments, Matthieu de la Teulière, Oppenord obtained a coveted residency at the French Academy in Rome before the grand prix system had been formalized. He remained in Italy from 1692 to 1699. There, the young architect perfected his grasp of seventeenth-century forms through his intense study of the Italian baroque.

Oppenord’s interest in the architecture of Borromini, which he documented in his Italian sketchbooks, and his awe of Bernini’s creative genius aligned him with an earlier generation of French architects and artists who experienced a similar fascination.16 Oppenord’s encounter of Italian models recalled that of Louis Le Vau, Jean I Lepautre, Charles Le Brun, Pierre Puget, and Antoine Lepautre, Jean I’s brother.17 All had explored the bold ornamentation and complex geometric planning of the Roman baroque. In 1748 the painter Saint-Yves summarized Oppenord’s attraction to the seventeenth-century grand goût practiced by his elders by calling him the “Le Brun of architecture.”18 Like Le Brun, Saint-Yves argued, Oppenord added a new decorative richness to the heritage of antique architecture. Saint-Yves’s “antiquity” had, of course, little to do with that studied by the nascent discipline of archeology. It was rather the Italianate tradition introduced in France by Cardinal Mazarin and made royal by Le Brun in the king’s grand appartement at Versailles.

Contemporaries of Oppenord certainly understood his work in the context of its seventeenth-century precedents. In his partial reissue of Jean Lepautre’s collected prints of 1751, Charles-Antoine Jombert chose to include four plates designed and engraved by Oppenord and first published by Jean Mariette in 1720.19 Jombert’s inclusion of Oppenord’s over-door designs, the only recent designs in this decorative
pattern book, suggests that the publisher saw clear affinities between Oppenord’s compositions and those of the earlier designer. Jombert’s reissued plates also testify to the mid-century vogue for *grand siècle* decoration, which formed, in France at least, an important part of the neoclassical inspiration. To the mid-eighteenth-century connoisseur, Oppenord’s formal anachronisms were as important to the neoclassical *retour à l’ordre* as the new archeological discoveries or the reassessment of the architecture of Palladio. *Rétardataire* or visionary, Oppenord’s work calls into question the appropriateness of the label “rococo” to capture all the diversity of early eighteenth-century architecture and decoration.

Oppenord’s skilful reinterpretation of the *grande manière* of Versailles is most apparent in his transformation of the Palais-Royal. Between 1633 and 1636 the architect Jacques Lemercier had designed and supervised the construction of the palace, then called Palais-Cardinal, for Armand-Jean du Plessis, cardinal de Richelieu. To the original building located on the rue Saint-Honoré, Lemercier added a theater to the east in 1639–40 and a large library wing to the west. The latter was left unfinished at the death of his patron in December 1642 (Figure 5, the library is on the right). Immediately after the death of her husband Louis XIII in May 1643, Anna of Austria moved from the Louvre to the palace that Richelieu had donated to the king. Nine years later, the events of the Fronde convinced the queen mother to return to the Louvre. Louis XIV’s brother, Philippe I of Orléans, known as Monsieur, moved into the building after a decade of neglect, following his first marriage to Henrietta Maria on 31 March 1661. The *Comptes des bâtiments du roi* itemize a decade of expenses necessary to repair the building. The most important transformations, however, took place after Louis XIV gave the building to the Orléans as part of their appanage in 1692. The king wished to reward Monsieur for the marriage of his son, the young duc de Chartres and future regent, to one of his illegitimate daughters, Françoise-Marie de Bourbon, known as Mademoiselle de Blois. Monsieur hired Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the king’s first architect since 1673, to supervise the work. Hardouin-Mansart’s principal intervention consisted of the subdivision of the first floor of Richelieu’s library wing into a new *grand appartement*. It comprised five rooms in enfilade: an *antichambre*, an *antichambre* “where one eats,” a *chambre de parade*, a *salle d’audience*, and a *grand cabinet* resplendent with large mirrors. The *cabinet* was the location of Oppenord’s future salon. Around 1698–1700, Hardouin-Mansart added a new gallery perpendicular to this cabinet and running north along the rue de Richelieu. Oppenord’s most memorable transformations at the Palais-Royal occurred in the spaces conceived by Hardouin-Mansart and his team.

**The Gallery (late 1713–18)**

Oppenord’s first intervention at the Palais-Royal was the reconfiguration of Hardouin-Mansart’s gallery into a bombastic showcase to glorify the regent’s military valor. After his father’s death on 9 June 1701, Philippe II had embarked on an ambitious redecorating program. During its first phase, the new duke commissioned the *premier peintre du roi* (and also his own painter) Antoine Coypel to depict scenes of the Aeneid on the ceiling of this gallery, completed in 1705. Most likely at the end of 1713, when he became first architect of the regent, or in early 1714, Oppenord began to redecorate the gallery, and at the same time Coypel was requested to add seven additional episodes to the Aeneas cycle. Oppenord completed the redesign before Coypel finished his canvases. The team of decorative sculptors—Bellan, Degoullons, Legoupli, and Taupin—were paid for their work in the gallery on 29 April 1714. Disposed on the blank wall on the rue de Richelieu, Coypel’s first three canvases date from 1714–15. In the summer of 1717, visitors could view two of these new paintings, and by February 1718, all the canvases had been installed. The extension of the painting project from the ceiling onto the wall called for a reorganization of the gallery’s decorative scheme. In this, Oppenord largely respected Hardouin-Mansart’s work. As recorded on the right portion of his autograph drawing (Figure 6, cat. D 13), this consisted of coupled composite pilasters rising from a dado and surmounted by a frieze articulated by coupled brackets interspersed with trophies. Two engaged columns of the same order flanked the gallery’s entrance. Brice specified that the architectural

*Figure 5* Israël Silvestre, View from the garden, Palais-Royal, Paris, ca. 1650
Figure 6  Oppenord, Reversed transverse half-section of the final scheme for the salon and partial longitudinal section towards the rue de Richelieu of the Aeneas gallery at the Palais-Royal, Paris (cat. D 13), 1719–21
order was made of gilded wood.\textsuperscript{32} To insert the new can-
vases onto the wall, Oppenord needed only to transform the
infill panels between the pilasters that originally had been
occupied by mirrors and paintings.\textsuperscript{11} The helmets, palm
fronds, cartouches, and mascarons in the borders of the
engravings of Coypel’s paintings correspond to Oppenord’s
outlines.\textsuperscript{34} The piers of the window wall, situated across
from Coypel’s largest wall paintings, were devoid of orders
and decorated with trophies.\textsuperscript{13} It remains unclear whether
Oppenord designed these decorations, strongly reminiscent
of the gilded bronze ornament used at Versailles, or if they
dated from Hardouin-Mansart’s campaign.\textsuperscript{36}

Oppenord’s major departure from Hardouin-Mansart’s
design was the new mantelpiece he placed in a decorative
niche at the gallery’s north end. It reveals Oppenord’s inter-
pretation of the royal manner of the seventeenth century at
its most martial (Figure 7, cat. P 11). In this design,
Oppenord referred directly to Bernini’s Scala Regia in the
Vatican Palace as well as François Blondel’s triumphal arch
at the Porte Saint-Denis, erected in 1672 to commemorate
Louis XIV’s crossing of the Rhine.\textsuperscript{37} According to Folliot,
a plan in a private collection demonstrates that Hardouin-
Mansart had already shaped the fireplace wall to form a rec-
tangular niche with rounded corners.\textsuperscript{38} Oppenord framed
this hemicycle with pairs of Corinthian pilasters positioned
at right angles to one another.\textsuperscript{19} The mirror of his cheminée
à la royale took the place of the central opening of Blondel’s
arch. Simulated drapery hid the mirror’s edges and rein-
forced the illusion of a void above the mantelpiece. To stress
Orléans’s successes on Spanish battlefields, Oppenord
extended Blondel’s military references in the ornamenta-
tion. He combined motifs, placing two winged figures of
Fame—taken from Bernini—above the fireplace, and
obelisks and trophies of arms—inspired by Blondel—on the
curved infill panels. Oppenord’s triumphal arch fused the
regent’s prowess in the art of war with his uncle’s. He made
this dual reading more complex by placing a bust of Louis
XV on a pedestal above the mantelpiece, adding to this mar-
tial shrine a tribute to the young king.

The Regent’s Bedroom (1716)
If the gallery revived the forms associated with Louis XIV as
military commander, Oppenord’s design for the regent’s bed-
room, completed at the end of 1716, recalled the late king’s
bedroom at Versailles.\textsuperscript{40} That royal bedroom had been a salon
in the petit appartement du roi situated in the older part of the
château before it became both Louis XIV’s state and private
bedroom in 1701 (Figure 8). Its white and gold wall paneling,
composed of pilasters surmounted by an attic story, dates from
this earlier incarnation. A previously unpublished drawing
(Figure 9 [without flap], Figure 10 [with flap]; cat. D 4), now
in the Musée Carnavalet, documents two alternate schemes
for the regent’s bedroom at the Palais-Royal that bear strong
resemblances to the royal precedent. It also shows the modi-
fications proposed to the other rooms of the apartment, the
so-called Galerie des Poussin, the grand cabinet or cabinet en
lanterne, and the arrière-cabinet.

In the first scheme (see Figure 9) Oppenord proposed to
enlarge the bedroom into the Cour du réservoir situated to the
south. He located the bed alcove on the southern wall, and
placed the bed parallel to the avant-cour façade. Employing a
Figure 9 Oppenord, *First-floor plan with two alternate schemes for the regent’s apartment at the Palais-Royal, Paris* (cat. D 4, without flap), ca. 1716

Figure 10 Oppenord, *First-floor plan with two alternate schemes for the regent’s apartment at the Palais-Royal, Paris* (cat. D 4, with flap), ca. 1716
simple row of freestanding columns and wall pilasters, he marked the position of the state bed beyond the balustrade, and his drawings show the elevation of this alcove and details of the orders. Oppenord proposed a rich Composite order, either in an “archeologically correct” version (see Figure 3) or in one of his own invention, incorporating listel and fleur-de-lis from the Orléans coat of arms (see Figure 4). He kept the remaining walls of the room free of architectural ornamentation.

In the second, realized version (see Figure 10), Oppenord expanded the bedroom to the west, locating the alcove in the center of the building and placing the bed opposite the windows. In this way he mimicked the formal organization of the king’s bedroom at Versailles, which faced the Cour de marbre. Following this model, Oppenord placed the fireplace opposite the entrance, a more desirable location than in the first scheme. Oppenord also extended the Galerie des Poussin toward the south by encroaching on the bedroom space. In doing so, he made symmetrical the elevation of the gallery’s western wall, which he centered on a newly designed fireplace. He also simplified its eastern wall by blocking an existing door to the northeast.

Following the bedroom’s royal model, Oppenord used pilasters to articulate the walls (see Figure 10), aligning them with the two freestanding columns that flanked the state bed. He placed three large mirrors in the bedroom: an arched mirror in a gilded and sculpted wood frame above the fireplace on the south wall, its twin on the north wall, and a third between the two windows giving onto the avant-cour, directly across from the regent’s bed.41 As suggested by Alexandre Pradère, the right portion of the print (Figure 11, cat. P 9) might show the paneling that flanked the fireplace.42 The delicate ornament includes a ducal crown similar to the one placed above the regent’s bed (see Figure 3), a cartouche decorated with a listel echoing Oppenord’s “Orléans” capitals, and a mosaic of fleur-de-lis that recalls the white and gold paneling by Degoullons, Legoupil, and Taupin for the royal bedroom.43

Like the salon and most of the rooms of the grand appartement of the Palais-Royal, the alcove walls of the regent’s bedroom were covered in crimson damask, as were the state bed, armchairs, stools, and a folding screen.44 Three pairs of gilt bronze sconces decorated with ram’s heads, and a copper and rock crystal chandelier lit the room.45 The 1752 probate inventory of the regent’s son, Louis d’Orléans, notes four valuable over-door paintings that were probably installed at the regent’s direction: a portrait of Maria de’ Medici by Anthony Van Dyck over the enfilade door to the southeast (no. 674; three thousand livres); a portrait of Philip II by Titian over a false door to the southwest (no. 675; three thousand livres); a portrait of the painter Frans Snijders by Van Dyck over the enfilade door to the northeast (no. 676; three thousand livres); and a portrait of Snijders’s wife by the same artist over the garde-robe door to the northwest (no. 677; three thousand livres).46 This costly decoration recalls the prestigious paintings the king hung in his own bedroom at Versailles.

**The Salon (around 1719–21)**

The last room Oppenord remodeled, the salon, formed the junction between the grand appartement and the gallery. It was the centerpiece of the regent’s transformation of the Palais-Royal and Oppenord’s crowning achievement. Kimball, citing passages in Dangeau’s journal, allows a mere two months between 8 April and 28 May 1720 for its construction.47 Other authors date the work to 1719–20 or 1720–21.48 It was a salon à l’italienne, a room rising two stories, each with its own set of windows, and topped by a coved or domed ceiling. It replaced an existing room built and decorated by Hardouin-Mansart.49 We do not know if
Hardouin-Mansart had used this arrangement in the original salon. However, Oppenord certainly looked carefully at the work of Hardouin-Mansart and of his predecessor Le Vau, an early and enthusiastic proponent of double-height rooms. Le Vau had introduced *chambres* and *salons à l’italienne* in much of his domestic work and in some of his more prestigious projects for the crown. To serve the regent’s architectural politics, Oppenord might well have emulated the rooms Le Vau had devised in his unrealized schemes for the Louvre, that urban royal palace par excellence.

Six autograph drawings now in the Musée Carnavalet shed new light on the evolution of Oppenord’s design for the salon (Figures 6, 12–16; cat. D 7–D 9, D 11–D 13). In the first drawing in the series (see Figure 12, cat. D 7), Oppenord intervened timidly in Hardouin-Mansart’s rectangular *cabinet*. He blocked the central window in the trio...
of openings onto the rue de Richelieu and added an order of pilasters around the room. On three pieces of paper glued on top of this drawing, he proposed a new design for the fireplace situated on the south wall and added an octagonal cabinet next to each of the two doors leading to the grand appartement. It is uncertain whether Oppenord proposed a double-story volume at this time. The configuration of the space suggests a lower zone between the two cabinets and a higher volume centered on the fireplace, one that might have featured an oval gallery, as indicated by dotted lines, unless these mark only a reflected ceiling pattern.

Oppenord altered the existing space radically in his second proposal for the salon. The second plan (see Figure 13, cat. D 8) and the associated exterior elevation (see Figure
14, cat. D 9) correspond to the Cooper-Hewitt section first published by Kimball in 1936 (see Figure 2). In these, Oppenord proposed a rectangular room with two semicircular apses, one of which jutted over the street, supported by a trompe. To match his design for the gallery’s mantelpiece, Oppenord articulated the walls of the salon with two serlianas facing each other, one on the south wall framing a mantelpiece surmounted by a mirror, the other on the north wall surrounding the door leading to the gallery. In plan, Oppenord’s serlianas clearly expressed the structural organization of the room, the Ionic pilasters defining its geometry. Figurative and abstract ornament, the former mostly military in subject like that of the gallery, never encroached on Oppenord’s architectural frame. Hermès, roundels, putti holding crests, trophies of arms and helmets—further recollections of the planetary apartments at Versailles—were confined to discrete zones, away from the structural articulation. In the salon at the Palais-Royal, Oppenord’s work was far from the plastic continuity of wall surface and the overall distribution of ornament that characterized such canonical “rococo” decors as Meissonnier’s cabinet for the count Bielenski (1734–36) and Germain Boffrand’s salon de la princesse at the Hôtel de Soubise in Paris (1735–39).

Oppenord’s realized plan for the salon was a rectangle with cropped corners (see Figures 6, 15, 16; cat. D 11–D 13). As it became more compact, projecting less onto the street, the salon gained in spatial complexity. Oppenord inflected the octagonal mezzanine balcony with shallow curves and counter curves. He also simplified the wall decoration, the east wall receiving only a lambris d’appui (see Figure 6, cat. D 13). Oppenord’s decision to pare down his décor resulted no doubt from the regent’s wish to display recently acquired paintings from Christina of Sweden’s collection in the grandest room of the appartement. The probate inventories of the regent and his son Louis d’Orléans and several contemporary guidebooks confirm that the former Swedish queen’s pictures were hung in Oppenord’s salon.

If the east wall was intended to display paintings, it remains unclear whether the north and south walls were paneled at this stage. A print by Huquier might show the room’s paneling and the mantelpiece designs (Figure 17, cat. P 6, left half), with obelisks and military ornament like that designed earlier for the gallery fireplace. For the second story of the salon, Oppenord adopted a simpler decoration. He framed the arched windows with delicate ornament and separated each opening by plain panels enriched with flat panels (see Figure 6, corresponding to Figure 18, cat. P 7, left half). He topped the salon with a frieze punctuated by pairs of consoles like that of the gallery. Huquier’s print may also document the salon’s marble mantelpiece, realized by the duc d’Orléans’s marble sculptor Nicolas I Dezègre (see Figure 17, cat. P 6, left half). Descriptions of the mantelpiece made for appraisals in 1722 are consistent with the design etched by Huquier.

Architectural Revival and Political Renewal under the Regency

The colored fabric and tapestries, the furniture, the bronzes and objets d’art, and the profusion of seicento paintings ensured that the suite of rooms leading to the salon rivaled the king’s grand appartement at Versailles. Although sparse, the salon’s furniture was richly colored and gilded. Gilt wood stools and banquettes were upholstered in gold Gobelins tapestry or crimson velvet. Two colored marble table tops rested on sculpted and gilt wood bases. Two bronze...
Figure 15 Oppenord, *Plan of the final scheme for the salon and the petits appartements at the Palais-Royal, Paris* (cat. D 11), 1719–21
Figure 16  Oppenord, Superposed plan of the entresol, first and second floors of the final scheme for the salon and the petits appartements at the Palais-Royal, Paris (cat. D 12), 1719–21
statuettes stood atop marquetry pedestals festooned in gilded bronze. A large gilded copper and rock crystal chandelier and two gilded bronze girandoles on boat-shaped bases adorned with sphinxes completed the decor. The walls, covered in crimson damask, were lined with pictures, mostly Venetian and among the most valuable in the Orléans collection. These included four over-door paintings by Paolo Veronese set in gilded frames designed by Oppenord. As noted by Françoise Mardrus, seventeenth-century Italian painting occupied a premier place at the Palais-Royal during the regency. Over half of the Italian works owned by the duc d’Orléans, and thus nearly a quarter of all his paintings, consisted of pictures from that period. The regent’s collection, second only to the king’s in the quantity and quality of its Italian masterpieces, complemented the studied antiquarianism of the decor.

The large scale of the salon and adjoining gallery reinforced the parallels with Versailles. In this respect the surviving drawings are deceptive. While the section of the second scheme for the salon gives the impression of a grand room that retains a pleasant domestic scale, it is in fact gigantic. In plan, Oppenord’s salon measured approximately 6.3 by 8.3 toises (about 12.3 by 16.2 meters, or 40.2 by 53 feet). From floor to coved ceiling, it rose nearly 7.75 toises (approximately 15.3 meters, or more than 49 feet). The total height of the mantelpiece and looking glass alone was roughly 3.5 toises (nearly 7 meters, more than 22 feet). Only taller visitors could glimpse at their faces in the looking glass: the top of the mantelpiece was 1.5 meters (approximately 4.9 feet) from the floor. Less imposing, the built scheme still retained this grandeur. In the regent’s inventory after death, the mirrors above the mantelpiece are given as 81 by 158 pouces (approximately 2.2 meters wide by 4.26 meters high, or 7 by 14 feet). Lower than the salon, the gallery had nonetheless impressive proportions. The looking glass and mantelpiece at its end measured more than 3 toises high (approximately 6 meters, or 19 feet) while the mantelpiece alone measured approximately 3.8 pieds high by 4.8 pieds long (roughly 1.23 by 1.55 meters, or 4 by 5 feet).

Another spatial feature of the salon links Oppenord’s design with Louis XIV’s architectural endeavors. As noted by Saugrain, the facing mirrors situated on the south wall of the salon and the north wall of the gallery produced the impression of a central space bounded by two symmetrical galleries. As we have seen, Oppenord probably reinforced this fictitious symmetry by setting similar ornaments at both ends of the composition. This organization recalls the salons flanked by two enfilades proposed by Le Vau in abandoned projects for the Louvre. In 1657, at Mazarin’s...
request, he had prepared several schemes to complete the Cour Carrée, left unfinished after Lemercier’s last work. Immediately before the cardinal’s death on 9 March 1661, Le Vau had submitted a design in which he introduced an oval two-story vestibule (labeled “salon” on Le Vau’s drawing) in the center of a doubled east wing (Figure 19). Excavations carried out in 1964 at the foot of the east wing of the Louvre revealed that Le Vau’s project was well advanced when Colbert decided to halt its construction in 1664 and request proposals from other French and Italian architects, including Bernini. Around 1662–63, after Mazarin’s death, Le Vau had enriched his design in an unsolicited proposal (Figure 20). He doubled the west range of the Cour Carrée and added an octagonal salon behind Lemercier’s Pavillon de l’Horloge as a pendant to the oval vestibule on the east. Le Vau inserted these two large forms in the façades of the king’s official residence, shaped their complex forms, and calculated that their imposing size would broadcast the munificence of the royal presence in the French capital.

Because of his father’s position in the royal household, Oppenord might have been familiar with Le Vau’s original drawings held at the Bâtiments, perhaps even with the large wooden model built by that agency in 1663–64 to record his proposal. It might not be too fanciful to think Oppenord wanted to recall this unrealized project when he reconfigured the salon at the Palais-Royal. Certainly the physical features of the Palais-Royal salon—its conspicuous cantilever over the rue de Richelieu, its shape, its size, the way it appears to mark the central point of a long enfilade—echo Le Vau’s ideas. Despite its smaller size and its less preeminent site, Oppenord’s salon also presented a memorable image of royal power, marshaled by the regent.

From Versailles to Paris and Back Again

In 1722 Louis XV moved the court back to Versailles. One of his earliest and grandest projects at the château of his great grandfather was to complete the Salon d’Hercule, begun in 1710 but left unfinished at his death. For this room, the first architect Robert de Cotte devised a rich decoration of colored marble. Red marble pilasters with gilded bronze bases and capitals supported a frieze ornamented with gilded consoles. On the great blank wall to the west, de Cotte placed Veronese’s *Meal at the House of Simon the Pharisee* in a spectacular frame by Antoine-François Vassé. The room was crowned by François Lemoyne’s vast *Apotheosis of Hercules*. Unveiled in 1736, the Salon d’Hercule perfectly matched the lavishness of the great apartment and the Grande Galerie.

Louis XV had learned the architectural lesson taught by his great uncle at the Palais-Royal. Although he relentlessly transformed Versailles throughout his life, obliterating most of its seventeenth-century rooms, Louis XV nevertheless understood the importance of preserving intact, even enhancing, the late king’s *appartement de parade*. Like the regent at the Palais-Royal, Louis XV asked his first architect to reinterpret the Italianate style of early Versailles. Yet these two architectural “revivals” served different purposes. After the turbulent years of the regency, the king felt the need to bring the court back to its familiar setting. He inaugurated his architectural patronage with a gesture of continuity that matched his political conservatism. By contrast, the regent’s conjuring of Louis XIV had served to legitimize his project of political change.

Oppenord’s careful reworking of Hardouin-Mansart’s gallery at the Palais-Royal, his evocation of the less martial,
airier domestic style of Louis XIV’s late reign in the regent’s bedroom, and his spectacular salon, inspired by Le Vau’s projected vaisseaux for the Louvre, span the full range of forms associated with the great king. At the Palais-Royal, Oppenord contributed little to the goût moderne, the expression contemporaries used to designate the rococo. His work compels us to consider the breadth of forms available to early eighteenth-century French architects beyond that decorative style. By bringing Versailles to Paris in a surrogate royal palace, the regent sought to make the monarchy “Parisian,” as Louis XV’s distant ancestor, the itinerant king François Ier, had also wished. Through Oppenord’s Palais-Royal, the regent attempted to bridge the increasing divide between court and city, one that resulted in the forced return of the royal family to the Tuileries in 1789 and led to the eventual demise of the French monarchy.

Checklist of Drawings and Prints by and after Oppenord for the Palais-Royal (1713–23)

Abbreviations:

AN: Archives nationales de France, Paris
AN MC: Minutier central des notaires parisiens, Archives nationales de France, Paris
BHVP: Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, Paris
BnF Est.: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris
CASA: Centre canadien d’architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
CHNDM: Department of Drawings and Prints, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York
ENSBA: Bibliothèque de l’École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris
MC CAG: Musée Carnavalet, Cabinet des arts graphiques, Paris
ML DAG: Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, Paris
NM DP: Department of Prints and Drawings, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm
SHM DD: Department of Drawings, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation
UCAD Des.: Cabinet des dessins, Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
WM: The Rothschild Collection, Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, United Kingdom

Drawings by Oppenord for the Palais-Royal

D 1. Gilles-Marie Oppenord. Half elevation of the fireplace for the Aeneas gallery at the Palais-Royal, Paris. Ca. 1714. Pen and brown and black ink with black chalk and brush and grey and green washes on laid paper with a black chalk counterproof of a maritime scene. 540 x 358 mm (WM, Acc. no. 2119)

D 2. Oppenord. Elevation of a thermometer and barometer case (left) and partial elevation of the mantel for the Aeneas gallery at the Palais-Royal, Paris (right). Ca. 1714. Pen and black, grey, and brown ink with brush and grey wash and white gouache over traces of red and black chalk on laid paper. 405 x 205 mm (irreg.) (SHM DD, inv. no. 30519)

D 3. Oppenord. Ground-floor plan showing proposed transformations for the west wing of the Palais-Royal, Paris. Ca. 1716. Brush and grey wash with pen and brown ink and red and black chalk on laid paper. 657 x 520 mm (MC CAG, D.14411)
Previously unpublished

D 4. Oppenord. First-floor plan with two alternate schemes for the regent’s apartment at the Palais-Royal, Paris. Ca. 1716. Pen and black ink with brush and grey and red washes on black chalk on cream paper with two flaps. 411 x 568 mm (MC CAG, D.14417)
Previously unpublished

D 5. Oppenord. Sectional elevation showing the bed alcove of the first scheme for the regent’s bedroom at the Palais-Royal, Paris. Cataloged as “Bed Alcove for the Duc d’Orléans, Palais-Royal, Paris.” Ca. 1716. Pen and black ink, brush and grey, violet and rose on white laid paper. 212 x 360 mm 8½ x 14‰, in. (CHNDM, Purchased for the Museum by the Advisory Council, 1911-28-81)

D 6. Oppenord. Partial plan, elevations and details of the balustrade and columns of the bed alcove of the first scheme for the regent’s bedroom at the Palais-Royal, Paris. Ca. 1716. Pen and black ink with black chalk on laid paper. 290 x 425 mm (ENSBA, O. 755)
Previously unpublished

D 7. Oppenord. Plan of the first scheme for the salon at the Palais-Royal, Paris. 1719–21. Pen and black ink with brush and grey and red washes on black chalk on cream laid paper, with three pieces of glued paper. 578 x 440 mm (irreg.) (MC CAG, D.14416)
Previously unpublished

D 8. Oppenord. Plan of the second project for the salon at the Palais-Royal, Paris. 1719–21. Pen and black ink with brush and black, grey, and red washes on black chalk on cream laid paper. 414 x 570 mm (MC CAG, D.14414)
Previously unpublished


D 11. Oppenord. Plan of the final scheme for the salon and the petits appartements at the Palais-Royal, Paris. 1719–21. Pen and black ink with brush and grey, red and pale orange watercolor on white laid paper. 582 x 429 mm (22½ x 16‰, in.). (CHNDM, Purchased for the Museum by the Advisory Council, 1911-28-80)

D 12. Oppenord. Superposed plan of the entresol, first and second floors of the final scheme for the salon and the petits appartements at the Palais-Royal, Paris. 1719–21. Pen and black and red ink with brush and red wash on laid paper. 671 x 512 mm (MC CAG, D.14413)
Previously unpublished
Drawings by Oppenord Associated with the Palais-Royal without Firm Evidence

DD 1. Oppenord. Elevation and assembly plan of half of a door portal with fleur-de-lis, a trophy of arms and a lion’s head. Pen and black ink with brush and grey wash over black chalk on laid paper. 994 x 280 mm (irreg.) (NM PD, THC 7065)

Unpublished. The Nationalmuseum catalog suggests the Palais-Royal as subject of this drawing probably because of its similarity with print P 1.

DD 2. Oppenord. Recto: Elevation for paneling. Verso: Partial elevation and plan for paneling, and half elevation for a mantelpiece. Pen and brown ink over black chalk on two separate sheets of laid paper brought together within a mat. Left sheet: 263 x 163 mm; right sheet: 263 x 204 mm (UCAD Dess., Inv. CD 360 recto and verso)

Associated with the Palais-Royal by Folliot, “Le Palais Royal (1692–1770),” 75 no. 52 (not reproduced)

DD 3. Oppenord. Three elevations for mantelpieces. Pen and black ink, brush and pale green wash over black chalk on laid paper. 669 x 443 mm (CHNDM, 1911-28-219)

Associated with the Palais-Royal by Fiske Kimball, “Oppenond reconnu,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts 13 (Jan. 1936), 46 fig. 7


The CCA’s online catalog associates this drawing with the Palais-Royal. Jean-François Bédard has demonstrated that it documents rather another domestic project, the Hôtel Gaudion in Paris (unrealized, from 1732). See Bédard, “The Architect as Honnête Homme: The Domestic Architecture and Decoration of Gilles-Marie Oppenond (1672–1742),” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2003), 375–82.

DD 5. Oppenord. Elevation for a five-branch wall sconce with a satyr putto. Pen and black ink, brush and black and grey ink with red watercolor and traces of red chalk on laid paper. 425 x 177 mm (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-T-1964-134)

This drawing shows a mosaic pattern that can be related to the one used on the paneling of the regent’s bedroom; see n. 49.

Copies after Oppenond’s Drawings for the Palais-Royal
Two of Jacques-François Blondel’s students in the 1750s, the Englishman William Chambers (1723–96) and the Swiss Erasmus Ritter (1726–1805), copied drawings by Oppenond, including some pertaining to the Palais-Royal, as part of Blondel’s curriculum at the Ecole des Arts.

C 1. William Chambers, after Oppenond. A Roman armor, a helmet and a cock’s head, part of the decoration at the Palais-Royal; mounted in Chamber’s French Italian album. Pen and black ink with brush and grey wash on laid paper. 84 x 122 mm (irreg.) (London, The Victoria and Albert Museum, 5712, f. 2r, bottom left)

C 2. Chambers, after Oppenond. A helmet and a Roman armor; part of the decoration at the Palais-Royal; mounted in Chambers’s French Italian album. Pen and brown ink with brush and grey wash on laid paper. 89 x 119 mm (irreg.) (London, The Victoria and Albert Museum, 5712, f. 2r, lower right)

C 3. Chambers, after Oppenond. Half elevation of the mantel at the Palais-Royal; mounted in Chambers’s Franco Italian album. Pen and black and brown ink with brush and grey wash on laid paper. 243 x 192 mm (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 5712, f. 8v)

C 4. Erasmus Ritter, after Oppenond. Half elevation of the mantel of the gallery of the Palais-Royal (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Ms. h.h. XXIa. 92.1 [41])

C 5. Ritter, after Oppenond. Three decorative friezes in the gallery and the salon of the Palais-Royal (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Ms. h.h. XXIIa. 92.3 [6])

I thank Peter Fuhring and Marc-Henri Jordan for alerting me to this and the previous drawing.

Prints after Oppenond
P 1. Gabriel Huquier, after Oppenond. Projets pour les Portes de la grande galerie du Palais Royal, pl. CC6 of the “Livre de différentes portes . . . .” XXI of the Œuvres de Gille Marie Oppenond enieur directeur general des Batiments et Jardins de son altesse royale Monsieur Le Duc D’Orleans regent du royauine . . . . (Paris, 1749–51), known as the Grand Oppenond. 375 x 240 mm

P 2. Huquier, after Oppenond. Projet de Plafond pour le grand Salon du Palais Royal, pl. OO6 of the “Livre de differentes décorations d’architecture . . . ,” LXXXIX of the Grand Oppenond. 434 x 304 mm

P 3. Huquier, after Oppenond. Left: Fuit des Cheminées pour le projet du Palais Royal; top right: Attique pour le Salon à l’Italienne du Palais Royal côte LXXXVII; bottom right: Clefs des portes pour le projet des Œuvres du Palais Royal côte LXXXVI; pl. QQ3 of the “Livre de différents fragments d’architecture . . . .” XCIII of the Grand Oppenond. 563 x 421 mm

P 4. Huquier, after Oppenond. Coupe du projet fait pour la reconstruction du Palais Royal, pl. RR1, title page of the “Livre de différents décorations d’architecture et appartement . . . .” CII of the Grand Oppenond. 358 x 540 mm

P 5. Huquier, after Oppenond. Suite du même projet du Palais Royal et de la plànche cottiée CII, pl. RR2 of the “Livre de différents Décorations d’architecture et appartement . . . .” CIII of the Grand Oppenond. 356 x 516 mm

P 6. Huquier, after Oppenond. Cheminées et Lambris pour un Salon à l’Italienne, pl. SS2 of the “Livre de différentes décorations d’appartement . . . .” CXI of the Grand Oppenond. 464 x 368 mm

P 7. Huquier, after Oppenond. Attique pour le Salon à l’Italienne cotti CX, pl. SS3 of the “Livre de différentes décorations d’appartement . . . .” CX of the Grand Oppenond. 336 x 369 mm

P 8. Huquier, after Oppenond. Porte pour le Salon à l’Italienne Cotté CX, pl. SS4 of the “Livre de différentes décorations d’appartement . . . .” CXI of the Grand Oppenond. 438 x 319 mm

P 9. Huquier, after Oppenond. Cheminées et Lambris pour les appartements du Palais Royal, pl. SS5 of the “Livre de différentes décorations d’appartement . . . .” CXII of the Grand Oppenond. 548 x 330 mm


Drawings for the Palais-Royal Formerly Attributed to Oppenond
R 1. Formerly attributed to Oppenond. Elevation for a table at the Palais-Royal. 1710. Red chalk on laid paper. 311 x 206 mm (CHNDM, 1921-22-196)
91st annual conference in a session led by Professor Maria Ann Conelli. I
Museum of Art, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. It also formed the
ences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Metropolitan
their support and comments during the dissertation process. This research
Archeology at Columbia University. I thank the members of my commit-
Marie Oppenord (1672–1742),” in the Department of Art History and
ations. Blondel,
engraved these drawings and incorporated Pierre Contant d’Ivry’s alter-
Sandoz,
Photographie, Paris (hereafter BnF Est.), Ve. 86, [f. 1–3]. Champier and
3.

Notes
This article is based on research done for my dissertation, “The Architect
as Hônêtê Homme: The Domestic Architecture and Decoration of Gilles-
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91st annual conference in a session led by Professor Maria Ann Conelli. I
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Rochelle Ziskin, and an anonymous reader for bringing focus to an earlier
draft of this article. I have adapted the drawing captions to reflect the con-
cclusions reached in this article; the drawing checklist contains both the
museum catalog titles for drawings and my revisions when required. Unless
noted, all translations are mine.

1. Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ed. Yves Coirault, 8
2. Victor Champier and G.-Roger Sandoz. Le Palais-Royal d’après des docu-
3. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la
Photographie, Paris (hereafter BnF Est.), Ve. 86, [f. 1–3]. Champier and
Sandoz, Palais-Royal, 1:313. Jacques-François Blondel subsequently engraved these drawings and incorporated Pierre Contant d’Ivry’s alter-
ations. Blondel, Architecture Française, ou Recueil des plans, elevations, coupes et
profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels & édifices les plus considérables de
Paris... , 4 vols. (Paris, 1752–56), bk. 5, no. 9, pl. 2, 3.
(1916), 113–17.
5. These drawings were originally in the Raduis-Breil collection sold at the
6. Antoine Schnapper, “Antoine Copley. La galerie d’Énée au Palais-
Copley had corroborated Schnapper’s discoveries. See Garnier, Antoine
Franck Folliot, “Le Palais Royal (1692–1770),” in Le Palais Royal (Paris,
1988), 52–77, esp. 61–77. The recently published guidebook on the Palais-
Royal by the French Monuments Nationaux does not add new information on
the topic of Oppenord’s interventions. Guy Lambert, et al., Le Palais-
Royal (Paris, 2006).
7. The first mention of Oppenord as first architect of the duc d’Orléans
dates from Dec. 1713. Minutier central des notaires parisiens, Archives
nationales de France, Paris (hereafter AN MC), Et. IV, 373, 30 Dec. 1713,
not in Mireille Rambaud, ed., Documents du minutier central concernant l’his-
bâtiments of the regent dates to Oct. 1719. AN MC, Et. IV, 407, 2 Oct. 1719,
also not in Rambaud, Documents du minutier central. Rambaud situates
Oppenord’s nomination as first architect instead to 1715; see Rambaud,
Documents du minutier central, 2:xiv. She follows in this Fiske Kimball, The
Creation of the Rococo (New York, 1964), 114.
8. Oppenord was the target of satirical verse composed by the Régiment de
la Calotte, a society of humorists who ridiculed public figures during the
first half of the eighteenth century. Its anonymous authors doubted the
architect’s competence, unjustly blaming Oppenord for the collapse of new
building work at the Hôtel Crozat. Anatole de Montaiglon, “Brevets du
régiment de la Calotte relatifs au peintre Charles-Antoine Copley le fils et
l’architecte Gilles-Marie Oppenord,” Archives de l’art français 2 (Mar.
1862), 91.
vols. (Paris, 1943–57), 3:5, and n. 3, citing Champier and Sandoz, Palais-
Royal, 1:284, who follow Blondel, Architecture Française, 3:38.
10. Peter Fuhring has provided convenient transcriptions of late eight-
teenth-century reactions against the rococo. See Fuhring, Joute-Aurile Meis-
11. Pierre Patte, Mémoires sur les objets les plus importants de l’architec-
ture, . . . (Paris, 1769), 96, transcribed in Fuhring, Meissonnier, 433; J. C.
Pingeron, Vie des architectes anciens et modernes, qui se sont rendus célèbres chez
les différentes nations. Traduit de l’Italien, & enrichies de notes historiques &
critiques... . (Paris, 1771), 2:242–43, n. 1, transcribed in Fuhring, Meissonnier,
434; Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d’Argenville, “Gilles-Marie Oppenord,” in Vies des
fameux architectes depuis la renaissance des arts, ed. Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d’Argenville, 2
et de la construction des bâtiments (Paris, 1797), transcribed in Fuhring,
Meissonnier, 643; J.-C. Meissonier, Principes de l’ordonnance des bâtiments
(Paris, 1797), transcribed in Fuhring, Meissonnier, 438; and “Jacques-Guillaume Legrand, “Notice historique sur la vie et les œuvres de
J. B. Piranesi, architecte, peintre et graveur, né à Venise en 1720, mort à
Rome en 1778 (Paris, BnF Ms., n.f. 5968),” in Piranesi et les Français.
Actes du colloque, ed. Georges Brunel (Rome, 1978), 221–52, transcribed in
Fuhring, Meissonnier, 437.
12. [Charles-Nicolas II Cochin], “Arts Utiles. Architecture. Lettre à M.
L’Abbé R** sur une très-mauvaise plaisanterie qu’il a laissé imprimer dans
le Mercure du mois de Décembre 1754, par une société d’Architectes, qui

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pourraient bien aussi prétendre être du premier mérite & de la première réputation, quoiqu’ils ne soient pas de l’Académie," Le Mercure de France.

17. Several of Oppenord’s drawings strikingly recall plates in Antoine and Jean Lepautre’s printed oeuvres. Compare for instance a drawing by Oppenord at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm [Department of Prints and Drawings, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm [hereafter NM PD], H. s. n., f. 79r] to a print by Jean I Lepautre, Half elevation of fountain with a naiad and a dolphin, reproduced in Maxime Préaud, Inventaire du fond francé, Graveurs du XVIIe siècle, vol. 12, Jean Lepautre (deuxième partie) (Paris, 1999), 53, no. 1176, repr. on 54.
18. “Huguer [Huquier] Graveur a publié quelques morceaux d’ornemens de sa [Oppenord’s] façon, qui sont d’une noblesse admirable, & dans un goître tenant de l’antique, mais plus riche” (Huquier Engraver has published some ornamental designs by Oppenord, which are remarkably noble and of a taste inspired by antiquity, but richer). [Saint-Yves], Observations sur les arts et sur quelques morceaux de peinture & de sculpture, exposé au Louvre en 1748. Où il est parlé de l’utilité des embellissements dans les villes (Leyden, 1748), 132.
20. The most recent and best documented history of the Palais-Royal under Richelieu and Anne d’Autriche is Alexandre Gady, Of a taste inspired by antiquity, but richer). [Saint-Yves], Observations sur les arts et sur quelques morceaux de peinture & de sculpture, exposé au Louvre en 1748. Où il est parlé de l’utilité des embellissements dans les villes (Leyden, 1748), 132.
22. Jean Mariette, Deseuirs de couronemens et amortissemens convenables pour deuers de portes couverres, croisées, niches, etc. . . . (Paris, 1720); rpt. in Jean Lepautre, Œuvres d’architecture de Jean Le Pautre, arbriste, dessinateur & graveur du ror. . . . 3 vols. (Paris, 1751).
23. Folliot, “Le Palais Royal,” 55 (see n. 6), citing the probate inventory of Monsieur, Archives nationales de France, Paris [hereafter AN], 300 AP I/746.
24. On 24 Apr. 1700 the construction was significantly advanced for a first marché for the wood paneling to be passed. This stipulated the completion of the work in Aug. of the same year. AN MC Et. I, 214, 24 Apr. 1700, ff. 1v–v (see n. 7); document cited in Rambaud, ed., Documents du minister central, 2:657 (see n. 7), and Folliot, “Le Palais Royal (1692–1770),” 59. This marché was canceled on 26 Apr. AN MC Et. I, 214, 24 Apr. 1700, f. lv. It was replaced by another one, involving different woodworkers, drafted on the same date. AN MC Et. XV, 372, 26 Apr. 1700, f. 1r; this does not appear in Rambaud, Documents du minister central. Both marchés confirm the traditional attribution of the gallery’s design to Jules Hardouin-Mansart.
27. AN MC Et. XIII, 167, 27 Sept. 1714, f. 5v. This document is mentioned in Bruno Pons, De Paris à Versailles, 1699–1736. Les sculpteurs ornementa-"
decorated with pyramids and trophies were disposed on curved planes.


41. Probate inventory of the regent (10 Mar. 1724 – 3 Mar. 1725), AN X°A 9162, f. 106v, nos. 111–13 (see n. 23).

42. Alexandre Pradère points out the similarities between the leg of a console table designed for the regent's bedroom and that of the column of the fireplace shown on the right half of Fig. 11 (cat. P 9). Although he erroneously attributes a drawing of this console to Oppenord (cat. R 6), as he does three others drawings for such tables at the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (hereafter UCAD), Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris (cat. R 3 to R 5), the straight console leg does correspond to the balustrade design for that room shown in an autograph drawing by Oppenord unknown to Pradère (Fig. 4, cat. R 6). Neither the eighteenth-century writing nor the graphic style of the UCAD drawings, particularly the rendering of the putti, match those of drawings firmly attributed to the architect. Pradère, “Les tables du Palais Royal. Evocation du décor intérieur du Régent,” Antologia delle Belle Arti 63–66, Studi sul Settecento, 3:39. The console table, now in a private collection, is reproduced on p. 36, no. 4, with details on 37, no. 6, and n. 7.

43. A drawing by Oppenord of a wall sconce with a satyr putto in the Rijksmuseum (cat. DD 5) features a similar mosaic and might have been destined for the Palais-Royal, although it was not realized for this room. The bedroom's six gilded bronze sconces bore instead ram's heads. See AN X°A 9162, f. 106v, nos. 1143.

44. AN X°A 9162, ff. 12v–13r, no. 107.

45. AN X°A 9162, f. 106v–107r, nos. 1143–48; and probate inventory of Louis d'Orléans (1752), AN AP° 300(I) 774, ff. 108v–109r.

46. AN AP° 300(I) 774, f. 166v.


48. AN R° 1066, ff. 23v–236r; cited by Champier and Sandoz, Palais-Royal, 1:284–85 (see n. 2); Brice, Nouvelle description de la ville de Paris (1725), 1:240 (see n. 22); and Brice, Nouvelle description de la ville de Paris, ed. Pierre Codet et Michel Fleury (Paris, 1791), 1:255.

49. “Par exemple Sad. A. R. [Monsieur] avait fait construire un saloon au bout de la grande Gallerie, on avait dépensé pour ce Saloon une somme tres Considerable. II en a ete construit un nouveau, a la place du premier, en lannée 1719 Et en l’année 1720” (For example, H.R.H. had a salon built at the end of the grand gallery, and spent considerable amount on it. A new one has replaced the former in 1719). AN R° 1066, f. 236r.


51. Oppenord had sketched this well-known architectural figure in Italy on Cortona's façade for Santa Maria in Via Lata. See Department of Drawings and Prints, The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, 1960-102–47 recto and verso. A more direct source of inspiration might be Borromini’s sérail window on the Piazza Navona façade of the Galleria Pamphilj in Rome. Interestingly this gallery was decorated, like that of the Palais-Royal, with a painting cycle depicting the episodes from the Aeneid by Pietro da Cortona.


53. The negotiations for the acquisition of the collection of Christina of Sweden from Don Livio Odescalchi came finally to an end on 14 Jan. 1721. Champier and Sandoz date their shipment to France in Oct. 1721. Champier and Sandoz, Palais-Royal, 1:304. See also Mardrus, “Le Régent, mécène et collectionneur,” 98 (see n. 34).

54. The printmaker indicated in his titles that the two prints (Figs. 17 and 18, cat. P 6 and P 7) are meant to be read together. They each offer alternate designs for an unspecified salon à l’italienne. Since the attic design on the left of Fig. 18 matches Oppenord’s final design for the Palais-Royal as shown on Fig. 6 (cat. D 13), it is tempting to consider the corresponding ground-floor elevation on the left of Fig. 17 (cat. P 6) to be that realized in the salon. The third print in this group, cat. P 8, shows on the left side the interior half elevation of a door that relates to the right portions of Figs. 17 and 18, and on the right side its exterior half elevation. It is therefore unrelated to the scheme possibly implemented at the Palais-Royal.

55. Made out of brique violette, the fireplace featured a central cartouche flanked by acanthus leaves. The vertical elements, shaped as consoles, are said to be sculpted on “five sides” which probably means that these consoles projected diagonally from the mantelpiece’s corners as they did in the earlier design (see Fig. 2, cat. D 10). The expert’s omission of the lion’s heads and the candelabra that decorate Oppenord’s earlier design does not necessarily indicate a simplified final version. Were they cast in metal, as was certainly the case, they would be excluded de facto from a document concerned exclusively with sculpture in marble. Appraisals by experts of the salon’s marble mantelpiece made by François Bourdet under the supervision of Nicolas I Dezzègre, AN Z°I 553, 27 July 1722; and AN Z°I 558, 28 Nov. 1722. The second document is cited in manuscript notes by Maurice Dumolin, “Guide pratique à travers le Vieux Paris,” 7 vols. (1923), Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris (hereafter BHIVP), Paris, Ms. 74 (Rés. 1) à 80 (Rés. 7), 4: f. 126r, n. 2. I thank Madame Aurélia Rostaing for having communicated the reference of the first appraisal to me. Between 1721 and 1723 Dezzègre furnished several works in marble for the Palais-Royal. AN MC Est. XIII, 229, 26 Sept. 1726, f. 46r.

56. AN X°A 9162, f. 19r.

57. AN X°A 9162, f. 109v.

58. The probate inventories of the regent and his son Louis show that the decoration of the salon, down to the furniture, objets d’art, and the very pictures that were displayed in it, remained much the same between 1725 and 1752. Hanging in the room at the regent’s death were fourteen Veroneses, including four over-door paintings showing four stages of love, eight Titians, two Rubenses, two Correggios, one Tintoretto, one Palma the Elder, one Adrian Keien, and a Leda by an unnamed painter. AN X°A 9162, ff. 148v–49r; and AN AP° 300(I) 774, ff. 203v–207v.

59. AN AP° 300(I) 774, ff. 207r–v; AN X°A 9162, f. 148r; and [Dubois de Saint-Gelas], Description des tableaux du Palais Royal, avec la vie des peintres à la tête de leurs ouvrages (Paris, 1727), 377–80. Strangely, drawing D 13 does not show the location of these dessou-de-porte that Oppenord must have placed above the two doors leading to the grand appartement and above the two corresponding windows giving on the rue de Richelieu.


61. These measurements were taken from Figs. 2 and 13 (cat. D 8 and D 10).

62. AN X°A 9162, f. 19r, no. 154.

63. These measurements were taken respectively from Fig. 7 (cat. P 11) and cat. D 1. Blondel indicates that the mantelpiece in the gallery was rather 6 pieds high. Blondel, Architecture Française, 1:120 (see n. 3).
64. “La cheminée de ce grand Cabinet [Oppenord’s salon], travaillée en marbre, est chargée de grandes glaces, qui font un effet d’autant plus agréable, qu’elles redoublent la galerie, en la représentant dans toute son étendue” (The chimneypiece of this great cabinet, all of marble, is surrounded by large mirrors, that produce a particularly pleasing effect, in that they double the gallery by showing it in its totality). M. L. R. Claude-Marie Saugrain?; Les curiosités de Paris, de Versailles, de Marly, de Vincennes, de S. Cloud, and des envois . . . . , 2 vols. (Paris, 1723), 1:143. This had apparently also been a feature of Hardouin-Mansart’s earlier cabinet, as we find exactly the same passage in the 1719 edition of Saugrain’s guide. Saugrain had received a royal privilege for this edition in Feb. 1718, therefore before Oppenord’s transformations. See [Saugrain], Curiosités de Paris (1719), 1:143 (see n. 29).

65. Ground-floor plan, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, Paris, Recueil du Louvre I, fol. 12, rpr. in Michael Petzet, Claude Perrault und die Architektur des Sonnenkönigs. Der Louvre König Ludwigs XIV und das Werk Claude Perraults (Munich, 2000), 25, no. 28; first-floor plan, BnF Est., Va 440a (see n. 3), rpr. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 25, no. 29. A section (AN, O1 1667, no. 77 [see n. 3], rpr. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 29, no. 32) might be associated with this scheme. The vestibule on the ground-floor plan is labeled: “Grand salon voulté / de pierre jusques au / hault de l’Attiqée de x6ts [16 toises] sur xts. [10 toises] / de Diamètre.”

66. According to Alexandre Cojannot, this new scheme was not sponsored by the king and resulted solely from Le Vau’s personal initiative. Alexandre Cojannot, “Le cardinal Mazarin et le ‘grand dessein’ du Louvre. Projets et réalisations de 1652 à 1664,” Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes 161, no. 1 (2003), 175 n. 135. By contrast, Petzet considers it as Le Vau’s definitive project. Petzet, Claude Perrault, 28–38.

67. Ground-floor plan, AN, O1 1678c, no. 495, rpr. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 28, no. 31; first-floor plan, AN, O1 1666, no. 1, rpr. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 31, nos. 36, 36a; site plan, AN, F21 3567, no. 9, rpr. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 34, no. 38, and 35, no. 38a (detail).

68. Interestingly, Le Vau used octagonal forms again for the king in his project for the reconstruction of Versailles of June 1669. In this scheme, he proposes two octagonal salons on the garden façade of the new château and two smaller octagons in the centers of the wings on the entry court. See Office of Louis Le Vau, Revised Competitive Plan for the Château de Versailles, (1669; NM DP, THC 2392 [see n. 17]), in Alfred Marie, Naissance de Versailles. Le château—les jardins, 2 vols. (Paris, 1968), I: pl. XXVI, left.

69. The salon’s striking urban presence was noticed by the satiricists of the Régiment de la Calotte: “Plus, informés de l’élégance / Qui brille dans le Lanternon / Qu’il a construit pour la Régence / Et dont l’aspect est si mignon / Qu’il forme un très-beau point de vue / Pour ceux qui passent / dans la rue” (Moreover, informed of the elegance / that shines in the lantern / [the Palais-Royal salon] / That he [Oppenord] built for the Regency / And, being so cute / That it forms a beautiful perspective / For those that walk in the street). Montaiglon “Brevets du régiment de la Calotte,” 91–92 (see n. 8).

Figure Credits
Figure 1. Jared Wright-Ward, based on Ve. 86, [f. 2], in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris

Figures 2, 3. Department of Drawings and Prints, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York; photographs by Matt Flynn

Figure 4. Bibliothèque de l’École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, O. 755

Figures 5, 19. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris: Fig. 5, Ve 14–4; Fig. 19, Va 440a

Figures 6, 9, 10, 12–16. Musée Carnavalet, Cabinet des arts graphiques, Paris. Fig. 6, D.14408; Fig. 9, D.14417 (without flap); Fig. 10, D.14417 (with flap); Fig. 12, D.14416; Fig. 13, D.14414; Fig. 14, D.14407; Fig. 15, D.14415; Fig. 16, D.14413

Figures 7, 11, 17, 18. Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal: Fig. 7, Blondel, Cours d’Architecture (Paris, 1754), vol. V, pl. LV (Main 8476 Vol. V); Figs. 11, 17, 18, “Livre de differentes décorations d’appartement . . . .,” in Gabriel Haquier, Œuvres de Gille Marie Oppenord Ecuier Directeur General des Batiments et Jardins de son Altesse Royale Monsieur Le Duc D’Orleans Regent du Royaume . . . . [known as the Grand Oppenord] (Paris, 1749–51), pl. CXII (SS5); pl. CIX (SS2); pl. CX (SS1) (CAGEM 4896)

Figure 8. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY; photograph by Daniel Arnaudet and Jean Schormans

Figure 20. Atelier photographique, Archives nationales de France, Paris, O1 1666, no. 1

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