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

Jean-Francois Bedard
jbedard@syr.edu
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 Cypel'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 Hauteceur, 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 ébéniste 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 Bérain, 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 predecessors. 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. *Retardataire* 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 skillful 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, Degoulons, Legoupil, 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](image-url)
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
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 interpretation 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. According to Folliot, a plan in a private collection demonstrates that Hardouin-Mansart had already shaped the fireplace wall to form a rectangular niche with rounded corners. Oppenord framed this hemicycle with pairs of Corinthian pilasters positioned at right angles to one another. The mirror of his cheminée took the place of the central opening of Blondel's arch. Simulated drapery hid the mirror's edges and reinforced the illusion of a void above the mantelpiece. To stress Orléans's successes on Spanish battlefields, Oppenord extended Blondel's military references in the ornamentation. 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 martial 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 bedroom, completed at the end of 1716, recalled the late king's bedroom at Versailles. 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 modifications 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. As suggested by Alexandre Pradère, the right portion of the print (Figure 11, cat. P 9) might show the paneling that flanked the fireplace. 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.

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. Three pairs of gilt bronze sconces decorated with ram’s heads, and a copper and rock crystal chandelier lit the room. 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 Snijders’s wife by the same artist over the garde-robe door to the northwest (no. 677; three thousand livres). 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. Kimberly, citing passages in Dangeau’s journal, allows a mere two months between 8 April and 28 May 1720 for its construction. Other authors date the work to 1719–20 or 1720–21. 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. 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

Figure 12  Oppenord, Plan of the first scheme for the salon at the Palais-Royal, Paris (cat. D 7), 1719–21
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. Hermits, 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 Gobelin 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 I, 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
CCA: Collection 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 Dess.: 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, red and black washes on white laid paper. 212 x 360 mm 8 x 14 in.). (CHNDM, Purchased for the Museum by the Advisory Council, 1911-28-81)

First published in Fiske Kimball, “Oppenord au Palais Royal,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts 15 (1938), 117 fig. 4

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. 775)

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 (MC CAG, D.14415)

Previously unpublished

D 12. Oppenord. Superposed plan of the bedroom, 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-lys, 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.)

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 Fiske Kimball, “Oppenord reconnu,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 13 (Jan. 1936), 46 fig. 7

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, “Oppenord reconnu,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 13 (Jan. 1936), 46 fig. 7


(CCA, Department of Prints and Drawings, DR1993:0010)

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 Oppenord’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 Oppenord, including some pertaining to the Palais-Royal, as part of Blondel’s curriculum at the Ecole des Arts.

C 1. William Chambers, after Oppenord. *A Roman armor, a helmet and a cock’s head, part of the decoration at the Palais-Royal; mounted in Chambers’s Franco 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 Oppenord. *A helmet and a Roman armor; part of the decoration at the Palais-Royal; mounted in Chambers’s Franco 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 Oppenord. *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 Oppenord. *Half elevation of the mantel of the gallery of the Palais-Royal* (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Ms. h.h. XXiia. 92.1 [41])

C 5. Ritter, after Oppenord. *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 Oppenord


LXXXIX of the Grand Oppenord. 343 x 304 mm

P 3. Huquier, after Oppenord. Left: *Piut des Cheminées pour le projet du Palais Royal; top right: Attique pour le Sallon à l’Italienne du Palais Royal coté LXXXVII; bottom right: Clefs des portes pour le projet des Ecuries du Palais Royal coté LXXXVII.*

P 4. Huquier, after Oppenord. *Coup 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 Oppenord. 358 x 340 mm


CIII of the Grand Oppenord. 356 x 516 mm


CX of the Grand Oppenord. 336 x 369 mm


CXI of the Grand Oppenord. 438 x 319 mm


CXII of the Grand Oppenord. 548 x 330 mm


CXXXIII of the Grand Oppenord. 550 x 330 mm


Drawings for the Palais-Royal Formerly Attributed to Oppenord

R 1. Formerly attributed to Oppenord. *Elevation for a table at the Palais-Royal.* 1710. Red chalk on laid paper. 311 x 206 mm (CHNDM, 1921–22–196)
Notes
This article is based on research done for my dissertation, “The Architect as Honnête Homme: The Domestic Architecture and Decoration of Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672–1742),” in the Department of Art History and Archeology at Columbia University. I thank the members of my commit-tee, Professors Robin Middleton, Barry Bergdoll, and Hilary Ballon, for their support and comments during the dissertation process. This research benefited from generous funding from Columbia University, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. It also formed the
ences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Metropolitan
benefited from generous funding from Columbia University, the Social Sci-
their support and comments during the dissertation process. This research

3. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris (hereafter BnF Est.), Ve. 86, [I–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
5. These drawings were originally in the Raduis-Breil collection sold at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, on 2 Dec. 1991, cat. no. 69.
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-
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 Coypel le fils et à l’architecte Gilles-Marie Oppenord,” Archives de l’art français 2 (Mar. 1862), 91.
Royal, 1:284, who follow Blondel, Architecture Française, 3:38.
10. Peter Fuhring has provided convenient transcriptions of late eighteenth-century reactions against the rococo. See Fuhring, Joute-Aurile Meis-
11. Pierre Parre, MémoIres sur les objets les plus importants de l’architec-
12. [Charles-Nicolas II Cochin], “Plans Utiles. Architecture. Lettre à M. L’Abbé R.”* on a très-mauvaise plaisanterie qu’il a laissé imprimer dans le Mercure du mois de Décembre 1754, par une société d’Architectes, qui


18. “Hugues [Huquier] Graveur a publié quelques morceaux d’ornemens de sa [Oppenord’s] façon, qui sont d’une noblesse admirable, & dans un goît 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.


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 ministre 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. Iv. 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 ministre central*. Both marchés confirm the traditional attribution of the gallery’s design to Jules Hardouin-Mansart.


30. Contemporary authors were unclear whether Hardouin-Mansart or Oppenord had been responsible for the gallery’s decoration. Brice described the gallery’s pilastered scheme in the 1717 edition of his guide without stat- ing its author, and he only hinted at a “rich paneling on both walls” orna- mented with mirrors and paintings in the 1706 edition. Germain Brice, *Description nouvelle de la ville de Paris et recherche des singularitez les plus remar- quables qui se trouvent à present dans cette grande Ville*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1706), 1:142; and Brice, *Description de la ville* (1717), 1:203. Décassiers d’Argenville squarely gave the design to Oppenord. M. D. [Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d’Argenville], *Voyage pittoresque de Paris, ou indication de tout ce qu’il y a de plus beau dans cette grande ville en peinture, sculpture & architecture* (Paris, 1749), 81. Yet, two autograph drawings by Oppenord (see Figs. 5, 6) show the entry columns washed in grey ink, indicating existing work, while his proposed additions are systematically highlighted in pink wash, suggesting that the gallery’s pilastered paneling predated his intervention at the Palais-Royal. Moreover, as the rhythm of the pilasters matched the divisions between the ceiling paintings, it can be inferred that this wall decoration dates from Hardouin-Mansart’s earlier building campaign.

31. See Figs. 5 and 6 (cat. D 7 and D 8); and Brice, *Description de la ville de Paris* (1717), 1:203.


36. For instance, the helmet and shield compositions in the upper corners of Coypel’s largest paintings recall the 1685 bronze ornaments by Baltasar Keller after models by Pierre Mazzelini and Noel Pouvet at the base of the pedestal of Bernini’s bust of Louis XIV in the Salon de Diane at Versailles. See Nicolas Milovanovic, *Les grands appartements de Versailles sous Louis XIV. Catalogue des décor au points* (Paris, 2005), 54, image reproduced on 57, fig. 31.


38. Folliot, “Le Palais Royal,” 59, no. 33 (see n. 6), not illustrated.

39. Fig. 7 (cat. P 11) is thus an unfolded elevation of Oppenord’s design. Both the manuscript (BNF Est., Ve. 86, [f. 2]) and Blondel’s printed plan of the gallery (*Architecture Française*, bk. V, no. IX, pl. 3 [see n. 3]) represent each pair of pilasters at right angles with each other so that the infil panels
decorated with pyramids and trophies were disposed on curved planes.


41. Probate inventory of the regent (10 Mar. 1724 – 3 Mar. 1725), AN X1A 9162, f. 13v, 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 Décoratifs (hereafter UCAD), Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris (cat. R 3 to R 5). 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 nos. 7, 43.

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 X1A 9162, f. 106, nos. 1143.

44. AN X1A 9162, ff. 12v–13r, no. 107.

45. AN X1A 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 and Michel Fleury (1752; Paris, 1971), 1:255.

49. “Par exemple Sad. A. R. [Monsieur] a vint faire construire un salon au bout de la grande Gallerie, on avoit dépensé pour ce Salon une somme tres Considerable. Il en a été construit un nouveau, a la place du premier, en l’année 1719 Et en l’année 1720” (For example, H.R.H. had a salon built at the end of the grand gallery, and spent a 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 sienais 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 Odelsalchi 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 Dezègre, AN Z* 553, 27 July 1722; and AN Z* 555, 28 Nov. 1722. The second document is cited in manuscript notes by Maurice Dumolin, “Guide pratique à travers le Vieux Paris,” 7 vols. (1923), Bibliotheque historique de la ville de Paris (hereafter BHVP), Paris, Ms. 74 (Rés. 1) à 80 (Rés. 7), f. 126r, n. 2. I thank Madame Aurélia Rostaing for having communicated the reference of the first appraisal to me. Between 1721 and 1723 Dezègre furnished several works in marble for the Palais-Royal. AN MC Et. XIII, 229, 26 Sept. 1726, f. 46r.

56. AN X1A 9162, f. 19r.

57. AN X1A 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 Keïen, and a Leda by an unnamed painter. AN X1A 9162, ff. 48r–49r; and AN AP* 300(I) 774, ff. 203r–207v.

59. AN AP* 300(D) 774, ff. 207r–v; AN X1A 9162, f. 48v; and [Dubois de Saint-Gelais], 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 dessus-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 X1A 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 Francaise, 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 surmounted 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 Mardy, de Vincennes, de S. Cloud, et des environs . . . . , 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, rprt. 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), rprt. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 25, no. 29. A section (AN, O1 1667, no. 77 [see n. 3], rprt. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 29, no. 32) might be associated with this scheme. The vestibule on the ground-floor plan is labeled: “Grand sallon vouté / de pierre jusques au haut de l’Attique de 16 toises (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, rprt. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 28, no. 31; first-floor plan, AN, O1 1666, no. 1, rprt. in Petzet, Claude Perrault, 31, nos. 36, 36a; site plan, AN, F31 3567, no. 9, rprt. 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). Montaignon “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’Ecole 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. XV (Main 8476 Vol. V); Figs. 11, 17, 18, “Livre de differentes décorations d’appartement . . . .” in Gabriel Haquier, Œuvres de Gilles 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.