

The “Salon de la Princesse”: “Rococo” Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere

Sherry McKay

Volume 21, numéro 1-2, 1994

Représentation et identités culturelles
Representation and Cultural Identity

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1072666ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072666ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)
1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

McKay, S. (1994). The “Salon de la Princesse”: “Rococo” Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 21(1-2), 71–84. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072666ar>

Résumé de l'article

On a souvent interprété l'art rococo de Paris à travers les paramètres d'un discours issu des Lumières que condamnait son ornementation indisciplinée et son manque de virilité, tout en mettant en relation cette décadence avec le corps privé et efféminé qu'un tel dessein semblait contenir et montrer publiquement, de manière inappropriée. Ainsi, du siècle des Lumières jusqu'à la période moderne, il y a eu confusion entre ornement, féminité et sphère publique menacée. Cependant, ce sont précisément ces catégories d'ornement, de corps privé/public, et de sphère privée/publique qui ont produit les tensions dans certains traités sur l'architecture du début du dix-huitième siècle. On peut retrouver les traces d'une configuration balbutiante et encore conflictuelle de la différence sexuelle avec l'ornement sur lequel les Lumières et les architectes modernes s'appuieront, et cela, autant dans les espaces décorés de façon très élaborée comme le Salon oval de la Princesse à l'Hôtel de Soubise, exécuté par Germain Boffrand en 1732, que dans les traités du dix-huitième siècle qui amplifiaient la signification du salon. Le Salon de la Princesse est l'expression du « passage » entre la chambre de parade et les appartements privés, entre sa fonction publique de cérémonie et de réception et l'affirmation du lieu privé de la famille. Tiré du mythe de Cupidon et Psyché, les scènes décoratives s'attardent sur des images qui évoquent le corps révélé par la luxure et les sensations, tel qu'on peut imaginer la Princesse et ses invitées, toutes vêtues de soie, révélant leur beauté corporelle par un décolleté, un visage poudré, un geste. Ce Salon, de par son emplacement et sa décoration, affirme le rôle et le rang social de la Princesse et oppose le caractère masculin du Salon du Prince, ainsi que l'extérieur de la bâtisse. La théorie du *caractère* élaborée par Boffrand, puis Blondel, au milieu du siècle influençait l'architecture, mais réciproquement, le dessein rococo répondait aux changements sociaux basés sur la masculinité et la féminité.

The “Salon de la Princesse”: “Rococo” Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere

SHERRY MCKAY, SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Résumé

On a souvent interprété l'art rococo de Paris à travers les paramètres d'un discours issu des Lumières que condamnait son ornementation indisciplinée et son manque de virilité, tout en mettant en relation cette décadence avec le corps privé et efféminé qu'un tel dessein semblait contenir et montrer publiquement, de manière inappropriée. Ainsi, du siècle des Lumières jusqu'à la période moderne, il y a eu confusion entre ornement, féminité et sphère publique menacée. Cependant, ce sont précisément ces catégories d'ornement, de corps privé/public, et de sphère privée/publique qui ont produit les tensions dans certains traités sur l'architecture du début du dix-huitième siècle. On peut retrouver les traces d'une configuration balbutiante et encore conflictuelle de la différence sexuelle avec l'ornement sur lequel les Lumières et les architectes modernes s'appuyèrent, et cela, autant dans les espaces décorés de façon très élaborée comme le Salon oval de la Princesse à l'Hôtel de Soubise,

exécuté par Germain Boffrand en 1732, que dans les traités du dix-huitième siècle qui amplifiaient la signification du salon. Le Salon de la Princesse est l'expression du «passage» entre la chambre de parade et les appartements privés, entre sa fonction publique de cérémonie et de réception et l'affirmation du lieu privé de la famille. Tiré du mythe de Cupidon et Psyché, les scènes décoratives s'attardent sur des images qui évoquent le corps révélé par la luxure et les sensations, tel qu'on peut imaginer la Princesse et ses invitées, toutes vêtues de soie, révélant leur beauté corporelle par un décolleté, un visage poudré, un geste. Ce Salon, de par son emplacement et sa décoration, affirme le rôle et le rang social de la Princesse et oppose le caractère masculin du Salon du Prince, ainsi que l'extérieur de la bâtisse. La théorie du *caractère* élaborée par Boffrand, puis Blondel, au milieu du siècle influençat l'architecture, mais réciproquement, le dessein rococo répondait aux changements sociaux basés sur la masculinité et la féminité.

The Rococo in eighteenth-century Paris has long been interpreted through an Enlightenment discourse which condemned its undisciplined ornamentation and lack of virility while correlating this decadence to the private and effeminate bodies which such design appeared to shelter and inappropriately present in public.¹ Such criticism continued to have relevance in the twentieth century when architects such as Adolf Loos related ornament with crime and the decorated private body with a threatened public order.² Thus, from the Enlightenment through to the modernist period there has been a conflation of ornament, femininity and an endangered public sphere. However, it was precisely these categories of ornament, private and public bodies, private and public spheres which also underpinned concerns in certain architectural treatises of the early eighteenth century. It will be argued here that in both the elaborately ornamented architectural space, the oval Salon de la Princesse designed by Germain Boffrand in 1732 (fig. 1), and the eighteenth-century treatises which amplified the Salon's significance can be traced an early, hesitant and still conflictual configuring of gender and ornament on which Enlightenment and modern architects would come to build.³ In addition, it is in the period of the Rococo that the attempt was made to accommodate architecturally, via ornament and spatial *distribution*, a transition from a space of aristocratic representation to that of an emerging bourgeois public sphere. Never quite signifying the same thing, as the eighteenth-century descriptive terms for this mode of design—*goût nouveau*, *goût de ce siècle*

or *genre pittaresque*—indicate, the Rococo might be usefully understood as a constantly shifting position adopted by architects and patrons in response to changes in social structure and the representational demands of gender which these occasioned.⁴

Changes in social structure and representation were amply recorded during the period of the Rococo, which spanned some five decades, between the 1700s and the 1750s. During the eighteenth century money had become a distinguishing feature among the various ranks of nobility, where, as one historian has concluded, it “mingled ranks and spread confusion.”⁵ As early as the 1720s the sumptuary laws which had clearly identified rank and condition were no longer enforceable, and would disappear from court legislation.⁶ By the 1730s the traditional role of the nobility of the sword as a liege nobility and exemplar of the French patriot was countered by that of the nobility of the robe and a rising financial class.⁷ The Marquis de Saint-Simon had noted the devaluation in signs and gestures of rank and opposed non-nobles who argued that merit, not birth, should confer the privilege of retaining one's hat in the *parlements*, once the prerogative of nobles.⁸ Conversely, in 1747, M. Lapeyre marvelled at the wearing of the sword by commoner and noble alike and the blending of social ranks in Paris that it signalled.⁹ The cultural arenas of art criticism and architectural commentary also registered their responses to these changes in the social and representational mores of the times. In 1745 Abbé Le Blanc wrote of the degenerate state of current taste, noting the lack of order

Figure 1. Germain Boffrand, Salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, 1732 (Photo: author, 1992).



in the juxtaposition of motifs in painting and the unnatural ornamentation which featured Chinese figures, bat wings and stags.¹⁰ In turn his contemporary, Diderot, criticized the domination of art production by *le petit goût*, a term that designated a lack of elevation in subject matter and style in art produced for private, not public, consumption.¹¹ Germain Brice's architectural guidebook, *Nouvelle Description de Paris, et tout ce qu'elle contient de plus remarquable*, from its first publication in 1684 to its last posthumous publication in 1752, enthusiastically recorded the ongoing changes to Paris as a developing city; shifts in property ownership as new financiers moved to occupy the former residences of aristocrats were a particular mark of a new social and economic world.¹²

At least one architect of the time, Germain Boffrand, worried over the results of such transformations: incorrect mixing of the architectural orders, the affronts to nature offered by novel ornaments, a preoccupation with personal comfort dominating over the concerns for dignified public display, and private dwellings ornamented and planned like princely palaces with their public status.¹³ The ornamented

body, whether flesh or stone, was clearly considered relevant to discussions of the new social order and its representation, as Boffrand makes clear in his *Livre d'Architecture contenant les Principes Généraux de cet art* of 1745:

Une sale [sic] de festins et une sale de bal ne doivent pas être faites comme une Eglise: sur ce même principe, la maison d'un particulier ne doit pas être distribuée et ornée comme le Palais d'un Soverain, ni le Palais d'un Prince comme une Eglise, et l'on peut trouver dans chacun de ces modes, ou ordres d'architecture, les caractères significatifs qui conviennent à chaque édifice.¹⁴

As the Boffrand passage asserts, ornament and *distribution*—the arrangement of functions in space—were understood as strategies by which architecture could order the ranks of eighteenth-century society: the first, second and third Estates. This focus on appropriate hierarchy rendered through design has implications for the Salon de la Princesse. Boffrand was highly respected in his profession, and this architectural space was both praised by contemporaries and recommended into the 1770s as an exemplar of good de-

sign.¹⁵ What this suggests is that the Salon's ornamentation of gilt and filagree, its reflective mirrors and coved ceiling and its spatial position within the plan of the Hôtel de Soubise were expressions of the architect's stated concern for social order. It also implies that there was something in Boffrand's design that even later critics of the Rococo found useful.

Boffrand stipulated in his *Livre d'Architecture* that salons in terms of both *disposition* and ornamentation should assert their function:

Si l'on veut faire un cabinet de musique, un salon où se rassemble la compagnie, il faut qu'il soit riant par sa disposition, par la clarté, et par la manniere dont il est décoré...car la nature forme notre coeur susceptible de ces differentes impressions, et il est toujours remué par l'unison.¹⁶

Just what would occur in the spaces labelled *salon*, or alternatively *sallon*, on Boffrand's plans was not specifically designated, but these rooms were generally envisioned, as he notes, for the "assembling of company," for socializing rather than court representation. In his published plans for both palaces and townhouses, the various precedents for the shapes, sizes and positions of the salons were indicated in the Latin: *oecus*, *atrium*, *aula vasta*, *ampla aula*, and implies an attempt to indicate some differentiation in intended use.¹⁷ Twenty years later, the *Encyclopédie* (1765) refers only to *sallon*, and of its functions states: "C'est dans les sallons qu'on se repose lorsqu'on vient de la chasse, ou de la promenade, qu'on joue et qu'on donne des repas de conséquence."¹⁸ However, the aspect which has become most closely associated with the architectural spaces termed *salon* is that of the Salon, a gathering of people of varied ranks for the purposes of discussing matters of a usually cultural nature.¹⁹

Boffrand's Salon de la Princesse, with its gilt, stucco and mirrored surfaces, provides a useful point of reference for considering two salient themes which have been the focus of much contemporary research on early eighteenth-century France and the period of the Rococo: the identification of profuse ornamentation with the "feminine," and the growth of Salon society. For Jürgen Habermas, the Salon was an institution which stood for a progressive process, the formative stage of a bourgeois public sphere.²⁰ It promoted development from a repressive Absolutist State where the Public consisted of the King in whose Court there was no private realm to a liberal bourgeois democracy where private persons came together to use their reason and to debate issues of common interest. Dena Goodman, following Habermas's model, has seen in the eighteenth-century

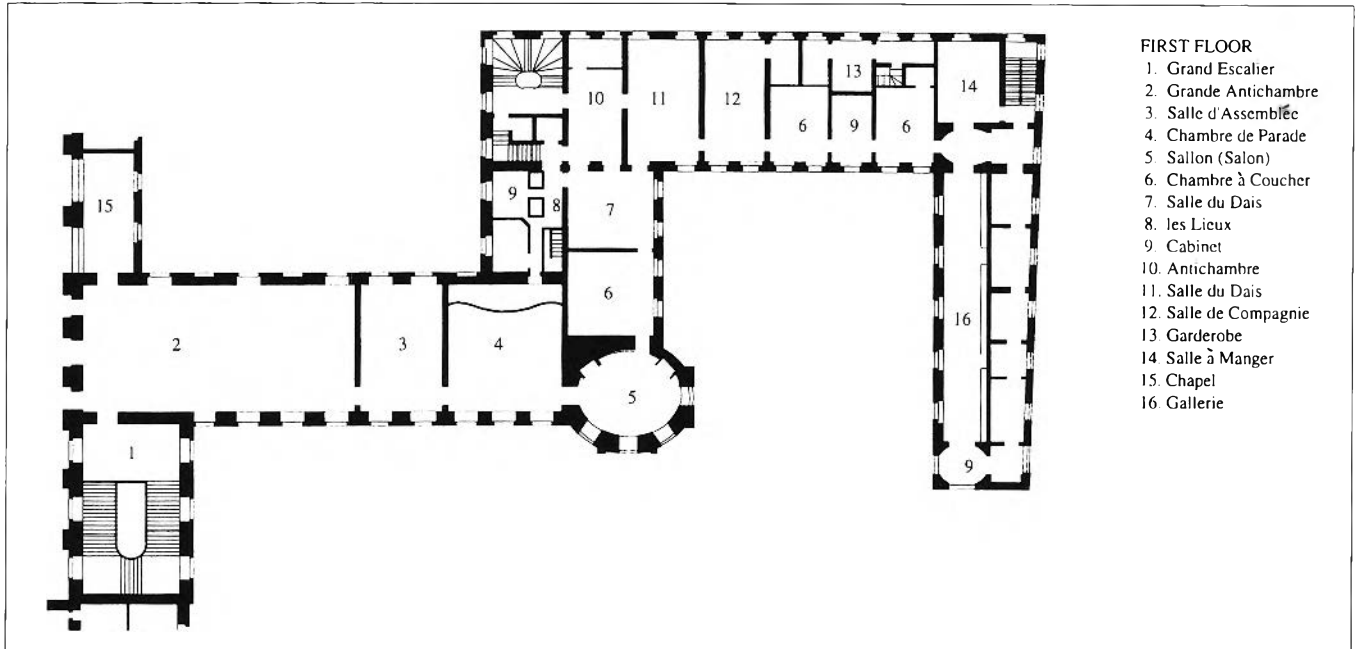
Salon "the convergence of female and philosophic ambitions" where "the salon became an institution of Enlightenment not only by embodying a new set of values, but by using those values to shape a serious working space for the women who led them..."²¹ It was, however, also this Salon society, with its cultivated manners, overwrought artifice in dress and surroundings and socially dominant women drawn from the haute bourgeoisie and aristocracy, that later critics of the Rococo, through the 1770s and 1780s and into the French Revolution, would identify with the aesthetic and social debasement of the *ancien régime*. As Joan Landes has argued, the Salon enabled women to play an influential role in political life, and this would be curtailed by the French Revolution's "silencing of 'public' women."²² Recent historians of the period have questioned the empowerment of *salonnières*, remarking on the deep-seated anxieties which both the Salon and the presence of women there provoked.²³ Within this context, the architectural and pictorial ornament of the Salon de la Princesse, designed for an aristocrat and prominent Parisian social figure by the fashionable architect Boffrand, raises some important questions concerning the nature of Salon activity and the working space that it allowed women.

The Salon de la Princesse: Distribution / Space

Boffrand was commissioned to design the Salon de la Princesse and a compliment of adjoining rooms for the Hôtel de Soubise in 1732.²⁴ These supplementary spaces were envisioned to mark the second marriage of Hercule-Mériadec de Rohan-Rohan, Prince de Soubise, to Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, nineteen-year-old widow of the Duc de Picquigny, granddaughter of the memorialist Dangeau, Marquis de Courcillon.²⁵ A certain ambiguity with respect to rank and gender is encountered in the plans with the attachment of these new rooms (fig. 2). Although the architectural term *salon* is generic, and the society originally gathered within it at the Hôtel de Soubise unknown, something of the use envisioned for the Salon de la Princesse might be gleaned from its placement in the plan where protocol and social etiquette placed demands on access, its place within the plan indicating its place within social practice.²⁶

Distribution, as the translation of daily life into space and the planning of spaces according to specific functions, was a relatively new concern for architects, and it often existed in tension with their other more established aesthetic interests.²⁷ Generally, *hôtels particuliers* and palaces were to express the *apparat* of their owners, that is, demonstrate power via magnificence, and this made reference to daily life less important. However, for bourgeois dwellings, the

Figure 2. First-floor plan, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, c. 1734 (drawn by Scott Edwards for the author).



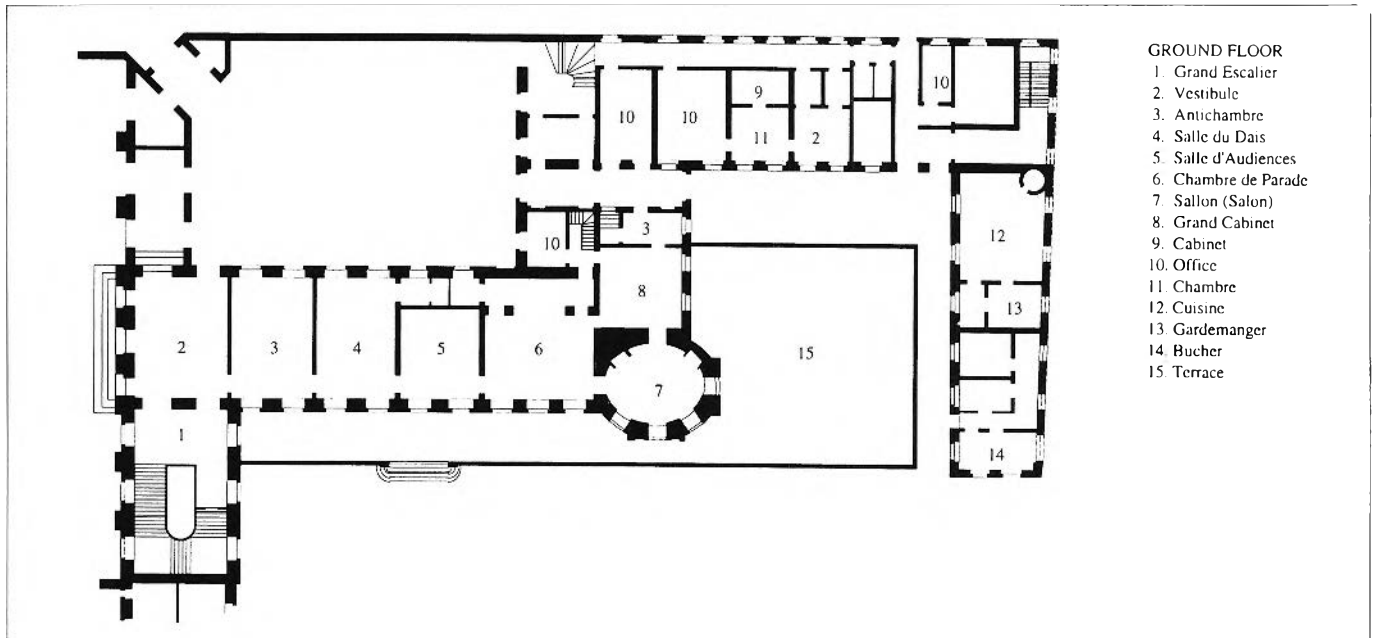
convenience of the plan for everyday life was deemed more important than aesthetics based on proportion, symmetry and *bienséance*.²⁸ Boffrand was sensitive to this and the consequent role of the client, stating that the patron “donne le ton à l’architecte qui doit en faire le plan.”²⁹ *Distribution* also began to acquire the bourgeois connotation of *commodité*.³⁰ For Boffrand *distribution*, “Cette partie de l’Architecture (la distribution) a pour objet la commodité: il n’y peut être commodément si tout ce qui l’environne n’est pas placé convenablement à son service, qui doit être fait avec aisance.”³¹ By the eighteenth century, rooms were becoming grouped according to their use. There were rooms of representation, where one’s duties according to rank and House, or lineage, were performed, and rooms where a society of choice could be gathered, where friends and family met on a regular basis. Finally, there were the more modern rooms of comfort and privacy. The latter consisted of a determined sequence: *l’antichambre, la salle d’assemblée, la chambre à coucher, le cabinet, l’arrière cabinet*, or in its reduced form *l’antichambre, la chambre, la garde-robe, le cabinet et les lieux*.³²

Although spaces labelled as salons in early eighteenth-century plans might accommodate various social functions, they generally served as antechambers to the more important *chambres de parade*, requisite for the representation of rank. In residences requiring less formality, the salon became the most important public space, and access to it was usually monitored by an adjacent vestibule.³³ In the Hôtel de Soubise, the Salon de la Princesse had a rather equivocal placement in relation to these conventions. It was one of a

suite of newly refurbished rooms: *chambre à coucher, salle du dais*, dressing rooms and *garderobes* which augmented the existing *appartement de parade* with its formal spaces of representation: *grande antichambre, salle d’assemblée* and *chambre de parade*.³⁴ Boffrand’s renovation of the 1730s signalled—in the insertion of corridors separating family, domestic and public circulation, the secondary stairs between private apartments, the *chambre à coucher* as a room specifically for sleeping, and the spaces of *aisance, garderobe* and *cabinet*, in addition to the salon—a concern for privacy. These rooms existed in contrast to the larger *salle* or *chambre de parade* and allowed the separation of elective social engagements from those imposed by the duties and etiquette of rank and lineage. The privacy and individuality garnered by these new spaces are now considered the bearers of bourgeois values; they supported new notions of family life while they defined new codes of social relations. Consequently, the Salon de la Princesse, a space allowing some degree of informality, sat at the juncture of the spaces of aristocratic representation (*appartement de parade*) and the less official apartments of the Princess, between public and private life as they were conceived in the 1730s. Although the Salon was evidently intended as an extension of the *appartement de parade*—the door was positioned as a continuation of its *enfilade*, or suite of adjoining rooms, while that to the newer, more private, quarters was concealed—it was built as part of an enlargement to what lies behind that hidden door, the private wing of the Hôtel.

Formerly, aristocratic women had been given equal spatial representation because, as representatives of their House,

Figure 3. Ground-floor plan, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, c. 1734 (drawn by Scott Edwards for the author).



they were considered equal to their husbands. Hence, apartments were duplicated, as is evidenced in Boffrand's plans for the Palace at Lunéville. This practice, however, was problematized by marriages of misalliance, that is between different ranks, as when wealthy financiers married their daughters to impoverished but aristocratic sons, or dukes married their daughters to foreign princes, or foreign princes married their daughters to princes of the blood.³⁵ Rooms such as salons would facilitate this intermingling of rank. Coinciding with this change, aristocratic dwellings began to develop more functionally specialized and gender-specific rooms. For example, the *chambre de parade*, at least by the 1750s, had become an exclusively feminine space—"le lieu où la 'dame de maison' reçoit les visites de cérémonies."³⁶ Although its function may not have been so clearly defined in the 1730s, it suggests that the Salon de la Princesse, adjacent to a *chambre de parade*, may have been conceived to differentiate social from official functions. It was also perhaps an expression of an awakening consciousness of gender as a component of the social order to be considered, but whose configuration was only dimly conceived.

As the convention of aristocratic residences was to render power spatially, just how one reached the Salon de la Princesse was an important index of the Princess' social standing. There were perhaps two routes, although the code of reception for the period would suggest that the more ceremonial one would be more usual.³⁷ Passing through the gate, the Soubise arms emblazoned above, one entered the colonnaded courtyard (fig. 3). Passing through the iron grill to the vestibule one perhaps waited to be announced, then

ascended the grand stair to the first floor (fig. 2). Crossing the landing, one turned and traversed the length of the *grande antichambre* passing before the portraits of François Premier and Henri IV flanked by the military nobles of the House of Rohan. One continued through the *salle d'assemblée*, penetrated beyond the *chambre de parade* with its bed of state and, finally, entered the Salon de la Princesse. Here a different order of architecture was encountered. While spatially it may appear to continue the *enfilade* of the spaces of representation, decoratively it pulsates with the thematic programme of the more private rooms of the Princess. Beyond the concealed door, the *chambre à coucher* of the Princess displayed in paintings, ceiling medallions and cornice sculptures the amorous adventures of the gods, familiar tropes of aristocratic representation.³⁸ Spatially the private life of the Princesse de Soubise is ensconced within the emblematic public life of the House of Rohan and the princely rank of the Soubise. He is the permanence of history, his House and the State; she is the fleetingness of entertainment, the liberty of withdrawal.

An alternative route might have commenced with a smaller stair in the old Guise wing of the Hôtel which brought one directly to the Princess' suite of rooms: *antichambre*, *salle du dais* and *chambre à coucher*. From the latter one would enter the Salon de la Princesse. In this configuration, the Salon would allow the bedroom a more private function, as it would no longer be forced to serve social occasions in addition to those of a private nature. This new suite of rooms would afford a modicum of privacy within the spaces of social life and representation.

A straining between aristocratic ritual and social life is registered in the very positioning of the Salon de la Princesse where it mediates between a nascent conception of private life and existing conventions of representational space. In this negotiation gender was brought to the fore as an ordering device. The tension or ambivalence conveyed in the juxtaposition of spaces of representation with those of socializing suggests something of the social pressures of the 1730s on families such as the Rohan-Soubise. Spaces of representation were still useful to the Rohan-Soubise because it was here that their favour with the King was won and their power ensured.³⁹ Conversely, the social practice implied in the Salon is that of participation “as if” all were equal, an idea which many representatives of the House of Rohan disdained. For example, the Chevalier de Rohan, who frequented the same Salon as Voltaire, took exception to the Enlightenment *philosophe’s* presumption of equality.⁴⁰ The chevalier, at least, did not endorse any dissolution of the privileges of rank; the House of Rohan had, in fact, asserted much effort to move up rather than down the ranks of French society.⁴¹ They wished their status as foreign princes to be elevated, above that of the dukes of France, to a higher rank just beneath that of the princes of the realm. However, the Rohan-Soubise, as participants in the exclusive Salon of Mme. Dupin,⁴² the schemes of Mme. de Pompadour⁴³ and the financial speculations of the financier Laborde, were not insulated from a nascent bourgeois public sphere.⁴⁴ It would seem that Rohan-Soubise interest in any bourgeois public sphere would have been an anguished and conflictory one. The presence and positioning of the salons, for Prince and Princess, speak of a certain tension, therefore, between the requirements of social life and those of rank. Thus, the space of society offered by the Salon de la Princesse is circumscribed by the images, symbols and codes of aristocratic representation and codes of reception. In this manner the architect sought to solve the problem of maintaining, via the *ordonnance* of architecture, the order of society.

Salon de la Princesse: Ornament

The cadence of the Salon de la Princesse is marked out by the story of Cupid and Psyche, portrayed in eight paintings by Natoire.⁴⁵ The myth recounts the fate of a princess venerated for her beauty, who thereby earns the disfavour of Venus, then the love of Cupid, which is forfeited due to her curiosity and suspicion, and subsequently regained by a series of labours of industry and diligence, a trial of housewifery. The story takes place in magical spaces and golden palaces of luxury and wealth. The myth is usually inter-

preted as an allegory for the human soul which, once purified by suffering and misfortune, is prepared for the enjoyment of true happiness. None of the eight scenes depicted in Marie-Sophie de Courcillon’s Salon dwell on such suffering and misfortune, nor on the tasks by which Psyche was to prove her domestic skills. Those which are represented regale the eye with magical transports of the body and displays of luxury, as in *Psyche gathered up by Zephyr*, *Psyche transported to the skies by Love*, and *Psyche showing her treasures to her Sisters*. Psyche is presented half-clothed, all gestures and glances, seemingly freed from the narrative by the sensual appeal of colour and detail.⁴⁶

There are other ways in which this Salon seeks to position the body within it. The paintings are held within a mere trellis of mouldings, their depicted space oscillating before and within it, merging with this screen of mouldings which is the wall, a screen which just holds in place the surface sensations called up by gilt, paint and fantasized images within a tremulous space. The individual narratives in which the depicted bodies participate are denied by their method of framing. These imagined bodies come to inhabit, by their foregrounded position and multiple reflections, the space of the room. We must imagine the Princess and her guests in this salon, their bodies draped in voluminous layers of silk enveloping them in glistening surfaces of refracted light, the *décolletage* of their bodices revealing expanses of white flesh, and face powder and paint re-sculpting their visages, while the artifice of underlying structures fastened this social body upon the biological one. These bodies are in turn encompassed within the artifice of the room. The Princess’ salon is of surface and presentation of self, defined by a frame of cupids and the loves of minor deities—of women specularized.

The Salon de la Princesse (fig. 2) contrasts in its decorative scheme with the Salon du Prince situated beneath it (fig. 3). The former is a swirl with curving gold filigree, coved ceiling and walls dematerialized by the fluctuating surfaces of glass and mirror. The space is constructed of encircling forms and linear twisting, the obscuring of boundaries—as where wall meets ceiling or reflections mingle painted goddesses and guests. The Salon du Prince is the antithesis to this—pale in colour, the ornament more discrete, with pictorial references to heroic endeavours and abstract thought: allegories of Music and Justice, History and Fame accompanied by Politics and Prudence, Geometry and Astronomy, Epic and Dramatic Poetry.⁴⁷ The images and the mirrors with their reflections seem more firmly secured within the orthogonal matrix of the wall panelling. The distinction is marked by the expressive language of line advocated by Boffrand:

...ces différentes lignes [courbes, droite] sont dans l'architecture, ce que dans la Musique sont les tons, qui sur différentes cordes expriment la joie & la douleur, l'amour et l'haïne, les grâces et la terreur.⁴⁸

His salon would evoke stability and reason, hers pleasure and gallantry.

It was frequently stated in architectural treatises of the period that the first thing one attended to upon entering a room was the fireplace with its mirror, where one caught one's reflection and corrected one's deportment.⁴⁹ The mirror, in this position amplifying light and space, would also act as the policing eye, evoking simultaneously corrective taste and the hierarchical authority of the court and absent King, whose ever-present status ordered the *ancien régime*. But the multiplication of mirrors in such modestly sized rooms as this Salon would refract, in an endless visual cacophony, gestures of body or eye. Seemingly displaced from their context, gestural signs, such as the raised eyebrow or beckoning hand, would lose their meaning by losing their bodily referent in their multiple replications in mirrored reflections; they became instead excessive and freed signifiers of sensual surface pleasure.⁵⁰ This very excess of sensation and symbol suggests that a libidinal resistance within the systems of architectural order and social hierarchy is at play, a breakthrough of desire onto the grids of power and control.⁵¹ The Salon de la Princesse seems to just hold together this space of freedom and the legitimizing space of "taste." With the science of sensations then developing in architectural discourse, however, a grid of reason and control could be constructed for such resistances.⁵²

Boffrand was to introduce a nascent, if still vague, science of sensations into architectural discourse in his *Livre d'Architecture*. Here he articulated his concerns for an expressive language of architecture, where the design would be made to suit the occupant, in social status and function:

Il ne suffit pas qu'un édifice soit beau, il doit être agréable, et que le spectateur ressente le caractère qu'il doit imprimer, en sorte qu'il soit riant à ceux à qui'il doit imprimer de la joye; et qu'il soit sérieux et triste à ceux à qui'il doit imprimer du respect ou de la tristesse.⁵³

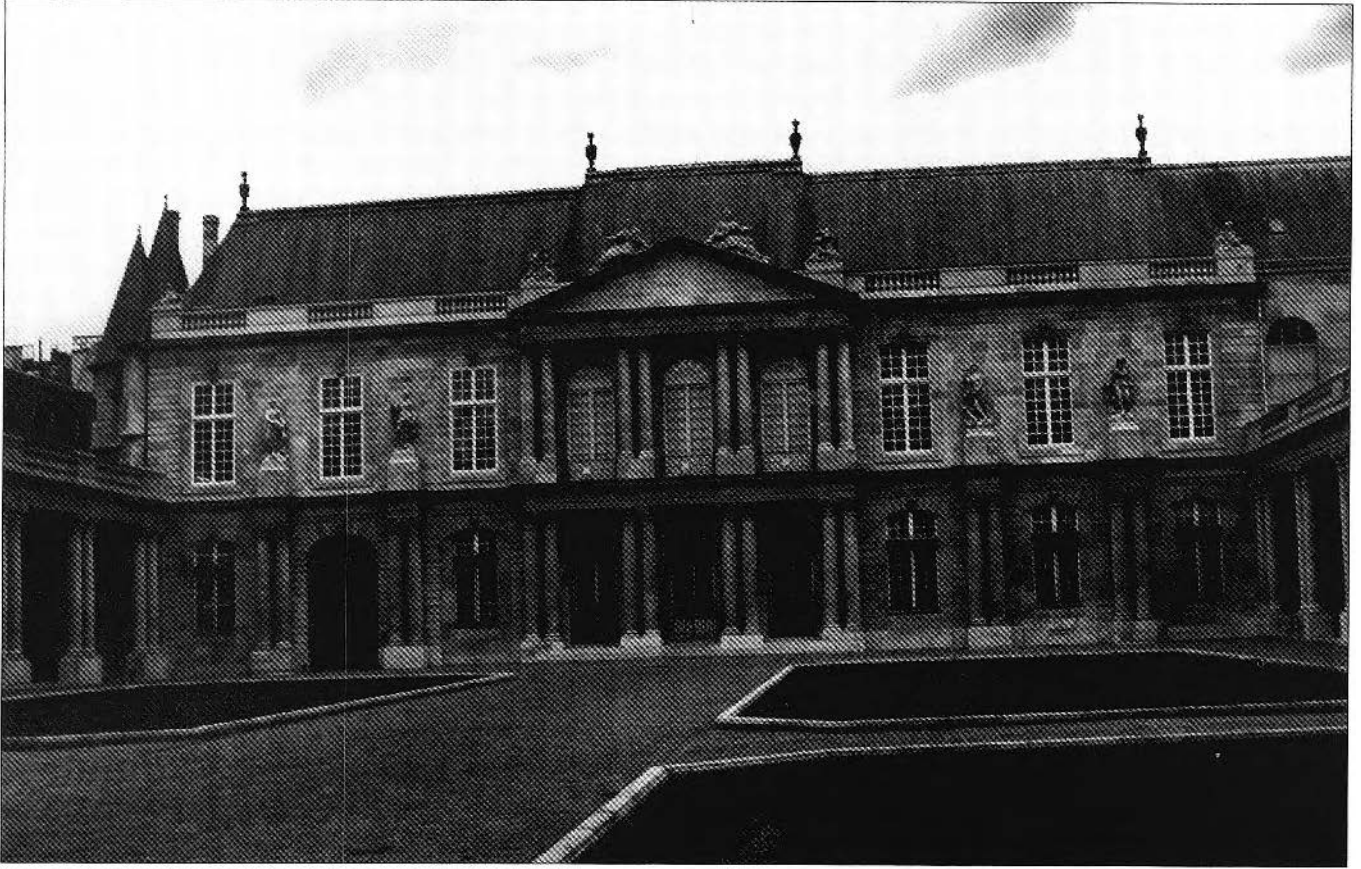
What, then, might have occurred in the space of the Salon de la Princesse? Who might have experienced its persuasive concoction of light and air, of mythical goddesses and real princesses? Was it a space where, as Goodman has argued for Salons, "a new set of values" were used "to shape a serious working space for the women who led them..."⁵⁴ We do not know what company the Princesse de Soubise gathered in her salon, nor if she maintained a regular Salon; there is no mention of her among the known *salonnières*,

although she may be the Princesse de Soubise listed as among the regulars of the very aristocratic and exclusive Salon held by Mme. Dupin, the wife of a *fermier général*.⁵⁵ However, her liaisons were noted in more than one admirer's *mémoires*.⁵⁶ The Princesse de Soubise would become a competitor of Mme. de Pompadour for the King's eye and would have several celebrated affairs.⁵⁷ A portrait by Nattier, which perhaps hung in the Prince's bedroom, depicts a rather informal Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, her hair falling loosely on her shoulders, her dress somewhat dishevelled as she looks away from the book she holds. The book, *Histoire universelle*, is open at the chapter on "Mariage chez les anciens" and her distraction perhaps a witty reference to her apparent interests in other liaisons.⁵⁸ It may also be a gesture of resistance to the Roman customs recounted in her book, customs where women passed from the authority of their father to that of their husband.

In eighteenth-century France, marriage was a contract as well as a sacrament, "an alliance of fortune and social rank,... a property settlement regulating the duties and rights of the spouses and their families."⁵⁹ As a legal act, marriage was defined by royal legislation which had as its concern the maintenance of property and status via the control of inheritance and legitimacy. One such piece of legislation, the *Ordonnance des donations* of 1731, served further to curtail the equality of women before the law.⁶⁰ In both aristocratic and bourgeois patriarchal systems, women were items of exchange in the economy of social advancement or dynastic power.

In a perhaps tangential way the series of paintings commissioned for the Salon de la Princesse seeks to represent and define the noble woman's position in society, caught between an archaic system where one's private person was defined in contradistinction to the King, in terms of one's House, and a nascent one where one's private person was defined in terms of one's gendered social role. It is perhaps significant that, when Boffrand published his *Livre d'Architecture* in 1745, his reference to the Hôtel de Soubise consisted of engravings of decorative schemes for the Salon du Prince and his adjoining *chambre à coucher*, and those for the Princess. Their juxtaposition clearly maintained their proper contrast—his is spare, grave; hers is opulent, gay. These were just the expressive forms with their related sensations that architect and theorist Blondel would later articulate more concisely as *mâle* and *fémeline*, in his *L'homme du Monde éclairé par les arts* of 1774. Here, Blondel would associate ornament *per se* with women, remarking that women were enchanted with ornament, gilding, light, mirror reflections, the movement of the Salon. He indicated that his own, masculine, taste preferred simple

Figure 4. Pierre-Alexis Delamair, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, c. 1709 (Photo: author, 1992).



beauty, and no confusion, no reflections from mirrors. He further stated that “in the style of our manner, salon, boudoirs, etc. are analogous to the lightness and frivolity of the gallant proposals that are distributed there.”⁶¹ Clearly indicated in Blondel’s remarks is the circumscribing of the intellectual pursuits of the Salon, as he put women in their “proper” place.

Façade

The Prince de Soubise and his House of Rohan found its public representation on the Hôtel’s façade, sumptuously renovated in 1706-09 by Pierre-Alexis Delamair (fig. 4).⁶² The entrance gate using the Corinthian Order was emblazoned with the Soubise arms, and the magisterial, colonnaded courtyard framed the decorative program which alluded to the characteristics attributed to a prince. The Prince de Soubise was made manifest in sculptural narratives of Hercules and Minerva, Force and Wisdom, Glory and Magnificence, Renown and Vigilance—themes referring to the military gentleman. When the Hôtel was illuminated by torch-light, Parisians gathered outside were afforded views to the spectacle within. Beyond the façade

could be glimpsed a series of spaces of public appearance and self-display presided over by the portraits of Rohan-Soubise ancestry and French sovereigns. On such occasions the public position of the House of Rohan was given visibility, ordering the social body around it, participants and on-lookers, according to rank. The *Mercure de France* described the illumination of the façade as part of the celebrations of the birth of the Dauphin in 1729:

Le Prince de Rohan fit illuminer les 5, 6 & 7 Septembre, toute la façade de son Hôtel en dehors; la grande Cour des Colonnades & bâtiment en dedans, en Lampions & Terrines, suivant l’order d’Architecture, qui fait un si bel ornement; le Vestibule d’en bas, le grand escalier, & le vaste Salon d’en haut en Bougies, avec de grands feux dans la Cour... L’arrangement ingenieux des lumieres, & le coup d’oeil gracieux qu’elles produisoient, attirerent un nombre infini de personnes, de tous états, qui y ont formé des Bals, & dansé toutes les trois nuits.⁶³

In this celebration of state, the Hôtel de Soubise, with its façade framed by the correct laws of a Classical Order and academic *ordonnance*, proclaimed its status as a public building. It was here that the King’s gendarmes were stationed

and civil order ensured, a function which had justified its paired columns, recalling Perrault's east façade for the Louvre and its courtyard purposely evoking Versailles.

The significance of this exterior and public architectural ordering was underscored some fifty years later at the celebration of a Rohan marriage when Grimm's *Correspondance Littéraire* drew attention to the inappropriateness, irreverence and social danger presented in a fireworks display which depicted Venus' betrayal of Vulcan in a romantic tryst with her lover Mars:

Ce qu'il y eut de plus remarquable, c'est un magnifique feu d'artifice représentant la fable de Vénus surprise avec Mars par le dieu Vulcan. Il y a bien peu de mariages sans doute auxquels ce sujet ne puisse convenir tôt ou tard. Mais l'exécution n'a pas répondu à l'attente des spectateurs, et l'imprudence de quelques ouvriers a risqué de mettre le feu à tout le quartier.⁶⁴

By 1780, of course, the commentary in Grimm's publication could draw on the Enlightenment critique of *ancien régime* culture and a growing view of aristocratic social life as facilitating an unnatural and inappropriate intrusion of women into the public realm. The point here, however, is that such representations of Venus and Vulcan, the former representative of distracting beauty, the latter the cuckolded husband,⁶⁵ within a space designated in its architectural accoutrements as a sovereign and public space of state, would have contravened Boffrand's insistence that public buildings uphold the social values and notions of public morality:

dans les édifices publics...tout doit inspirer la tranquillité, le respect pour les loix et pour la Religion, et les égards pour le public, qu'il faut éviter tout ce qui peut causer de la corruption dans les moeurs des citoyens, tout ce qui peut blesser les honnêtes gens, et dont le libertinage prendroit l'exemple pour s'autoriser. Il faut enfin ne pas offrir aux yeux des objets méprisables et odieux, qui marquent de la rusticité et de la férocité, et ne présenter au Public que des objets touchants, qui mettent l'esprit en repos, et qui recommandent la commisération, la justice et l'innocence.⁶⁶

Thus, Venus brought to the façade, to public view, in an ephemeral event that took place some forty-eight years after Boffrand's renovations to the Hôtel de Soubise, serves to underscore the ordering power that had been initially invested in the architectural apparatus of the Hôtel de Soubise, its graduated spaces, correct *ordonnance* and emblematic flourishes, exterior and interior. Cupid and Psyche, as a theme of love, could be appropriate to the Salon

de la Princesse precisely because it was a space of sequestered viewing that did not flout public decorum. The Salon was firmly embedded within the emblems of the House of Rohan and distanced spatially from the public realm. In effect, the Salon gatherings of Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, as aristocratic socialite and hostess, were "architecturally" policed—held within a well defined and gendered frame.

What emerges from this study of the Salon de la Princesse? In the multiple ways indicated above, architectural discourse—its shifting vocabulary, socially diverse patronage and debates over terminology and protocol—echoed in its changing practice and varied productions contemporary discussions of private and public spheres, and masculine and feminine roles within these spheres. Boffrand's solution to contemporary design and representational problems had sought to clarify social order, via an informed choice of architectural order, line and ornamentation correctly distributed according to the rank, profession and needs of the master of the house. But also implied in Boffrand's distinction of interior and exterior expression, his concern for a public architecture which bespoke justice, tranquility and a nobility that was *mâle*, was the distinction of gender. The contemporary imagination would predispose this gender split in representation, portraying kings as Hercules and women as Venus, and making distinctions in interior space according to the master of the house, graduated from master to servant, just as women's status within this hierarchy was beginning to slide toward the position of the latter.⁶⁷

The expressive architectural surfaces of the Salon de la Princesse were produced as part of the current interest in sensation among architects of the period. In the 1740s and 1750s Boffrand, and then Blondel, elaborated a theory of *caractère* which sought to expand the expressive and representational potentials of architecture and design. Attempts to analyze scientifically, or rationally, and categorize the use of space, to distinguish the spaces destined for "manly" uses from those of a "feminine" type, took its cue from Boffrand. This architect had been concerned with the spectator's ability to distinguish the function of a room, *élégante, rustique, riant, mâle*.⁶⁸ And he was thus concerned in a period when the problems of order in the changing social realm began to be considered in terms of gendered spaces and new configurations of public and private representation. The Rococo, then, emerges as one attempt to bring sense to the disparate anachronistic and modernizing practices of the early eighteenth century.

Boffrand's success within the profession and the acclaim given the Salon de la Princesse by contemporaries lie perhaps in his suggestions on how to keep gender in order:

through a stylish manner of expressive line and nuanced spaces which could negotiate the changing relationships of class and gender which the eighteenth century presented. No longer confined to the general distinction of the architectural orders, representations of femininity and masculinity could be, through the strategies that he suggested, put into play in the Hôtel de Soubise and more extensively integrated with social practices. Masculinity would be expressed in the straight line, the severe, the ordered; femininity in the curve, the ephemeral, the pleasurable. Both social practices and architectural theory deemed the former appropriate to the public realm, the latter to the private. Architectural theory and practice became accomplices to the changing manners and customs of everyday life, which happened to be, in this instance, increasingly gendered.

To understand the Rococo, then, as merely a style of decoration is to misconstrue the efficacy of elegance and luxury in the economy of power in the early eighteenth century; it is also to misunderstand, marginalize or silence the mechanisms by which social space and function were gendered in the decades just prior to the French Revolution. One of the most enduring attributions given to the Rococo is that of femininity superficially associated with sensual delight, its lack of manliness seen as an attribute of the corrupt and decadent social order of the *ancien régime*. Yet as this investigation of the Salon de la Princesse has suggested, the devaluation of the Rococo facilitated a particular definition of the public sphere which has as one of its characteristics the denial of women as a constituent part. What the denigration of the Rococo by later critics as a debased ornamental production obscures is its modernity, which in turn masks the continuation of its patriarchal purpose.

- 1 The word *rocaille* was first used as a descriptive term in 1734 and as a style designation by Jacques-François Blondel in 1772. Criticism of "Rococo" work existed simultaneously with its production. Fiske Kimball, *The Creation of the Rococo* (Philadelphia, 1943), 3. For critiques of Rococo as decadent and symbolizing the failing of aristocratic culture, made in the 1770s and 1780s by Enlightenment social commentators like Diderot and Rousseau, see Bernadette Fort, "Voice of the Public: the Carnivalization of Salon Art in Pre-Revolutionary Pamphlets," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 22, no. 31 (Spring 1989), 370-71 and n. 9. In addition, Georges Brunel reminds us that the term "Rococo" was not necessarily used by its detractors; Georges Brunel, "Boucher, Neveu de Rameau," *Diderot & l'Art de Boucher à David: Les Salons: 1759-1781* (Paris, 1984), 101. For a discussion of the critical denigration of Rococo architecture, see Louis Hautecoeur, *Histoire de l'architecture classique en France*, vol. III (Paris, 1950), 264-66. Thomas E. Crow has also pointed
- out that there was no consensus within the anti-Rococo camp; Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, 1985), 10. For a discussion of the class and gender aspects of the Rococo debate, see Madelyn Gutwirth, "Gendered Rococo as Political Provocation," *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), 3-22.
- 2 Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime* (1908), reprinted in Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London, 1960), 93-94.
- 3 For clarity "Salon" will be capitalized when the social activity of the Salon is meant or when it is used as an abbreviated reference to the Salon de la Princesse; otherwise salon refers to an architectural space.
- 4 The various names given to the art of the period which is now generally designated as Rococo are enumerated by Kimball, *Creation of the Rococo*, 3-4.
- 5 This is the conclusion of Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: From Feudalism to Enlightenment*, trans. William Doyle (Cambridge, 1985), 2-10. The situation described contrasts with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the nobility had been given "its more modern form as a form of legal status represented by a series of legal privileges, determined by birth, and defined by culture;" Ellery Schalk, *From Valor to Pedigree: Ideas of Nobility in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton, 1986), 208.
- 6 Yves Durand, *Les fermiers généraux au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1971), 483-86.
- 7 Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility*, 5, 9.
- 8 James D. Hardy, Jr., *Judicial Politics in the Old Regime: The Parlement of Paris during the Regency* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 34.
- 9 M. de L.P.Y.E. [Lapeyre], *Les mœurs de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1747), 149-50, cited in Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 181.
- 10 Kimball, *Creation of the Rococo*, 187-88. See also Donald Posner, "Madame de Pompadour as Patron of the Visual Arts," *The Art Bulletin*, LXXII, 1 (March 1990), 102-03.
- 11 Brunel, "Boucher," 102, 106-09.
- 12 Germain Brice's guide to Paris went through nine editions, 1684, 1687, 1698, 1701, 1706, 1713, 1717, 1725, and the posthumous publication in 1752 was by P.J. Mariette and Abbé Pérau. The guide was successively corrected and augmented. Illustrations were added in 1713, including one of Pierre-Alexis Delamair's renovation of the Hôtel de Soubise. The architect of the Salon de la Princesse, Germain Boffrand, first appears in the fifth, 1706, edition and became one of the most referenced, and praised, architects in Brice's subsequent guides. See the facsimile reproduction with introduction by Michel Fleury and the cumulative table and index to the nine volumes by Pierre Codet, *Nouvelle Description de Paris, et tout ce qu'elle contient de plus remarquable* (Paris and Geneva, 1971). According to Codet, this was the first modern guidebook to Paris, an easily consulted compilation of historical and aesthetic facts and opinions ar-

ranged according to a promenade. Although dedicated initially to the German princes who formed Brice's clientele, by 1752 it would be dedicated to the Duchess of Orléans and used by Parisians as well as foreigners. The judgements on architecture published there announce a sphere of architectural taste-formation independent of practitioners and academy. Architectural careers were damaged or aided by Brice's opinions. Delamair felt he had been professionally undermined by Brice; Boffrand was perhaps aided by Brice's praise.

- 13 These were all concerns of Boffrand who wrote, for example: "Pourroit-on ne pas trouver ridicule un tableau qui représenteroit une tête humaine posée sur le col d'un cheval, où seroient entremêlées de plumes de différentes espèces, auquel on auroit ajoûté des membres de divers animaux; en sorte qu'une belle femme fût terminée par la queue d'un horrible poisson." And about the ills of novelty he states: "Ainsi donc l'Académie d'Architecture depositaire de ces principes, sur lesquels sont fondées la pureté, et la noble simplicité de l'Architecture, doit être attentive à les conserver, & à s'opposer aux folles nouveautés qui s'introduisent, afin qu'on puisse avancer, autant qu'il est possible, du bon vers l'excellent, c'est en quoi consiste le bon goût." *Livre d'Architecture: contenant les Principes Généraux de cet art* (Paris, 1745; reprint, Westmead, Farnborough, Hants, 1969), 17, 15.
- 14 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 26.
- 15 Boffrand was esteemed by his contemporaries and subsequently by advocates of a more restrained style. Jean Mariette's *L'Architecture française* (Paris, 1727), a retort to Colin Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1716-25), placed Boffrand in the company of Mansart and Perrault. Later critics continued to hold Boffrand's work in high regard, as exemplified in Blondel's *L'Architecture française* (Paris, 1752-56) and this esteem remained unrevised in his subsequent *Cours d'architecture* (Paris, 1774). Throughout the Rococo reaction, architectural commentators—Héré in 1750, Pierre Patte in 1757, Jean-Claude Pingeron in 1771—continued to distinguish his work from the reviled Rococo. Although he had a detractor in his competitor Pierre-Alexis Delamair and Victor Hugo would vilify his work, calling it "Décor Pompadour," Boffrand's work has generally been cast in a more favourable light; see Bruno Pons, "Germain Boffrand et le décor intérieur," in Michel Gallet and Jörg Garms, eds, *Germain Boffrand 1667-1754: l'aventure d'un architecte indépendant* (Paris, 1986), 245 and Michel Gallet, "Introduction," *Germain Boffrand*, 14-15.
- 16 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 27.
- 17 The differentiation does not at first appear to be based on function, but rather on size. However, size would be an indication of the public, social or private use of the room. Boffrand also uses both *sallon* and *salon* to refer to the same kinds of spaces; they are given the same Latin translations. Sometimes the *salon* is two stories high and used as a distribution point to the several apartments leading from it, as exemplified in the Hunting Lodge at Bouchefort where the *salon* is used for the assembly of the Court. It also serves a similar function in the second

project for Malgrange Palace. The *salon* designated as *aula* is found at the end of the gallery. In many instances the *sallon* is translated as *oecus*. At Nancy four salons are designated, the *aula spaciota* is reached directly from the terrace, the *ampla aula* is entered from the preceding *salon*, the *aula vasta* is a circular room reached via several antechambers and terminates the sequence of spaces. At Montmorency the *sallon* is preceded by a vestibule and overlooks a garden; it is translated as *atrium*. This variation in terminology suggests a desire to distinguish rooms just as functional differentiation came to influence and complicate planning practices based on protocol and tradition and where space was not as specific in its designation as it would become in the course of the eighteenth century. It may also represent a conceit on the part of Boffrand, with the Latin terms being inserted as a sign of his knowledge of classical architecture. At the Hôtel de Soubise both *salons* are translated as *oecui*. Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*. Found in palaces and townhouses, spaces designated as salons served social gatherings; in palaces they functioned as gathering places for large numbers of people on occasions which did not require the formality of the *appartement de parade*. The degree of formality attending these spaces can be judged by the number of antechambers and vestibules by which they are preceded. In his *L'Architecture française* of the 1750s, Blondel designated one room on the plan for the Hôtel de Choiseuil of 1723 *sallon ou chambre de parade*, suggesting that the latter was being replaced by the former. It was centrally placed on the garden façade and was preceded by two large antechambers and followed by a large *cabinet*. The more modern Hôtel de Vrillière had a similar spatial sequence except that the *sallon* could also be entered directly from the vestibule. The much heralded Palais Bourbon of 1722 placed the *sallon* at the juncture of two enfilades. One consisted of vestibule, *salle à manger*, *sallon*, and the other commencing from the same *sallon*, consisted of *chambre de parade*, *grand cabinet* and *galerie*. The innovation here is the corridor which also connects these rooms with each other and with the private apartments. See Monique Eleb-Vidal with Anne Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée, maisons et mentalités XVIIe-XIXe siècles* (Brussels, 1989), 47-49.

- 18 Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 3 (1765; Fairview Park, N.Y., 1967), 390. The entry is signed D.J., and J.F. Blondel is referred to for examples.
- 19 The word "salon" meant in the eighteenth century a room, although its particular functions were listed in architectural treatises of the period: entertainments, balls, concerts, public assembly; that is, social gatherings. In the nineteenth century "salon" was used to refer to the intellectual and social gatherings that had been organized, largely although not exclusively by women. The most renowned eighteenth-century *salonières* were Mme. Geoffrin, Mlle. Lespinasse and Mme. Necker. Mme. Dupin's salon, as it was in 1769, contained the most precious objects in the house. Although paintings are not mentioned, tapestries with the themes of *Spring* and *Autumn* and two family portraits are listed; Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 484-85. Mme.

- de la Haye at the Hôtel Lambert in 1753 had a much more richly decorated salon with tapestries illustrating the "Seasons" and "Venus and Love." Two unspecified paintings by Natoire are also listed; Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 485-87. For a discussion of the social functions of Salons, see Dena Goodman, "The Convergence of Female and Philosophical Ambitions," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 22, no.3 (Spring 1989), 329-50, and Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988), 22-28.
- 20 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, 1989). However, this bourgeois public sphere, as it was developed by and in Parisian society, was not unproblematic with respect to women. Their influence was increasingly circumscribed by assumptions about gendered mentalities, and architectural discourse played a role not dissimilar to that of medical sciences in this respect. Nancy Fraser has corrected Habermas's oversight of race and gender in his account of the development of the bourgeois public sphere while still maintaining the usefulness of his analysis. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere. A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis, 1983), 1-32. In addition, history begs some rethinking of the relationship between this public sphere and the freedom of expression and use of reason which it entailed. Nancy K. Miller observes with respect to women's role in publishing (which includes access to the publicity that Habermas identifies as a key determinant of the bourgeois public sphere) that: "The fact that few female writers chose the memoir form in eighteenth-century France reflects in part the decline in social and political power enjoyed by dominant women in the seventeenth century." She goes on to remark that "by the 1730s the protocol regulating the codes of public and private behaviour of men and women had significantly curtailed the spheres of women's social autonomy and political intervention." Nancy K. Miller, *French Dressing: Women, Men and Ancien Régime Fiction* (New York, 1995), 84.
- 21 Goodman, "Female and Philosophical Ambitions," 331-32.
- 22 Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 2 and passim.
- 23 Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 3-22.
- 24 Something of Boffrand's popularity can be gauged by the frequent and favourable comments made about his Parisian work in Brice's *Nouvelle Description de Paris*. The most comprehensive study of Boffrand's work is Gallet and Garms, eds, *Germain Boffrand*. Boffrand was popular in Paris, and was involved in many speculative ventures, architectural and otherwise. He suffered bankruptcy with the fall of the financier, Law. He then practiced primarily in Lorraine, particularly Nancy. This may have made him the favoured choice among other "foreign" princes, although he met the Rohan-Soubise family in 1709 through an introduction by Langlé. J. Garms, "Boffrand," in Gallet and Garms, eds, *Germain Boffrand*, 46.
- 25 P. Violette, "Natoire et Boffrand," in Gallet and Garms, eds, *Germain Boffrand*, 255. She was the daughter of Marie-Anne-Jeanne de Courcillon and the duc de Montfort, Honoré-Charles d'Albert, who were married in 1694. Marie-Sophie was born in 1713. Marie-Anne-Jeanne was the daughter of Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, and Françoise de Pompadour. Hence Marie-Sophie came from an aristocratic family, although not of the most established lineages. Marriage had placed her grandfather within court circles, but he was, according to Saint-Simon, something of an upstart, if a fairly wealthy one. See Marquis de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Saint-Simon*, vol. 6, ed. Gonzague Truc (Tours, 1958), 247, 413, 415 and 634-43.
- 26 For a discussion of the social protocol controlling the access to space and the aristocratic house plan, see Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 57-71. *Distribution*, which had meant the proper arrangement of proportion and beauty, began to develop a new meaning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which was only precisely defined in the middle of the eighteenth century. Much of this early writing was largely theoretical, describing ideal situations rather than actual practices. Although Blondel would be its first systematic theoretician, *distribution* was also a key concern of Boffrand.
- 27 Blondel was, as late as the 1770s, forced to offer alternative designs, one resulting from a priority given to commodious *distribution*, the other where it is sacrificed. See plan illustrations in Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 42.
- 28 *Bien-séance* was a code of etiquette and propriety which was implicated in the maintenance of two classes, the nobility and *le peuple*. It was legitimated by good taste, learned qualities which derived their meaning from social context. The greater the importance attached to the observance of *bien-séance*, the greater must be the refusal of economy. *Bien-séance* was related to *convenance* in architectural parlance where it meant the appropriate expression of the motive of the building, the social role and responsibilities of the building and its users. See Kevin Harrington, *Changing Ideas on Architecture in the Encyclopédie, 1750-1776* (Ann Arbor, 1981), 61, and Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère: Théorie et terminologie de l'architecture à l'âge classique, 1550-1800* (Paris, 1986), 95.
- 29 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 9.
- 30 Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère*, 85-90. Szambien also considered *distribution* to be a reformulation of *commodité*, which originated in the production of bourgeois dwellings in the seventeenth century and as a step in the "bourgeoisification" of French architecture. Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère*, 45.
- 31 Boffrand, quoted in Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 45. Eleb-Vidal traces the development of this concept in terms of domestic comfort. She notes that eighteenth-century theorists stated that "La distribution doit obéir aux principes anciens de convenance qui sont fonction du statut social du propriétaire et aux principes de commodité et de beauté, qui situent et dégagent chaque pièce suivant l'usage

- auquel elle est propre." Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 45.
- 32 Ebel-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 53.
- 33 Boffrand's Palais de Nancy is an example of the former, his Hôtel d'Amelot one of the latter. The *Encyclopédie* described such spaces generally, as: "sallon, grande pièce située au milieu du corps d'une maison, ou à la tête d'une galerie, ou d'un grand appartement." Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, 390. The examples given are classified by their shapes: Clagny (square), Vaux and Rincy (round or oval). The *chambre de parade* was considered by Blondel to be a place of reception used for social representation, that is of one's rank, whose use continued into the early eighteenth century but began to fall out of favour as the rules of etiquette fell into disuse. Ebel-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 53.
- 34 In his *Livre d'Architecture* Boffrand illustrates only the Salon and *chambre à coucher* of the Princess and those of the Prince de Soubise. The omission of the *salle du dais*, is curious; it may be that Boffrand was not involved in its design, but it does not appear to have been present in the plans of the former Hôtel de Guise. Langlois speaks of the salons as being *en suite* with the bedrooms and mentions that a secret stair provided communication between the two bedrooms. Ch.-V. Langlois, *Les Hôtels de Clisson, de Guise et de Rohan-Soubise du Marais* (Paris, 1922), 164, 173.
- 35 In addition, although the Rohans achieved their privileges via their presence at court, by the 1730s they augmented that power by associations with financiers. Saint-Simon recounts how Mme. de Soubise, wife of François de Soubise, was active at court on his behalf. Saint-Simon, *Mémoires* (1709) vol. 3, 32-34. The involvement of the Rohans and Soubises with *fermiers généraux* is mentioned in Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 344.
- 36 Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 58. This was the functional definition given by Blondel in *L'Architecture française* (Paris, 1752-56).
- 37 See Ebel-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 57.
- 38 For a discussion of the role of these themes in the ornamentation of aristocratic residences and about the artist, Nattier, who did many of these decorations, see Pierre de Nolhac, *Nattier: peintre de la cour de Louis XV* (Paris, 1910).
- 39 Lavish displays at the Hôtel de Soubise in 1711 are recorded by Saint-Simon. He states "Le prince de Rohan, qui avait jeté un million dans l'hôtel de Guise devenu un admirable palais entre ses mains, lui donna des fêtes, sous prétexte de lui faire voir sa maison." Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. 3, 950. Again in 1714 he notes a *grand fête* in this *superbe maison*. Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. 4, 918. The *Mercur de France* will note *fêtes* there in 1729, and diaries mention the presence of Mme. de Pompadour in the 1750s. Charles de Rohan, Prince de Soubise, heir of Hercule-Mériadec, will be protected by Mme. de Pompadour despite his disastrous military efforts in the 1750s.
- 40 As Glotz and Maire describe it, "Au debut du siècle, ceux-ci sont parfois considérés de très haut, en simples amusers. Quand Voltaire, qui fréquente la même société que le chevalier de Rohan et croit pouvoir le traiter en égal, se prend de querelle avec lui, ce grand seigneur, refusant un duel, le fait bâtonner par les laquais. Après la Régence, on raille encore les 'bureau d'esprit' où les hommes de lettres sont traités avec consideration. Mais les barrières sociales tombent peu à peu." Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire, *Salons du XVIIIème siècle* (Paris, 1949), 19-20.
- 41 Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 209.
- 42 Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 540.
- 43 See note 57 below. Also, D.R.R., "Charles de Rohan, Prince de Soubise," *Biographie Universelle (Michaud) Ancienne et Moderne. Nouvelle Edition*, 39 (Paris, n.d.), 661-62.
- 44 Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 480-90.
- 45 There are a few precedents for the use of love as a decorative theme for salons. Pons mentions the Hôtel d'Argenton, where the ceiling decoration of the *grand salon* was ornamented with the *Triomphe de l'Amour sur le Dieux* by Coyzel in 1708. Pons, "Le décor intérieur," 190-93. The source for the Cupid and Psyche theme was *L'Ane d'Or* by Apuleius and La Fontaine. Natoire used both texts. It was understood as a story which combined gallantry and romantic heroism; Violette, "Natoire et Boffrand," 258. Natoire had returned from Rome, where he had been a student, only recently, in 1729, and had been welcomed with flattering publicity in the *Mercur de France*. He worked for such influential persons as the Cardinal de Polignac and Philibert Orry, Contrôleur général des Finances; Violette, "Natoire et Boffrand," 256.
- 46 Boffrand wrote that "painting speaks to the eyes, it excites tender and violent passions" (author's translation); Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 16. Gutwirth references the research of Jeri Mitchell who asserts that: "Decorative mythological paintings designed to adorn aristocratic living spaces...constitute a system of meaning referring back to the room's inhabitants, announcing that fully displayed sexuality is the province of the privileged, just as it is the province of the gods and goddesses of legend." Jeri Mitchell, "'Le Commerce des femmes: Sexuality and Sociability in Eighteenth-Century French Representation,'" paper presented at the conference, "Women and the Rococo" (University of Missouri, Columbia, 1987), 10, cited in Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 13. Gutwirth also asserts that the Rococo was read according to a code that was elitist and aristocratic and shared by members of the male sex—"what it conveyed was necessarily a male construction of seduction and of pleasure;" Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 9. Women were depicted as the ephemeral quality of love, a symbol of liberty, necessary for desire; Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 7.
- 47 For an illustration of the Salon du Prince, see Gallet and Garms, eds, *Germain Boffrand*, 232.
- 48 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 9.
- 49 It is interesting that even the art critic La Font de Saint-Yenne

- criticized the extensive use of mirrors because, as Gutwirth summarizes, they "had reduced the function of painting to the status of a mere decorative adjunct" but also because of the "devastating effects upon women" he claimed that they possessed. La Font elaborated on this stating: "Self-love...had the art of presenting to the eyes, and above all to those of the Ladies, mirrors of themselves the more enchanting as they were less faithful." He went on to associate the vanity of women with their representation as goddesses. Cited in Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 16.
- 50 Blondel confirms that a confusion of reflections would be the effect of such decor in rooms of entertainment and gallantry, but noted that the confusion of reflected images was not to his taste. J.-F. Blondel, *L'Homme du Monde Eclairé par les arts*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam, 1774; Rpt. Geneva, 1973) 27.
- 51 On the conception of the social body and libidinal resistance being evoked here, see Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, ed. Joan Ockman (Princeton, 1985), 51.
- 52 Boffrand is cited as a precursor to a long line of eighteenth-century architects, among them J.-F. Blondel, Boulée and Le Camus de Mézières who were interested in sensation and who made attempts to systematize in a scientific manner the architectural ramifications of sensation; see Robin Middleton, "Introduction," in Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture; or, The Analogy of that Art with our Sensations*, trans. David Britt (Santa Monica, 1992), 17-64, esp. 25-31.
- 53 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 27.
- 54 Goodman, "Female and Philosophical Ambitions," 332.
- 55 Durand, *Les fermiers généraux*, 540.
- 56 Marmontel remarks that the Abbé Bernis "was the public and declared lover of the beautiful Princess of Rohan [apparently an alternative designation for the Princesse de Soubise], which placed him, in the fashionable world, on the footing of a man of quality;" *Memoirs of Marmontel*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Leon Vallée (Paris and New York, 1903), 227. The Princesse de Soubise is also mentioned in the memoirs of the Abbé Bernis himself, published as *Mémoires du Cardinal de Bernis*, preface by Jean-Marie Rouart, notes by Philippe Bonnet (Paris, 1986), 86. She is also mentioned in Saint-Simon's, *Mémoires*, vol. 2 and vol. 6.
- 57 de Nollhac, *Nattier*, 81-82. In addition to mentioning the competition with Mme. de Pompadour, de Nollhac mentions the Princesse de Soubise's affair with a certain Valpons. Langlois mentions that the Abbé Bernis had an affair with the Princess, and reference to her is made in Marmontel's *Memoirs*; Langlois, *Les hôtels*, 128, 126.
- 58 de Nollhac, *Nattier*, 81. Nattier was a painter of "historic portraits" fashionable among many aristocratic and famous persons of Paris. Women were often portrayed as goddesses, Venus and Diana being popular. Allegories, such as *The Source* and *The Huntress* were also themes used in conjunction with portraits. Mother and child paintings were occasionally commissioned. Most portraits of women show them with flowers, arrows, and in some degree of dishevelment. Only one other portrait containing a book is mentioned by de Nollhac; that is of Mme. de Geoffrin, who also looks away from an open, unspecified book.
- 59 James Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth Century France* (Ithaca, 1980), 23.
- 60 Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 115.
- 61 Blondel, *L'homme du Monde*, 27, 49; the quote is from 92 (author's translation). He also approves of the *genre pittoresque* for embellishment of rooms meant for amusement and gallantry.
- 62 The Soubise were a cadet branch of the House of Rohan, whose chief became Seigneur de Soubise-en-Saintonge by marriage in 1663 and Prince by the erection of a *fief in principauté*, letters patent were issued in 1667. One son of Francis de Rohan became cardinal-prince-bishop of Strasbourg and another, Hercule-Mériadec, was made Duke of Rohan-Rohan in erecting Fontenay-en-Saintonge and elevated to peer under this name in 1714. Charles de Rohan, Duke of Rohan-Rohan, known as Prince de Soubise and Maréchal of France, died, the last of the male line, in 1787. His daughters were the Princesses of Condé and of Guéméné. François Rohan, Prince de Soubise, purchased the former Guise mansion and commissioned Delamair to renovate it in 1706. By 1709, he began to favour Boffrand over Delamair. His son, Hercule-Mériadec, patron of the Salons, would from that date prefer and use Boffrand. "Rohan," *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, 41 (Paris, n.d.), 514-42.
- 63 *Mercure de France*, September 1729, 2308.
- 64 Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, XII, 1780, cited in Langlois, *Les hôtels*, 200.
- 65 Vulcan (Hephaestus) was the lame and ugly god of the forge and of fire married to Venus. Venus, although known for her beauty, was in the *Illiad* and heroic literature portrayed as soft and weak, a false enticement to the greater task of heroic deeds. Vulcan is also the cuckolded husband in portrayals of the Rococo period, Boucher's *Venus and Mars Surprised by Vulcan*, for example. See Gutwirth, *Gendered Rococo*, 11-13.
- 66 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 28.
- 67 There was, of course, precedent for the gendering of architectural elements and spaces in architectural theory, beginning with Vitruvius' explanation for the three orders of architecture. For a discussion of Alberti's gendering of architecture, see Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York, 1992), 332-52.
- 68 Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture*, 9, 26, 27.