

Vienna, Prague, Paris and Augsburg:

The Provisioning of Interior Decoration in the Ludwigsburg Residence

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The essay addresses the organization and initial stages of the interior decoration at Ludwigsburg Residential Palace in the Duchy of Württemberg. Duke Eberhard Ludwig of Württemberg (r. 1693–1733) ordered the building to be erected from 1704 onwards; he originally intended it as hunting lodge. From c.1711, the duke gradually extended and transformed the complex into a formal residence.¹

The Political and Economic Situation in South-Western Germany after 1700

The focus of the essay is on the campaign of interior decoration, which was started around 1708 and which lasted in its early phase until the year 1716. This topic is of particular interest, since the three residences that emerged at the south western edge of the Holy Roman Empire after 1700 – Durlach (Margravate of Baden-Durlach), Rastatt (Margravate of Baden-Baden) and Ludwigsburg (Duchy of Württemberg) – were being erected after a very long period of military conflicts. The border regions with France had experienced the effect of the Thirty Years' War followed by the War of the Palatine Succession (1688–97), with Louis XIV's conquest of Alsace (including the free imperial city of Strasbourg) of 1681 in between. The year 1701 would mark the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession, part of which was also fought in the German South-West. By the end of the seventeenth century, the territories bordering France were wrecked, economically and otherwise. None of the sovereigns was able to rely on an established staff of architects or court artists. This fact begs the question of how such a building boom of palatial residences – taking off despite a multitude of difficulties around the year 1700 – could have brought forth this high level of quality in architecture and in interior decoration. How was the necessary knowledge about European standards in palace building acquired? In what way and by which means could they be met?

Oberhofmarschall Georg Friedrich von Forstner

After modest beginnings – architecturally as well as in terms of conception – a new basis for the Ludwigsburg enterprise was established in 1707, some three years after laying the foundation stone. From the beginning, the duke's Haushofmeister (major domo), Baron Georg Friedrich von

Forstner, acted as the supervisor of the gardens. While the construction proceeded, the administration became more institutionalized. In January 1707, Forstner was appointed as Baudirektor (director of works). Together with the soon to be created building commission, he was in overall charge of the construction of Ludwigsburg, which he directed and supervised.² In addition, by 1708, Forstner held the office of Oberhofmarschall (lord chamberlain) and became thus responsible for the running of the entire court.³ Georg Friedrich von Forstner (1676–1717), born the same year as Eberhard Ludwig, had accompanied him as his valet (Kammerjunker) on a Grand Tour through Holland, Belgium and England, including a short visit to Paris. Although, so far, researchers have tended to overlook Forstner's role and influence, he was a key figure during the first phase of the construction of Ludwigsburg Palace and of its interior decoration.⁴

Johann Friedrich Nette

In the spring of 1706, only a few months before Forstner was appointed as Baudirektor, Eberhard Ludwig managed to recruit Obristhauptmann (Colonel) Johann Friedrich Nette as his court architect.⁵ Nette, who originally had come to Württemberg with the intention to join the army, was discovered as an architect immediately after his arrival in the regiment of General von Sternenfels, Forstner's brother in law.⁶ Therefore, Nette's foremost patron became Baudirektor and Oberhofmarschall Georg Friedrich von Forstner.⁷ Nette himself had been trained in Berlin, contributing to the construction of Schlüter's Schloss, and in Saxony. Because of his appointment, Ludwigsburg Palace rose above the provincialism of war-torn Württemberg.

In the centre of the residence's engravings (fig. 1) we see the old *corps-de-logis*, which was built in accordance with plans either revised or newly designed by Nette in 1706. In the autumn of 1708, following the completion of the building's structure, the architect travelled to Prague to recruit capable painters, stucco workers and sculptors for the planned interior decoration. We do not know why Nette chose Prague rather than Vienna, the imperial residence, or over southern Bavaria with its many monasteries and a thriving stucco tradition. Yet, from an art historical perspective, some important arguments may be presented in Prague's favour. Since Bohemia, unlike Vienna, was spared the immediate threat of Turkish attacks after the Thirty Years' War, building and decorating activities flourished significantly earlier and more richly than in Vienna. In addition, at the time of Nette's journey a building boom in Vienna, driven by the aristocracy of Austria and of the Hereditary Lands, tied the artists to their wealthy patrons.



Fig. 1 Johann Friedrich Nette, *View of Ludwigsburg Palace, 1709–12.*

Moreover, the attention of the decision makers at Ludwigsburg may have been directed towards Prague following the example of nearby Rastatt. Due to the Bohemian ancestry of Margravine Sibylla Augusta, born Princess of Saxe-Lauenburg, a large portion of Rastatt's residential palace was executed by artists of Bohemian provenance. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that Nette had his own affinities with the Bohemian capital. During his training, he may well have acquainted himself not only with Brandenburg and Saxony but also with neighbouring Bohemia.⁸ Even though geographically closer, the Bavarian monasteries were perhaps neglected in favour of the duke's aspirations to the artistic level appropriate to a prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore, he preferred to draw on cultural and artistic inspirations that included the imperial and royal courts of Vienna, Versailles and Berlin.

Exploratory Travels and Purchases in Paris

While Ludwigsburg awaited the arrival of the Prague artists, Forstner travelled to Paris for just over a month from late March to early May 1709. The fact that he travelled at all and, more im-

portantly, what he purchased there for the Ludwigsburg building project can be gathered from the account books.⁹ The enterprise started on 20 March 1709 with the allocation to Forstner of 500 Gulden from the building budget for '*einer pressanten ausgab, Ludwigsburg concernierend*' ('a pressing expense concerning Ludwigsburg'). All further allocations bear a date after Forstner's return in early May 1709. Apparently, Forstner paid some bills on the spot to be reimbursed later; some of the allocations spell this out clearly. Other goods were paid afterwards and transported to Ludwigsburg; the account books would then mention the additional expenditure for postage and shipping. Some of the money is specified as 'Gulden', other sums were paid in French currency, i.e. in *Louis d'Or* and *Louis blancs*. No original bills of Parisian dealers, publishers and architects are preserved; neither are letters by Forstner to his master. Therefore, many illuminating details of this 'journey of provisioning' remain hidden.

It was obviously Forstner's task to familiarize himself with current trends in architecture, gardening and apartment design, and to transfer the acquired knowledge to Ludwigsburg. The bills allow us roughly to reconstruct his course of action. He first turned to Pierre Lepautre who appears in the accounts as '*Architekt Le Pautre zu Paris*' and was paid 200 Gulden for '*allerlei Garten- und Architektur Riss*' (sundry garden and architectural engravings). Through his numerous engravings, Lepautre's father Jean was probably the French designer of ornaments best known in the Holy Roman Empire at the time. Therefore, with Pierre Lepautre (1652–1716), Forstner immediately engaged with the very top level of the Parisian design world. From 1699, Pierre Lepautre had been an important contributor to the *bâtiments du Roi* in his role as designer of ornaments and first of all as royal engraver.¹⁰ From Lepautre, Forster was able to get exactly what was needed in Ludwigsburg at this precise moment of the building's progression: design samples of the highest standard for the interior decoration of the Salon, of the apartments and galleries. Most likely, the Ludwigsburg account entry referring to sundry garden and architectural engravings has to be interpreted as Forstner's not buying original designs but rather copper engravings with sample designs. The term 'Riss' is used in the accounts several times for both original plans as well as engravings. Nonetheless, the word 'allerlei' (sundry) – in connection with the relatively modest sum of 200 Gulden spent – seems to point at the likelihood of sample engravings being purchased by Forstner from Lepautre.¹¹

Some of Forstner's Parisian purchases can be reliably identified with engravings in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, the successor to the ducal library (fig. 2). There are several series by Lepautre, of which I reproduce one here. This particularly sumptuous series of seven large-format sheets (measuring around 20 x 30 cm) depicts gallery-type rooms with three bays. Forstner must have been impressed by their opulence and wealth of creativity, since each sheet offered multiple variants of sumptuous interior decoration. Scholars date these images to the period of between 1703 and about 1710.¹² This means that, in April 1709, Forstner acquired what was then considered most up to date in palace design.

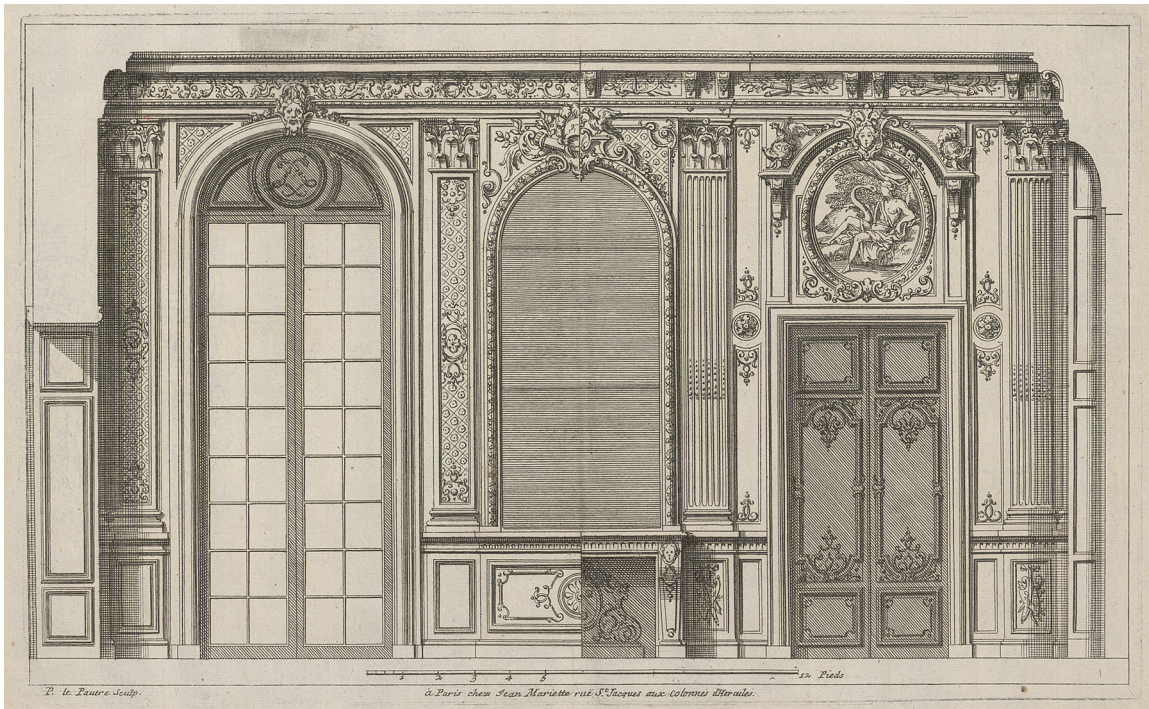


Fig. 2 Pierre Lepautre, *Designs for a Three-Bay-Long Room*, before 1709.

The accounts also mention Lepautre's engravings of garden designs, which were urgently needed to continue with the completion of Ludwigsburg. So far, it has been impossible to locate these engravings either in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek or in any of the other collections with (holdings of) Württemberg ducal provenance. There are several large-format series by Lepautre, which Forstner could have bought in 1709. The innovations of the day in gardening design included trellised pavilions, patterns for parterres and stairways. Forstner also purchased in Paris 'gewisse [...] Riss mechanischer und architektonischer Sachen' (certain engravings of mechanical and architectural things), a multi-volume edition of Vitruvius and four pairs of compasses. The mechanical engravings, which I have so far also been unable to locate in the Stuttgart collections, were probably acquired with a view to installing water features at Ludwigsburg. Their proper functioning was very dear to Forstner's heart.

Most engravings of interior decorations in the Landesbibliothek bear the address of the then most important Parisian publisher, Jean Mariette (1660–1742). His premises were in rue Saint Jacques, a street preferred by seventeenth-century engravers, publishers and book dealers, leading from the île de la Cité to the Sorbonne. Pierre Lepautre lived at the corner of rue Saint Jacques and rue de Foin, and he, like so many others, used Mariette as publisher for his work. Due to a lack of sources, we do not know exactly how Forstner went about his acquisitions of engravings: as mentioned above, the preserved documents prove that he first called at Pierre Lepautre's workshop since he had close links to the *bâtiments du Roi*. Unfortunately, we do not know whether he then directly approached Mariette, the publisher of the subsequent series of engravings, or

if he trusted a well-stocked book dealer. The name Mariette does not appear in the Ludwigsburg accounts. A Parisian book dealer called Charles Nemar, on whom the relevant dictionaries offer no further information, is documented once with respect to additional later orders of books and patterns.

There is proof that, for 228 Gulden, Forstner bought engravings from Mariette's publishing programme: 'Pariser Modellen als Betten, Sessel auch Riß von Caminen und Spiegel' (Parisian models as beds, arm chairs also engravings of chimneys and mirrors). Given a mention of bed hangings – a rarity in books of engravings – this passage in the accounts has to be linked to a series of engravings (of bed hangings) by Nicolas Pineau (fig. 3). Since these patterns of bed hangings are bound in early eighteenth-century brocade from Augsburg it is possible to identify this entire book of engravings – in conjunction with Lepautre's large-scale wall sequences – as the Paris purchase of 1709. In this book, one also finds a series of consoles by Nicolas Pineau (fig. 4) to which, so far, it has not been able to ascribe a date. Consequently, Forstner's purchases help establish an important date *ante quem*. Pineau was only twenty-four years old in 1709 but developed into one of the most significant designers of Régence ornament.



Fig. 3 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for Bed Hangings*, before 1709.



Fig. 4 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for a Console*, before 1709.

Augsburg – Centre of Artisanal Transfer

Another important source for up-to-date French patterns was the relatively nearby city of Augsburg – a centre for publishing and the art of goldsmithing. Nette's journey there is recorded for the summer of 1709, a crucial year for the interior decoration of Ludwigsburg, in which the Prague artists arrived and Forstner went to Paris. In Augsburg, Nette and the publisher Jeremias Wolff arranged the publication of engravings of Ludwigsburg Palace. Wolff's publishing programme also included engravings after Berain. At the Württemberg court, these were bound in early eighteenth-century brocade from Augsburg and Nette might have purchased them in 1709. Moreover, his proven early knowledge of Paul Decker's *Fürstlicher Baumeister*, published as late as in 1711, may well have been facilitated by Wolff, publisher for both Nette and Decker.

It is difficult to explain how the Parisian designs were used. It seems, however, that the northern Italian stucco artists, Donato Giuseppe Frisoni and Tommaso Soldati, who had arrived from Prague, made quite an impression with the help of their skills and that their exceedingly magnificent stucco decorations were very compelling. The ceilings of the eastern ground floor apartment, according to the current state of research, were executed during the very early phase

of their stay in Ludwigsburg (figs. 5 and 6). Frisoni and Soldati did what they could and presented their skills by the use of techniques such as bronze and brass plating.



Fig. 5 Ludwigsburg palace, stucco ceiling on the ground floor, Donato Giuseppe Frisoni, 1709.



Fig. 6 Ludwigsburg palace, stucco ceiling on the ground floor, Tommaso Soldati, 1709.

It seems that at first the Parisian patterns were used in a rather subordinate and, particularly, in a non-figurative context. The purely ornamental ceiling panels of the ground floor passage seem to indicate such a *modus operandi* (fig. 7). Here, traditional motifs such as sweeping trefoil medallions and acanthus were combined unexpectedly with distinctive scrollwork drawn from Jean Berain's engravings. However, in subsequent decorative phases, Frisoni, Soldati and Frisoni's nephew, Riccardo Retti, who later joined them, were able to harmonize convincingly their own repertoire with French motifs. As an example may serve the ceiling fresco of 1715 in the Marmor-saletta (little marble hall), based on the plafond of the Palais Tessin in Stockholm, knowledge of which arrived in Ludwigsburg via an engraving executed by Sébastien Leclerc in Paris.¹³



Fig. 7 Ludwigsburg palace, stucco ceiling in the ground floor vestibule, 1710.

The textiles of Ludwigsburg's old *corps-de-logis* were tapestries and mainly produced in the Duchy. Following the examples of Berlin, Ansbach (Schwabach) and Bayreuth (Erlangen), back in 1698 Eberhard Ludwig had granted privileges to the Huguenot Charles Leonhard Tellier, who had arrived from Schwabach, with a view to establishing a manufacture in Stuttgart. The enterprise flourished due to the duke's many orders. Most of the tapestry cartoons were variations on famous models. For example, a painting by the French artist Claude Simpol, presumably from 1711 and 1712,¹⁴ served as model for one of the four-part series of the Four Seasons.¹⁵ Despite their high quality and their use of French models, in 1715 Eberhard Ludwig decided to send Tellier to Paris to purchase tapestries for nearly 5,000 Gulden.¹⁶

Non-figurative textiles used in Ludwigsburg, such as borders and fabrics, were purchased from court Jews, who also supplied the electoral court in Mainz. Tailoring and embroidery were carried out in Stuttgart. Some less sumptuous textiles were produced in Neuhausen auf den Fildern, a Catholic enclave near Stuttgart. In either case, it seems that Forstner dictated colours, patterns and materials and checked the results on site.

Conclusions

In this final part, I would like to address Paris's possible function as role model for the interior decoration at Ludwigsburg Palace. My conclusions are mainly based on the intentional acquisition of Parisian models, which I was able to prove for the year 1709 with the help of the Ludwigsburg account books and of the holdings of prints and drawings preserved in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek. When Forstner left for Paris in the spring of 1709, the duke in Ludwigsburg (and presumably Forstner as well) was still uncertain about how good the artisans from Prague might be. It is also possible that Eberhard Ludwig and his Baudirektor Forstner aspired to something quite beyond the usual repertoire of travelling northern-Italian plasterers and stucco artisans. In any case, additional French models were obtained. They served to broaden horizons, to further the general education and, possibly, to offer some inspiration to the artists arriving from Prague. Irrespective of their later use, the original prime motive was to establish an awareness of European standards. The rather hesitant implementation of the engraved Parisian models certainly had something to do with the exceptional quality of the Prague stucco workers. Moreover, the engraved designs of Daniel Marot arrived at Ludwigsburg in the year of 1712 and seem to have been much more to the duke's 'Baroque' taste than the rather sober Parisian models of the *bâtiments du Roi*. Jean Marot, who had left France in 1685 after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes to go to the Netherlands and then to England, specialized in designing completely furnished rooms, including beds of state, upholstered chairs, clocks and porcelain. Obviously, it was Marot, who provided the high artistic standard that Duke Eberhard Ludwig wished to claim for himself to become accepted by the princes and electors of the Holy Roman Empire as well as by his military idol, Eugene of Savoy.

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Illustrations

Figs. 1–4 photos: Württembergische Landesbibliothek Sch.K.fol. 23 and 983.

Figs. 5–6 photos: Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague.

Fig. 7 photo: author.

¹ For a detailed overview of the architectural and artistic history of Ludwigsburg Residential Palace, see Fleischhauer 1958 and Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg 2004.

² Weiß 1914, p. 36. Merten 2004, p. 12.

³ Oßwald-Bargende 2000, p. 83. The Oberhofmarschall was the highest-ranking administrator of a princely court. He ran the Hofmarschallamt (Chamberlain's Office) and supervised all economic affairs.

⁴ Forstner's role as Baudirektor was first acknowledged in Weiß 1914, p. 36. Forstner as Baudirektor is judged rather negatively by Fleischhauer 1958, p. 175. Allegedly, Forstner encouraged the duke's excessive expenditure for Ludwigsburg, '*ohne jedes Verständnis und ohne menschliches Gefühl für die verheerenden Auswirkungen der in gar keinem Verhältnis zu dem bescheidenen Wohlstand des Landes stehenden ungeheuerlichen Ausgaben für das Bauwesen*' (lacking every understanding and human feeling for the damaging consequences of the monstrous building expenses that bore no relation to the modest prosperity of the country. Transl. by Gerhard Bissell). This essay provides a glimpse into my more substantial, ongoing research into his role; Seeger forthcoming c. 2019–2020.

⁵ Reasons for Nette's early arrival in Ludwigsburg in the spring of 1706 are discussed in Seeger c. 2019–2020.

⁶ Merten 2004, p. 12.

⁷ Weiß 1914, pp. 19–20. Fleischhauer 1958, pp. 174–77.

⁸ To alleviate the illness that affected him from 1708 onwards, Nette did not choose one of the Black Forest spas in Württemberg but travelled to Carlsbad in Bohemia (Weiß 1914, p. 21).

⁹ Forstner's purchase of French engravings is first mentioned in Fleischhauer 1958, p. 175. Fleischhauer refers to source material without postulating a journey to Paris at this point. For references in the account books, listing purchases of engravings, see Merten 2004, p. 17 with detailed sources.

¹⁰ Préaud 2008, p. 22.

¹¹ Higher-ranking or artistically more ambitious courts such as that of the elector of Bavaria or the Würzburg Prince Bishop Johann Philipp Franz von Schönborn were not satisfied with mere reproductions. Rather, they consulted an architect in Paris to revise their plans (Robert de Cotte) or even hired a French architect outright (Germain Boffrand).

¹² Wilke 2016, cat. no. 162, II, pp. 207–09.

¹³ Pozsgai 2004, pp. 83–85.

¹⁴ Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg 2002, pp. 133–35.

¹⁵ It is likely that Tellier was entrusted with the task of finding appropriate models. At least, the way Pierre Mercier's Berlin manufacture usually operated makes one expect such a course of action; Heinz 1995, p. 195.

¹⁶ Fleischhauer 1954, pp. 254–56.