The Model of a Régence Palace Interior:

The Dollhouse Collection *Mon Plaisir* in Arnstadt, Germany (1690–1750)

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Few complete cases of Régence interior decoration have outlasted the changing taste of fashion and successive campaigns of re-decoration to this day. One example still exists, however, in the rather extraordinary medium of the dollhouse collection *Mon Plaisir* in Arnstadt, Germany. The main part of the collection was brought together between 1715 and 1735 and, therefore, follows the Régence style, which reduced the monumental scale of the 'absolute' Baroque before it turned into the *rocaille* ornament of the Rococo. Its dominant stylistic device is floral or geometrical strap work ('Bandelwerk'), that covers walls, the lambris/dado, doors and fire-screens in *Mon Plaisir* (fig. 1). The collection, in general, offers wide possibilities of interpretation as to its various personal and symbolic functions for the court, the collector and the local society.[1] The examination of the constructing principles of the miniature houses, of the interior decorative schemes and of the furnishings allows us to reflect on possible parallels to original full-size decorative schemes and to draw conclusions about the contemporary reception of the French Régence in Germany. Nonetheless, it needs to be clarified what is usually meant by the term 'régence' and what are its stylistic key elements. After a brief introduction to the history and background of the collection, the aesthetic principle and iconography of the scenes, the production of the miniature furniture and of the doll-figurines, this essay will focus on the types of rooms within the miniature palace. It will investigate the defining interior elements, look at the construction of walls and ceilings and at the usage of furniture indoors, before summing up in relation to the theory of 'cultural transfer'.

Fig. 1 *Blue Salon.* The interior decoration contains a double-winged door with strap work ornament and silk wall cover, dado panelling and a white chimneypiece in the background.

The Régence Period in Europe and Key Elements of its Interior Design

The term 'régence' traditionally has two meanings. First of all, the term refers to the decade between the death of Louis XIV of France in 1715 and the succession of Louis XV in 1723 and thus to the period during the regency of Philip of Orleans. Later the term for a short phase in French political history was transferred to denominate a decorative style. The Régence as a style marked the end of the heavy Baroque opulence, both in interior design, ceremonials and behavioural norms at great and small courts in Europe. As mentioned above, technically, the term only applies to seven years but as a decorative fashion, it began around the year 1700 toward the end of Louis XIV's reign- and after the Bourbon wars of succession. The style originated in Paris as a reaction against the official art of the 'absolute' state and was initiated by an elite of urban aristocrats who favoured a more private, yet highly aristocratic taste, the prime aesthetic principle of which followed the idea of grace and gallantry. Régence style as a cultural reaction is the result of the dawning change of the political and social system of the ancient regime. Generally, French and also English decorative systems and furniture take their labels from the ruling monarch during its height of popularity, for example *Louis Seize* or *Queen Anne*. The Régence style was, however, not named after Philip of Orleans who was only acting as stopgap for the next king. The lack of a strong sovereign led to a phase of insecurity as if French society had come to a halt while waiting for the next king to grow up. The Régence also coincided with the early Enlightenment movement

in which the individual was expected to overcome the traditions of societal standing and rank. Just as the political term 'regency' marks non-permanency, the stylistic label carries the connotation of a transitional phase. Interior decoration now established an up-to-then unknown diversity of vocabulary for public and private spheres of the arts at court. With the success of the more private over the stately taste within the French nobility came the dominance of the ornament over Baroque themes and decorations. In Paris, the comparably smaller architectural type of the 'hotel de ville', for example the Hotel d' Assy (1719) and the Hotel de Toulouse with its famous Galerie Dorée (1717–20), became the alternative to the grand palaces of the Baroque. The Régence saw the dawn of fayence and porcelain collections, which would become a social must after the building of the Trianon de Versailles; it saw the fashion of the China-mania among European elites. Chinoiseries flooded the Continent through the services of the East India company, so did furniture covered in shiny and durable lacquer of the K`ang Hsi period after 1680, but such goods were soon produced by European companies as well. Treatises explained the professional furniture makers and also to laymen how to 'Japan' a surface.[2]

Although there is an ongoing interest in the political Régence by historians,[3] hardly any art-historical research has undertaken a systematic approach to the decorative style.[4] 'Régence' for a 'transitional style', is usually applied when talking about the stylistic changes in interior decoration, in furniture, of hairdo and of dresses but it is not usually used as an independent term for an era sandwiched between the Baroque and Rococo.[5] Instead, it is considered a late, peculiar version ('Sonderform') of the Baroque and understood as marking either the end of the Baroque period or to be at the threshold to a new style, the beginning of the Rococo-period. It shares the fate of all transitional phases, since it is neither the one nor the other and, therefore, it cheats spectators and scholars of clear and recognizable patterns. Scholars seem to like the opulent Baroque and the eccentric Rococo at their most developed and with clear-cut characteristics, while interim phases are stylistically blurred, more complex and methodologically difficult to grasp. The Régence appears to emit a refined and delicate atmosphere, almost a reluctance that seems not to attract many scholars these days.

The Interior Design of the Régence Period and Stylistic Elements

It is not easy to extract distinct features of the Régence period exactly for the reason of its intermediate position between Baroque and Rococo. Nonetheless, some defining stylistic criteria of the Régence style can be identified. The Régence is characterized by its unpretentious variety of forms. The period interiors demonstrate an overwhelming importance given to the ornamental form (only exceeded by the Rococo), as a decorative device preserved from the Baroque. Visually, it implies an ongoing metamorphosis, a transition from the figurative to the floral to the material to the ornamental. One key element is the ornamental design of strap work ('Bandornament' or 'Bandelwerk'), which was developed by Bérain and Marot around 1700. In Germany it was widely recognized between 1715 and 1740 and was also used in *Mon Plaisir* (figs. 2a and 2b).[6] It is a complex fusion of the arabesque with acanthus leaves and small straps and exists in a floral and

curved and in a geometrical form. The ornament also includes figural themes and objects that, once applied to wall panels, wainscoting and table tops, were reduced to a mere ornament. The Régence preferred plain pilasters and a soft curvature and it aimed at connecting wall and ceiling zones. Nevertheless, the scheme of arranging walls was still oriented towards a more Baroque axiom of hierarchical order with a rhythmical change between pilaster and wall zone, wainscoting and frieze zone. The ornamentation is organized symmetrically and based on frequent repetition and intentional convergence. Most influential were French and German engravings of ornaments as well as pattern-books, which were reminiscent of the grotesques of the Renaissance. They formed the underlying ideas of the stylistic concept. Preferred colours were gold, white, pastels/ light colours and light patterns. The ornament became the connection between architecture and interior decoration.

Figs. 2a-b *Widows' Salon*. Régence wallpaper and *boudoir*,
simple painted Régence ornament on dado/lambris (detail).

Because of the importance of the ornament, the decorative arts became the central media of the new fashion and were considered the highest form of art to overtake all other genres. The style thus spread through the work of decorators, cabinet-makers and bronze-workers such as Robert de Cotte (1656–1735) and Charles Cressent (1685–1768), Jean Bérain the Elder (1640?–1711), the architect and engraver Daniel Marot (1661–1752).[7] Influential were André Charles Boulle (1642–1732)[8] as well as the draughtsman of ornaments Gilles Marie Oppenordt (1672–1742), who designed parts of the interior decoration of the Palais Royal in 1716.[9] Their work impressed contemporaries by marquetry made from ivory, tortoiseshell and metal or with tapestried chairs. Of significant influence, especially on the decoration of furniture and on the fashions of the time were the works of Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) in the years after 1700 as painter of the spirit of the age in the form of the Fête Galante of an enlightened nobility who dreamt of an Arcadian idyll. This idyll is represented in several scenes of the dollhouses (fig. 3). Equally important were the designs of Judocus de Vos's series of 'European' chinoiseries between 1720 and 1730.[10]

Fig. 3 *Ballroom*. The court is dancing: ceiling-high, carved wooden chimneypiece
with mirrors, wall-lustres and chandeliers.

Although the style originated in France, it developed into an internationally appreciated courtly taste and was quickly adopted throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Starting in around 1700, it became the dominant and most popular style for interior design and of the applied arts and crafts.[11] The pace of the European-wide reception of the new style depended on the medium to which it was applied. While women's fashions, transferred with the help of wooden mannequins were adopted immediately, interior decoration and furniture underwent a slightly delayed reception.[12] While in Paris modern style had already moved on to Rococo, the Régence had its heyday in Germany. Ambitious projects were undertaken by Wittelsbach patrons in Munich (Amalienburg and Residenztheater) and Cologne (Falkenlust) at the time, while Frederick the Great adopted strap work ornament in Potsdam (Sanssouci). At this point, the floor plans of the French Régence hotel departed from axial symmetry, for example in the case of the Hotel de Matignon in Paris built by

Jean Courtonne in 1722. In the Habsburg Empire Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt's (1668–1745) Oberes Belvedere, built between 1721–1723 in Vienna, went well beyond the usual ornamentation of furniture, interior decoration and ground plans to arrive at the ornamentation of a monumental architecture, which would gain fame by way of Salomon Kleiner's engravings.[13] Outside the princely courts of the high aristocracy, the situation was more diverse. In German rural courts an eclectic combination of modern-style interior decoration and traditional forms developed between 1710 and 1740. If we wish to understand the example of the dollhouse as a mirror of contemporary interiors, we have to take into account that only certain decorative elements of the Régence were adopted for some genres, rather than entire French decorative schemes or complete 'period rooms'.

The Historical Background of the Dollhouse Collection and its Collector

At the age of eighteen, Auguste Dorothea of Schwarzburg, Princess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1666–1751) married Count Anton Günther II of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, a small German territory in Thuringia/Germany (fig. 4). To match her social standing among the nobility, the already small territory was divided and Anton Günther became the sole ruler of Schwarzburg-Arnstadt, which held 4,000 inhabitants. The couple resided in Schloss Arnstadt, a four-winged building dating back to the sixteenth century, which had been erected by the only politically important member of the family, Günther XLI (1529–83), who had served three emperors as a successful military and political leader. After his death, no other member of the family rose to more than local importance. Nonetheless, the dynasty belonged to the old nobility of the Holy Roman Empire. They were considered ideal representatives of their status as counts and, although they became Lutheran during the Reformation, always kept on good terms with the emperors in Vienna.[14] Auguste, therefore, married into an old and traditional house, which had neither territory nor political powers. Anton Günther was an intellectual, beset by ill health and unable to walk. As an antiquarian, he spent all his money on collecting coins and medals and kept a lively social circle of poly-historians and numismatists.[15] The social atmosphere at the Arnstadt court must have been more inspiring than one would expect from a place so small, but the childlessness of Auguste marred their happiness. After 15 years of marriage, Auguste increased her expenditure on luxury goods and turned to collecting dolls, most likely as a substitute for failed motherhood, but also because of her upbringing in accordance with ideas of a gendered education that included handicraft for women.[16]

Fig. 4 Portrait-figurine of Augusta Dorothea as widow.

Besides her garden, the collecting of dolls and dollhouses became the central occupation of her life. The earliest accounts of the dollhouse collection began in the 1690s and run as far as the very year of her death in 1751. The collection was steadily enlarged and amounted to 82 scenes in (originally) 17 dollhouse ensembles with over 2,000 miniature pieces and over 400 figurines. The collection was presented in a gallery in her private *maison de la plaisance* called Augustenburg, which had been built around 1710 near Arnstadt. After the death of her husband in 1716, the princess moved to her summer palace, which subsequently became her widow's seat. At times, she employed up to 100 servants who organized and managed a large household and real estate, including the food supply and trade, and which functioned like a small state ruled by her as the dowager. Compared to other aristocratic widows, therefore, she needed and spent a lot of money. Even though both the Brunswick branch and the agnate branch of her marital family tried to find cheaper solutions for her, such as a convent, she insisted on staying in her house and near her old territory.[17] No one objected seriously and, thus, here she lived there for another 35 years until her death.

Upon her death, the collection stayed at her palace for another 16 years, after which it was given to the newly founded orphanage of Arnstadt. *Mon Plaisir* had been visited by local nobility and by the public, while it was still on display in Augustenburg. Formerly part of a cabinet of curiosities it now entered an educational context and served as model on how to run a well-organized household for the orphans and certainly also as a memorial piece of the princess. In the early

nineteenth century, the orphanage was converted into a mental asylum and the dolls' houses were moved to the attic and eventually forgotten. Decades of utter neglect did great harm to the dolls and the houses as the delicate wax heads fell off, the figurines and furniture were dishevelled, pieces were broken and the eighteenth century textiles of walls and clothing as well as the woollen wigs of the dolls were heavily damaged by moth bite. The people of Arnstadt complained about the condition of the collection and appealed to the Prince of Schwarzburg several times for help. It was only due to the intervention of Marie, Princess of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen that the collection is still preserved. On her orders, it was transported to Schloss Gehren where what was left was cleaned, 'repaired' and finally moved to the public museum in Arnstadt where the collection has been on display ever since.[18]

Intentional Eclecticism

Since the entire collection was gathered together over a lifetime of at least sixty years of active collecting, neither the outside nor the internal appearance is homogenous (fig. 5). The houses differ in height, width, depth and in the internal distribution of rooms. They consist of a minimum of three floors up to a maximum of six floors. The cabinets did not stand on table consoles but started at floor level and, in accordance with the numbers of storeys added, went up to a height of almost 3 m. In the historical situation, the cabinets were presented alongside the walls of a gallery (20 m long and 3.5 m wide) and opposite one another. The walls of most cabinets are equipped with doors and the contents of diverse scenes not only related to one another (*church* opposed to *corps de logis*) but the dolls were arranged inside and outside the cabinets and communicated with one another. The impression achieved was that of a lively community of every social status. Some of the cabinets were clearly made in one piece (with all rooms planned together from the start), while others consisted of single modules which were re-arranged. The earlier projects followed a vertical order and a clear internal structure of only one scene per level (fig. 5, see the first four examples in the top row). Cabinets, which display outdoor scenes, such as the *Baroque Garden*, a *Harbour* or a *Deerhunt* were usually made of only two levels. The walls of the wooden cabinets are reduced as much as possible or were substituted by glass panels. In addition, the second level opens the ceiling to a curved half-tondo in imitation of the sky (fig. 5, final examples on top row). The hunting scene even uses a piece of linen imitating landscape as backdrop, which must at the time have been presented in front of a window. Daylight could shine through and give an appropriate impression of nature. The later projects were set out along a horizontal order and presented three to five scenes beside one another. Although some continue a symmetrical distribution of the rooms, others feature asymmetrical layouts (fig. 5, middle row). A possible variation consisted of presenting outdoor scenes at the bottom of a cabinet and indoor scenes on top (fig. 5, bottom right, Royal Mail underneath the salons). As a general rule, it can be said that the scenes were organized following the social order of the estates in the Holy Roman Empire. At the bottom were farmers and craftsmen, the middle level showed the bourgeoisie, while the top level was reserved for the depiction of the aristocracy. A formal exception is presented by the *Church*. It is the

only cabinet, which can be viewed from all sides and it is very nearly a realistic model of a church, whereas all the other houses are based on imagination.

Fig. 5   A heterogeneous impression of a lifelong collecting activity: sixteen of today's twenty-six cabinet cases, attesting to the great variety of sizes and internal structures.
All consoles at the bottom are of modern workmanship.

Scenes of Idealized Court Life

Mon Plaisir depicts a condensed microcosm of early eighteenth-century life in a middle-German residential city. It provides an encyclopaedic, yet personalized portrait of the court of Princess Auguste of Schwarzburg. Besides, it includes important episodes from her own biography. Sixty percent of the scenes represent court-related themes, such as the audience, the salon, the porcelain-chamber, the cabinet of curiosities, the court-painter at work, a court theatre, several bedchambers, masquerades, gambling, music making, dining, reading and hunting (fig. 6). Most relate to occupations dominated by females, although some show the princess with her husband or a group of men smoking and playing billiards in the *Tabakskollegium*, in accordance with the courtly custom of separating men from women after dinner. Most of the other scenes depict all the necessary lines of supply to her court and the crafts exercised at the domain, stables and

buttery, the brewer in his wine and beer cellar, two kitchens, a dressmaker, a carpenter, a wood turner, a weaver and an apothecary. Archival material and the floorplan of her castle show that all facilities depicted in *Mon Plaisir* also existed in her own Maison de Plaisir.[19] The remaining scenes show themes from her life, such as travel, visits at trade fairs and shopping tours. Two very important cabinets refer to her conversion to the Catholic Church in 1715 as forth member of her family (after her niece, father and sister). Her niece had to convert to marry the Habsburg Archduke Charles who eventually became emperor of the HRE in 1711 as Charles VI.[20] Her father had converted shortly before his death for unknown reasons. In the case of her sister Henriette Christine who had given birth to a child as the unmarried abbess of the Lutheran monastery of Gandersheim, the Catholic Church had acted as saviour and helped to camouflage the incident. Henriette thereafter lived in an Ursuline Convent in Roermond (Flanders).[21] Auguste thus had several reasons to convert, even though it led to great difficulties with the Lutheran agnate family. Aunt to the empress, very much obliged to the Roman Catholic Church for the role it played in saving the reputation of the family, as an act of loyalty to her father and hoping for financial support from Vienna, she converted as well. Two scenes illustrate the particular personal importance of this theme: firstly, the depiction of the Ursuline Convent, which most likely came as a gift from the Erfurt Ursulines. Secondly, as mentioned above, the model of a Catholic church, which showed a Corpus Christi procession – one of the highest Catholic ecclesiastical holidays and surely a red rag for the Lutheran Schwarzburg family. So, looking thoroughly at the circumstances and incidents of Auguste's life, one may well consider *Mon Plaisir* as a personal, object-based court-diary.

Fig. 6 *Porcelain Cabinet*.

The Production of Figurines, Houses and Interiors

The cabinets as well as the dolls or better figurines, since they are to be understood as portraits and representations rather than as mere toys, are from diverse stock and differ in size and quality. Today a little over 400 figurines are left; most likely only a quarter of the original amount. The central stock is of high quality and about 20 cm high. A wooden construction for the spine and limbs is padded by layers of textile filling material to form the body (fig. 7). The heads are made of bees' wax and adorned with human or animal hair. While male figurines always have legs and are able to stand on their own feet, most female figurines 'stand' on the hemline of their long skirts stuffed with paper if necessary. Usually they are presented in a sitting position, thereby presenting contemporaneous gendered patterns of behaviour. The faces of the figurines are portraits of the princess herself, of people the princess knew and of subjects of her court and territory. An eighteenth-century eyewitness confirmed the portrait character of the dolls that bore a great likeness to their real counterparts who came from all social spheres.[22] Apart from particular groups of dolls, which clearly originated in other locations, most dolls were produced at court as a collective task and daily occupation of the female household of the princess. Auguste herself certainly knew how to knit, to sew, to embroider and to make bobbin lace, since these were considered virtuous occupations for noble women. She employed a dressmaker and a carpenter in her household and, in addition, was served by skilled maids and by two friars of the Franciscan Capuchin Order after her conversion as her confessors but also for their skill of making waxen heads, a Catholic votive tradition.[23] Both friars left their signatures on parts of the miniatures and their responsibility for the dolls' portrait-heads can be taken for granted. The princess and her court ladies as well as her ladies-in-waiting produced part of the dresses for the figurines, glued original wallpaper or cut-out prints on the walls of the miniature rooms; they added drawings and paintings, decorated tables and varnished furniture. The whole court took part in creating this three-dimensional image of itself and the collective process fostered the identity of the mini-state. Moreover, *Mon Plaisir* served as storage space for 'proper' collectibles such as artefacts made from jade, coins or *memorabilia* and as the recipient of diplomatic presents. The cabinet, which depicts the Ursuline Convent, was proven to have been made at the Erfurt convent and, most likely, was given to the princess as a gift to enhance the relationship.[24] Some objects, such as the miniature furniture, must have been commissioned by the princess from local artisans. In sum, it can be said that the dollhouses are the rather eclectic result of a collective effort made by the entire household in conjunction with the usual collecting activities, very similar to the cabinet of curiosities still prominent at the time.

Fig. 7 Count Anton Günther II dressed in a silk dressing gown, seated in an armchair of red velvet.

The scenes and diverse parts that depict the apartments of the princess and her courtly life are to be taken as *miniaturizations* (not miniature copies or models) of the original interior of her spatial surroundings. In part, original-size wallpaper, most likely leftovers of the original decoration, were re-used to decorate the walls in the miniature ensembles. Still, it is possible that the miniatures show what the princess would have liked her rooms to look like, even though in reality they were quite different. Whether or not – and how strongly – the miniatures resemble the real castle we cannot tell, since both the palace and the *maison de plaisance* were dismantled or destroyed shortly after Auguste's death in the second half of the eighteenth century. Therefore, *Mon Plaisir* very well could have been a fashionable, three-dimensional model-catalogue for up-to-date interior decoration.

Types of Rooms within the Miniature Palace

Among the ensembles, there are four different types of rooms. The first includes rooms for representational purposes, such as a grand parlour and an audience room, the porcelain collection and the cabinet of curiosities. The second category comprises rooms destined for daily life, such as the bedroom, breakfast room and withdrawing room for leisure activities such as handiwork/needlework, reading or music (fig. 8). The third group is defined by its function for specific situations or groups of people such as the lying-in-room for women about to give birth, the nursery for the upbringing of children and, for example, the 'Tabakskollegium' with billiards reserved exclusively

for male use. The fourth category covers all rooms necessary for the supply of the court, which in reality amounted to a large percentage of the entire system but in *Mon Plaisir* is represented as about half the display. Here, all rooms that are necessary for cooking, food supply, storage, clothing, washing, health-care, for stables, for the butcher, as wine cellar and as the living quarters of the staff are included (fig. 9). Since the representation of the rooms in the dollhouses is directed towards its spectator on one side only, the distribution of rooms in *Mon Plaisir* in many cases does not reflect their real situation in the ground plan of a building. Rooms or corridors for maintenance that would have been hidden behind a representative room are shown beside or, more likely, even underneath it in the dollhouse. Thereby, the hierarchy from front to back, from visible to hidden, is translated from the originally horizontal organization to its vertical representation. Thus, the vertical order of rooms, functions and *personae* mirrors the social ordering of spheres. Not to forget, the miniature ignores some features, which were, however, integral parts of the original architecture such as staircases. The defining architectural elements in each room are the numbers and types of windows, the numbers and types of doors and the existence of a chimney, open fireplace or cast-iron stove. The windows, doors and the fireplaces define the social status of a room. All high-class rooms are equipped with a fireplace, the official rooms with a high, carved chimneypiece with a mantelpiece in the centre of a wall, the every-day rooms with a smaller and plainer chimney, sometimes placed in the corner of a room such as the *boudoir* (see fig. 3). All staff and supply rooms have only small tile stoves or metal stoves when considered a 'Stube' (a plain sitting room) and none at all, when serving as 'Kammer' or bedchamber (see fig. 9).

Fig. 8 *Bedroom*. Couple in front of a canopy bed of green and silver silk bed-hangings, wallcoverings (with original-size pattern) and silver mirror.

Fig. 9 *Silver chamber*. Unstructured wall without decoration
as standard procedure for merely functional rooms.

The walls follow two structures: The first type is most complex and comprises a pedestal, panelling structured by pilasters and capitals and is completed by a frieze. It is used for representative rooms such as the salon or the porcelain cabinet (see figs. 1 and 6). In the case of the widow's salon, the wall is decorated by coloured prints, displaying ornamental strap work in clearly distinguishable fields glued onto it (fig. 2a). The wainscoting or dado and frieze-zone of the porcelain cabinet in white and gold are made of plaster and wood. The second decorative scheme employs a white or decorated dado of wood or plaster, usually painted at the bottom of each wall, above which wallpaper is attached up to the ceiling. This scheme is the most favoured and most rooms follow it. The blue salon and the green bedroom best illustrate this constructing scheme, as well as the general custom or obligation of interior design to tailor the colours of the furniture to those displayed on the walls (see figs. 1 and 8). The last kind of wall decoration leaves the walls uncoloured and unfurnished, most likely intended in imitation of lime wash, a paint that creates a good air-permeability and that prevents dampness and mould. This scheme was applied to all merely functional rooms such as staff chambers and storage rooms (fig. 9). The wallcoverings either consist of coloured prints, painted images in imitation of tapestries, textile wallpapers or of a decoration in *lacca-povera*-technique in the form of cut-out scenes glued to the wall (figs. 10 a–d). The mere size of the ornament implies that in particular the textiles consist of original wall-furnishings, chair covers or dresses used for a second time (fig. 11).

Most ceilings in *Mon Plaisir* are plain and white. This is most likely due to the fact that the ceilings are barely visible to the spectator. Only with great difficulty and with the technical

support of a spotlight their plainness becomes apparent. Nonetheless, most official rooms have a decorated ceiling. It probably is the result of the maker's wish to visualize the rooms as correctly as possible. Some show an ornamental motif in the centre of the ceiling (usually at the spot where the chandelier is fixed to the ceiling), a complete ornamental decorative pattern (fig. 11) or a completely painted plafond. In reality, the glass chandeliers, once they were lit, produced a lively effect of moving shadows and coloured light beams on the ceiling.

The furniture shown in *Mon Plaisir* is a reflection of the types of furniture popular in the first half of the eighteenth century and of their appropriate usage according to decorum. It consists solely of beds, tables, chairs, cupboards, cabinets, chests, storage furniture, shelfs, firedogs and fire screens, mirrors, guerdons, étagères and candelabra. To each type, there is a clear internal hierarchy and social ranking, tied to its function. The furniture is not homogenous in form, style and ornament; while some pieces still follow Baroque *formulae*, others show Régence ornamentation of floral *or* geometrical kind. This is the consequence not only of the production over the course of a lifetime but also of the cultural habit of either redecorating one separate room or a set of rooms at a time, but not the entire interior of a palace at the same time. In addition, it was possible to use furniture from different periods in one ensemble; even though this custom did not apply to representative rooms, it did not matter for less important rooms.

Figs. 10 a–d Forms of wall decoration: painted imitation of a tapestry; textile wall cover; Roman-style print as wallpaper; Chinese-style motif, cut out and glued to the wall.

Fig. 11 *Offene Tafel*. Gilded-leather wall cover (original size), geometrically ornamented ceiling in imitation of stucco, chandelier and draperies above the doors.

Beds are the most striking and dominant pieces of furniture to occupy a room. Mon Plaisir has a number of bedrooms, yet beds are also part of multifunctional rooms. They range from simple wooden bedframes for maids, daybeds, a very rare example of a folding bed for the housekeeper to keep the cold out in winter (fig. 12), a bunk bed with front lids used for children in the nursery and several examples of four-poster or canopy beds to be used solely by the nobility (fig. 13). Not only was the shape and size of the bed related to its owner's social status, even more important was the kind of wood from which it was made and the skilfulness of the carvings. Most important though, were the textile bed hangings and coverings. The more expensive and elaborate they were, the higher was the social rank the furniture was able to bestow.[25]

Several types of tables survive. Frequent examples of curved gambling tables for three or five players with slots for money or gambling-chips, including a basset or backgammon table, show the importance of all sorts of games for the daily routine at court (fig. 14). Tables for social activities were varieties of a round table top, which rests on a turned pedestal with three to five legs. A very modern gate-leg table served as side-table but could be easily extended by folding down the upper part of the tabletop and was also intended to be used for playing cards. Side tables, dining tables and tea & coffee tables have a regular and symmetrical construction and four

straight balustrade or turned table legs (fig. 15). The tabletops are rectangular or polygonal with marquetry decoration, painted with figural or floral ornaments or with cut-out prints glued to the surface to resemble Boulle designs. The dining tables are amazingly low compared to the chairs and to the positioning of the bodies of the dolls. Since both mirror the cultural habits of the times, we may deduce the fact that the average height of a table was lower than today. The frequent existence of small tables is for the provision of greater comfort and convenience.

The chairs displayed in *Mon Plaisir* follow every contemporaneous form of wingchair, armchair, settee and tabouret and were accompanied by their particular social connotation (see figs. 1, 7 and 8). Some examples of miniature cabinets and chests of drawers represent furniture, which was suitable for representative rooms (figs. 16 and 17). The cupboards are typical cabinets for the collection of gems, drawings and, especially, coins, the great passion of Count Anton Günther II. The cupboard may have contained precious china or Venetian glass vessels for drinking (fig. 18). All show simple inlays of Régence or Baroque floral ornament. Simple chests of drawers are used in non-representative arrangements with the functional purpose of safekeeping of clothes and silverware. Here the aesthetic value was not considered as important as in the official rooms. Cupboards that contained food or perishable goods are plain in appearance apart from those of the apothecary. While there the wall decorations and the textile designs already follow the new fashionable style of the Régence period, the furniture mostly continues in the Baroque style.

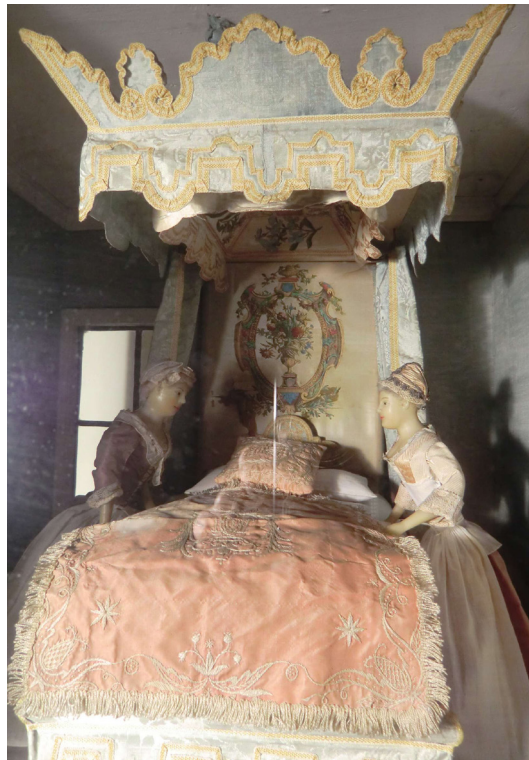Fig. 12 *Chamber of a Lady-in-waiting*. Folding bed.

Fig. 13 *Bedroom*. Canopy bed with Régence curvature and embroidery.

Fig. 14 *Salon*. Gambling table.
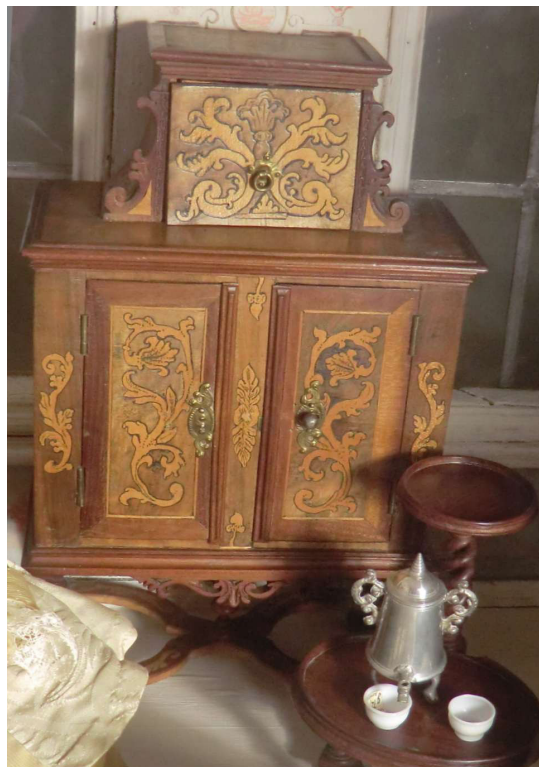
Fig. 15 Traditional Baroque table-legs.

Fig. 16 *Corps de Logis I*. This wooden cabinet is designed for collections of smaller items. It is richly decorated with inlays of floral ornaments, executed symmetrically and produced as mirror image.

Fig. 17 *Corps de Logis I.* Cabinet for numismatic collections, gems or drawings.

Fig. 18 *Widows' Salon*. Cupboard.

Rural Cultural Habits and the Reconsideration of Cultural Transfer

This miniature display clearly still serves as an example of contemporaneous taste and style. Nonetheless, we may ask ourselves how closely the dollhouses resemble original interiors and what can be gained by looking at the miniature version? The deduction of information from a miniature carries some methodological problems. Apart from the wall decoration, all other items are movable and have been moved several times. Today (see figs. 1–18), the furniture is ordered and separated according to likeness and possible former placement. There is no evidence left about how items were placed by the princess during the first half of eighteenth century. Some ensembles are actually misplaced, for the twentieth-century curators did not know or recognize the scenes represented, for example, by the so called 'Offene Tafel' (ceremonial dinner) or by a masquerade. Many miniatures as well as the figurines are lost and have been destroyed. *Mon Plaisir* is neither a precise model nor a minute copy of an original interior. Most likely, the ideas for the wall decoration and representations of rooms were taken from places the princess owned, had inhabited or at least knew from visits. The residence at Arnstadt and her private Schloss Augustenburg, in each of which she spent over 30 years of her life, have long been destroyed.[26] Hardly any information of their former decoration and furniture exists today. Of the palaces of the Guelph dynasty at Wolfenbüttel, where she was born, raised and which she frequently visited as a grown woman (Prinzenpalais Wolfenbüttel, Salzdahlum Palais), only Schloss Wolfenbüttel has survived.[27] Some interior devices such as the principal genres and kinds of furniture and the wainscoting of the *chambre des parades* show similarities to Mon Plaisir.[28] Princess Auguste never explicitly stated her intention to create a model of her own court, but accounts of visitors described it as such. Nevertheless, the similarity of the scenes displayed to the life of the princess as presented by archival sources, very much suggests that she also tried to remodel her world not only in respect to scenic iconography in as much detail as possible. The lack of bills referring to miniatures also suggests the use of leftovers and the production of the miniature furniture at her court carpenter's and wood turner's, both court workshops confirmed by archival sources. Thus, we assume that she willingly miniaturized interiors and furniture examples, which bore some kind of personal relevance or were of aesthetic preference to the princess. The miniature as such is to be considered a result of a translation process that enhanced its meaning not in spite of but because of the small format. It offers a concentrated version of the formal, functional and visual ideas implemented in the original, since the miniaturization needs detailed decision-making and planning and a reduction of the key-elements of form and aesthetics to make it feasible.

While the interior decoration in *Mon Plaisir* is orientated towards a reduced version of the French Régence, the furniture still predominantly follows Baroque symmetry with heavy spiral balustrade legs or s-shaped legs.[29] The interiors of *Mon Plaisir* thus present a fusion of period ideas, styles and, *nota bene*, practices, which followed the fashion of styling an *enfilade* of rooms in one coherent style. At the same time, it was the custom to use the furniture that was handed down in the family or older decorative schemes or textile draperies on the walls. The reason for this re-use might be limited financial resources or simply the economical or maybe emotive idea

of prolonged object usage even if it went against fashion. Today, we would define this behaviour as 'sustainability', but surely the term did not exist at the time. This idea of using an item as long as possible seems very traditional. Moreover, 'fashion', as a term to describe the quick change of decorative styles was not applied to all genres alike and was heavily criticized.[30] While the cut of dresses or of textile patterns started to change more quickly around the year 1700, and at least among the nobility, heavy wooden furniture for example beds or dining tables remained in use, in particular at the smaller courts in more rural areas of the Holy Roman Empire.

The findings of the decorative scheme in *Mon Plaisir* call for a new consideration of the theory of cultural transfer, which has been a popular master-narrative in art-history and cultural history to explain aesthetic changes as a result of cultural hierarchies within Europe. The idea behind this model is the connection between cultural dominance and political status and the implied wish to become alike by imitation of a cultural habit. In part, this model can be shown to have been true. But just as 'absolutism' was not absolute, we will have to differentiate between the so-called 'trickle-down effect' in respect to cultural refinement from France to Germany and to acknowledge that aristocratic country style insisted on traditional and long-lasting forms, ornaments and materials, since tradition formed a core virtue of early modern noble identity. *Mon Plaisir*, matched against the backdrop of original interiors, displays both forms of expression, insisting on tradition and reception of novelties, which formed a hybrid fusion of the old and new. This perception and attitude might be true for small German courts in general and further research is necessary in future.

The Régence period definitely deserves more focused attention. Maybe it ought to be studied with the same academic concentration as Mannerism has been granted in recent decades meanwhile as an independent phase and not merely as a simple transition between the Renaissance and the Baroque. The Régence is viewed as a style, which draws only on certain aspects of the 'maternal-style' and makes them flourish in an absolute form without completely replacing the overall scheme. Although this is true for the Régence, I suggest to refrain from defining it merely as a developmental step towards the Rococo but to consider it as a style, which adheres to its own set of rules and which created an atmosphere very unlike either the Baroque or the Rococo. This consideration seems to be appropriate in particular for those examples in which the Parisian style was not adopted completely but only in part or blended with other stylistic elements due to financial constraints or to a locally diverse taste.[31] After Mannerism, the Régence is the first 'modern', *hybrid* style of pre-modernity.

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Illustrations

Figs. 1–18 *Mon Plaisir*, Arnstadt/Germany, Schlossmuseum. All photos taken by the author with the kind permission of Schlossmuseum Arnstadt.

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[1] See Cremer 2015 for detailed information on the dollhouses.

[2] Stalker/Parker 1688. [Cröker] 1724.

[3] Richardt 2003. Dupilet 2011.

[4] If so, authors only look at specific genres; see, for example, Dennerlein 1981 (on gardens) and Demetrescu 2003 (on furniture).

[5] Osborne 1975, p. 662.

[6] Wagner 2013, p. 40. See the image in Schlagintweit 1991, p. 149; on the historical discussion about decorative elements see Schütte 1986, pp. 134–51. Its principles were implemented as late as 1739 in the wainscoting of the porcelain cabinets of Schloss Ansbach.

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[7] Wasmuth 1892. Berain 1703.

[8] Ramond 2011.

[9] Further examples are Jacques Gabriel (1667–1742), Germain Boffrand (1667–1754), Claude Gillot (1673–1722).

[10] Wetzel 1993, p. 380.

[11] Wetzel 1993, p. 381.

[12] Gröber 1928, p. 55 (on mannequins as communicators of fashion). Wittkop-Menardeau 1962, p. 56. From the last quarter of the eighteenth century fashion was quickly distributed by F.J. Bertuch's, *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* published at Weimar between 1786 and 1825.

[13] Kleiner 1731–1740.

[14] Cremer 2012, pp. 111–54.

[15] Schiffner 1985, pp. 5–22.

[16] Multer 1998, pp. 109–13.

[17] Cremer 2015, p. 189.

[18] '"Mon Plaisir" in Arnstadt', *Arnstädter Anzeiger*, 28.10.1930.

[19] Cremer 2015, pp. 205–40.

[20] Hoeck 1845. Körper 1975. Peper 2003. Rill 1992.

[21] Küppers-Braun 2006, pp. 229–44.

[22] Leber 1965, p. 35.

[23] Hillier 1985. Lessmann et al. 2002. Einhorn 2008.

[24] Klein 1999, pp. 7–19.

[25] Cremer 2015, p. 62. In real life, the princess explicitly demanded textile covers of a lesser quality in comparison to her own for her court ladies. Pallach 1987.

[26] Hesse 1841, pp. 169–72.

[27] Grote 1996 and Grote 2005.

[28] Grote 2005, pp. 106–07.

[29] Leber 1965, p. 37. See also Ponte 2000, pp. 90–149 and Griseri 2000, pp. 272–323.

[30] Zedler 1732–1750, XXI, col. 700–12 on fashion. Contemporary criticism: Garve 1792, pp. 116–294.

[31] A fusion of diverse influences from Germany, Austria and France can be observed at the Residenz Würzburg, see Friedrich 2010, p. 18.