

# A Fairy-Tale Palace: The *Trianon de porcelaine* at Versailles

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‘The Trianon palace was first perceived as an enchantment: for, having been begun only at the end of winter, it was found to be complete in spring, as though it had sprung out of the ground along with the flowers of the gardens that accompany it.’<sup>1</sup>

In 1670, within a few months and at great cost, Louis XIV had ‘a small palace of extraordinary architecture’ built at Trianon, on the outer grounds of Versailles, where he could ‘pass some hours of the day during the heat of summer’.<sup>2</sup> The construction of the palace was a feat of engineering that required the transformation of the chosen location and a speeding up of the normal rhythms of construction work. Not only had the existing village, including its church, been demolished<sup>3</sup> and the ground levelled to make way for the palace and its gardens (they were laid out first), the building itself had been constructed very rapidly without consideration for costs. Such was the king’s pleasure.

One can only be surprised by the disproportion between the means, that is the effort, energy and money expended, and the end result, a simple summer pavilion, meant for *al fresco* relaxation and pleasure. As shown by the absence of fireplaces in any of the rooms, the miniature palace was to be used only in the summer months for exclusive tea or dinner parties. The duc de Saint-Simon dismissed it as a simple ‘house of porcelain for light refreshments’.<sup>4</sup> It is also surprising that this so-called ‘*galante maison*’,<sup>5</sup> a retreat built for the king and his mistress Madame de Montespan, turned out to play an important part in the iconographical language of power perfected at Versailles. At the opposite end of the park from the *château*, which was slowly being transformed into a monumental seat of power, the Trianon palace embodied a ludic space seemingly devoted to leisure and pleasure. However it also shared in the same propagandist purpose as the *château* and the royal park, that of glorifying the monarch through his achievements. In the same way it was part of the ideological construction of Versailles.

Designed by the architect Louis Le Vau, the Trianon palace proved a costly affair. Official accounts show that large sums of money were spent on it. In 1670 155,600 *livres* were spent on the building work alone. In 1671 and 1672, 140,000 *livres* and 120,000 *livres*, respectively, were spent putting the finishing touches to the decoration of the buildings and the gardens in which they were situated.<sup>6</sup> [Figs. 1, 2] The palace consisted of a central one-storey pavilion surrounded by four identical smaller pavilions, which served as outbuildings and were used for the preparation of food, evincing the king’s and his mistress’s shared interest in gastronomic delights.<sup>7</sup> It was built of brick, but faced with glazed earthenware tiles,<sup>8</sup> predominantly blue and white, which, under the name of ‘*carreaux de Hollande*’, passed for porcelain in the world of commerce. In fact until Johann Friedrich Böttger from Meissen discovered the secret of making porcelain in 1715, nobody in Europe at the time knew how to make

1 Andre Félibien, *Description sommaire du Casteau de Versailles*, Paris 1674, pp. 104–105.

2 Félibien (see note 1), p. 109.

3 The village was demolished in 1668 after the lands on which it stood were acquired by the king from the Abbaye Ste Geneviève in Paris. See Pierre de Nolhac, *Le Trianon de Marie-Antoinette*, Paris 1914, pp. 3–4.

4 Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la Régence XII*, Paris 1840, p. 151.

5 *Le Mercure galant*, November 1686, No. 11, Part 2, p. 113. The term *galant* is ambiguous. It referred to lovers’ trysts, as well as ‘*honest rejoicings*’ (Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, The Hague – Rotterdam 1690). The second meaning is most probably intended here.

6 Pierre de Nolhac, *Le Trianon de porcelaine*, *Revue de l’Histoire de Versailles*, 1901, pp. 1–16, esp. p. 4.

7 The two main side pavilions were for the preparation and the consumption of dishes, the other two for the preparation of ‘*entremets*’ (i.e. dishes served between the courses) and ‘*confitures*’ (sweetmeats).

8 This technique of applying glazed earthenware tiles to the walls was in fact inspired by a Moorish and subsequently Spanish technique.

it and little distinction seemed to have been made between Oriental porcelain and European earthenware copies of it. However by 1688 the difference between the two appeared to have been generally appreciated in France, and in accounts or written descriptions, the term ‘faïence’ was used to refer to glazed earthenware, whereas the term ‘porcelain’ tended to be associated instead with painting techniques.

For obvious reasons the miniature palace at Versailles came to be known as the *Trianon de porcelaine*. According to Claude Denis, a craftsman who made garden fountains for Versailles and wrote a poetic description of the Trianon, everything, from the roof to the outer walls, was ‘entirely covered in faïence’.<sup>9</sup> Blue and white Delft tiles were used for the facades and ceramics from Saint-Cloud, Lisieux or Rouen for the decorative ornaments. In the gardens the fountains were made of faïence or painted to look like porcelain, as were the flower tubs and the boxes used for growing small trees. Even the interior décor was governed by the same blue and white colour scheme. In addition to large gilded mirrors and more Delft tiles on the floors and the lower part of the walls, there were coverings of polished white stucco to imitate porcelain with ‘azure’ ornamentation. The ceilings too were decorated with blue patterns on white background.<sup>10</sup> However more recent studies have called into question the extent to which faïence was used as a revetment, as well as the predominance of the blue and white scheme in the decoration, on the grounds that royal accounts show that white and purple tiles from Holland were also used in the apartments together with polychromatic tiles from Lisieux and Saint-Cloud.<sup>11</sup>

As Arthur Lane remarks,<sup>12</sup> the Trianon was a curiosity not without precedent. In the 1520s François I had a palatial residence built in the Bois de Boulogne near Paris, whose facades were faced with glazed tiles in bas-relief (or *terracotta invetriata*) designed by Girolamo della Robbia. The *château de Madrid*, as it was called, came to be known as the *château de faïence*. John Evelyn described it in 1650 as ‘observable only for its open manner of architecture, being much of terraces and galleries one over another to the very roof; and for the materials, which are mostly of earth [i.e. earthenware] painted like porcelain, or China-ware, whose colors appear very fresh, but is very fragile. There are whole statues and relievos of this pottery, chimney-pieces, and columns both within and without.’<sup>13</sup>

Another example was the grotto of stone and colour-glazed earthenware that, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, Bernard Palissy had built for Catherine de’ Medici in the Tuileries gardens, but this had been demolished by the time the porcelain palace was built at Versailles.

It is clear that in its design and ornamentation, the Trianon testified to the new vogue for porcelain and all things Chinese in late seventeenth century France and Europe. According to Félibien, the author of a *Description sommaire* of Versailles, ‘everything was decorated in the Chinese manner’.<sup>14</sup> In particular, notwithstanding the classical triangular pediment and the four pilasters adorning the facades of the central pavilion, the outside decoration of the roof space was reminiscent of Chinese pagodas. The one-storey pavilions also pointed to the low rise architecture, popular in the Middle Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> This was the time when missionaries were publishing their descriptions of the Far East and when pieces of lacquered furniture, painted silks and brocades began to make their way into Europe. The king himself collected Chinese porcelain with enthusiasm and had acquired 695 pieces by 1673.<sup>16</sup> It is also possible that in his fascination for the East and his desire to outshine its marvels, he had even tried to outdo the famous porcelain tower at Nanjing, whose construction, dating back to the fifteenth century, filled travellers with admiration and was often described as the eighth wonder of the world. An engraving of it had

9 This poem, entitled *Description de toutes les grottes, rochers et fontaines du château royal de Versailles, maison du Soleil et de la Ménagerie*, was probably composed around 1675 and published for the first time by Marcel Raynal, *Le manuscrit de Claude Denis, fontainier de Louis XIV à Versailles, Versailles. Revue des sociétés des amis de Versailles* 36–44, 1971.

10 Alfred Marie, *Naissance de Versailles II*, Paris 1968, pp. 203–204. – Nolhac (see note 6), pp. 5–6. Even the furniture seemed to have been painted to mimic porcelain, as shown by a table listed in the inventories and now in the Getty museum, where the effect is achieved through the use of blue-stained horn and ivory.

11 Annick Heitzmann, *Le Trianon de Porcelaine à Versailles*, in: *Kangxi. Empereur de Chine. 1662–1722. La Cité Interdite à Versailles*, Paris 2004, pp. 167–175, esp. pp. 167–175.

12 Arthur Lane, *French Faïence*, London 1970, p. 16.

13 John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn I*, edited by William Bray, New York – London 1901, p. 252 (entry of 25th April 1650). The *château de Madrid* was torn down in 1792.

14 Félibien (see note 1), p. 110.

15 According to Athanasius Kircher, whose *China monumentis illustrata* (1667) was translated into French in 1670, this was because the Chinese preferred convenience to magnificence (*La Chine d’Athanasie Kirchere*, Amsterdam 1670, p. 290).

16 Lane (see note 12), p. 16.

appeared in Johan Nieuhoff's *An Embassy from the East India Company* in 1665: the original work was in Dutch but it was soon translated in French, German, Latin and English.<sup>17</sup> Although the style in which the Trianon pavilions were built contrasted with the type of monumental, neo-classical art habitually favoured by Louis XIV, as evinced by the transformations of the *château* itself carried out by Le Vau in the 1660s and continued by Mansart in the late 1670s and 1680s, nonetheless they showed the same desire to showcase the skill of French artists and to celebrate the grandeur of their royal patron, capable of vying successfully with foreign potentates and their achievements.

Unsurprisingly the Trianon caught the public's fancy and sparked an immediate vogue, both for the blue and white colour combination and for the garden retreat. In 1673, in its discussion of contemporary fashions, the *Mercurie galant* informed its readers that 'Nearly all the great seigneurs who have country houses are having [Trianons] built in their parks, and private individuals at the far end of their gardens; and the bourgeois who wanted to spare themselves the expense have dressed some dilapidated building as the Trianon, or at least some hut or closet in their house.'<sup>18</sup>

The sudden appearance of the porcelain palace in the gardens at Versailles astonished Louis XIV's courtiers to the extent that its construction was said to be another royal miracle, another example of the king's ability to turn his wishes into marvellous realities at the moment they appeared. It was a new demonstration of his might through his power over nature:<sup>19</sup> the king could make a palace appear suddenly, as if by an act of magic, in a spot where before only dilapidated ruins had stood. In other words the Trianon not only showcased the king's role as magician, it also contributed to the sense of wonder and astonishment that he wanted his person and his achievements, be they military triumphs, garden *fêtes* or architectural constructions, to arouse in his subjects and visitors alike. With their element of surprise and bedazzlement, these achievements were all associated with the stupendous and the marvellous, in other words with *meraviglia*, seen here to be the aim of the monarch's actions, as much as that of the Baroque artist or poet.<sup>20</sup>

Admittedly the Trianon was meant to provide Louis XIV with a space for private diversion, just as the *château* itself had some ten years earlier. At the time, his father's former hunting lodge, the work of Philibert Le Roy, had afforded him a retreat away from Paris and the Louvre. Always the gossip, the duc de Saint-Simon called Versailles a place where the king went 'to be more private with his mistress', then Mademoiselle de La Vallière.<sup>21</sup> This might explain why Louis's minister, Colbert, had opposed the planned alterations and aggrandizement of the *château*, arguing that the money would be better spent on the Louvre because 'this house of Versailles has much more to do with [His] Majesty's pleasure and diversion than with [His] glory' and that it would be 'a pity if the king were to be judged by Versailles'.<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, the works were carried out regardless, and with the gradual transformation of the *château* into a public political space that embodied the king's desire for absolute power and representation, the porcelain palace at Trianon represented a space where fantasy and imagination were given free reign.

The 'extraordinary construction' of the palace also contributed to the sense of *meraviglia*. The splendour of its ornamentation, the brilliance of the blue and white tiles of its facades, and the dazzle of the golden lead plates of its roof in the sunlight were all intended to point to a supernatural origin. For some of the contemporaries it was well and truly the 'palace of the Sun'.<sup>23</sup> The exaggerated magnificence of the pavilions, the ostentatious display of wealth and luxury, but also the fragility of some of the materials used in the construction were reminiscent not only of all the marvellous palaces that had filled European romances since the days of *Amadis de Gaule* and the palace of Apolidon, but also of the enchanted palace built by Love for Psyche in Apuleius's tale in *The Golden Ass*, of which it was written

17 Nieuhoff described it as 'a high Steeple or Tower made of Purceline, which far exceeds all other Workmanship of the Chineses in cost and skill, by which the Chineses have declared to the world, the rare ingenuity of their Artists in former ages' (*An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Province to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperour of China*, London 1669, p. 84).

18 *Le Mercure galant*, 1673, No. 4, pp. 338–339.

19 Louis Marin, *Le Portrait du roi*, Paris 1981, pp. 236–239.

20 The recurrent use of 'extraordinary', 'marvellous' or 'unexpected' in Félibien's *Description* of Trianon, as well as in his accounts of the 1668 and 1674 Versailles festivals is an indication of this capacity of the king's actions to elicit wonder and delight in the viewer.

21 Saint-Simon (see note 4), p. 136. Ironically the king's own father regularly escaped to Versailles to get away from female company, because he 'fear[ed] the great number of ladies [attached to the queen], who would spoil everything for him' (Letter of 17 October 1641 to Richelieu, in: Louis XIII, *Louis XIII d'après sa correspondance avec le cardinal de Richelieu*, edited by the Count of Beauchamp, Paris 1902, p. 418).

22 Letter of 28 September 1665 to Louis XIV, in: Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires* V, edited by Pierre Clément, Paris 1868, p. 269.

23 This is how Claude Denis eulogizes the Trianon, whose faïence revetment is said to 'dazzle the eyes of the world'.



that 'it glittered and shone in such sort, that the chambers, porches, and doors gave light as it had been the Sun'.<sup>24</sup>

In other words the *Trianon de porcelaine* was a fairy-tale palace. But at the same time it was a real palace, visible in the real world, and therefore far superior to all the fabulous abodes of mythology and literature. Unsurprisingly it was to serve as a model for all the enchanted palaces of contemporary *pièces à machines*, operas and fairy tales. Less than a year after the Trianon suddenly appeared in the gardens of Versailles, Molière and Lully staged a tragedy-ballet, entitled *Psyché*, at the Tuileries palace in Paris, in which a transformation scene at the end of the second act revealed a shining palace built by Vulcan for Cupid. The set imagined by Carlo Vigarani for the palace was predominantly gold and blue like the Trianon, with columns of lapis lazuli, gold figures and silver vases. Another transformation scene showed a superb garden, whose arbours were lined with orange trees and various other fruit trees growing in vases, also a citation of Louis XIV's pleasure house. In 1697 Madame d'Aulnoy's tale of *Serpentin vert* featured 'the most beautiful palace in the world', complete with 'gardens full of flowers, fountains, statues and rare trees; forests in the distance', which housed 'a hundred pagodas, adorned and built in a hundred different ways, [...] of diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, crystal, amber, coral, porcelain, gold, silver, brass, bronze, iron, wood, clay'.<sup>25</sup> Preschac's allegorical tale, *Sans Parangon* (1698), also included a description of a fairy palace, in which every single detail hinted at the Trianon: 'As he [Sans Parangon] was particularly keen to please the princess Belle Gloire, he [...] struck the earth three times with his wand: and a palace appeared at once, made entirely of porcelain and surrounded with a parterre filled with jasmine flowers and a myriad of little fountains. The whole made a most pleasant impression.'<sup>26</sup>

As Cupid's palace had been, the Trianon and its gardens were a celebration of love. They were a gift from the king to his mistress, Madame de Montespan. Together with the smallness of the palace and its intimate character, the layout and the interior and exterior decoration of the main pavilion were all in keeping with its destination as a love nest. The main pavilion included a central salon flanked by a *Chambre des Amours* (the bedroom?), with an adjacent cabinet, and a *Chambre de Diane*, also with its adjacent cabinet. No painting of the interior has survived but it is possible that the richly decorated room with its windows painted blue and white and walls hung with brocades and silks depicted on a gouache in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, is in fact, if not the *Chambre des Amours* itself, which boasted a huge mirrored bed,<sup>27</sup> at least one of the little cabinets adjoining it.<sup>28</sup> It shows a fair lady, presumably Madame de Montespan, reclining on a daybed surrounded by Cupids, some of whom hold a circular canopy over the bed, while others disport themselves around an ornate gold and silver bath or by an equally magnificent jewel coffer. Again the colour blue predominates. Rather than a faithful depiction of one of the little cabinets, the presence of allegorical figures and the overcrowding of details turn the scene into a 'pastiche' of the palace interior<sup>29</sup> and an exaggerated representation of its destination. [Fig. 3] As for the outside decoration, Félibien reported that 'the roof was stepped and on the lower level were Cupids hunting animals, armed with javelins and arrows'.<sup>30</sup> The theme of love was omnipresent.

One of the central themes in Félibien's *Description* of the Trianon was the conjunction of the time of its construction and the natural cycle of the seasons. Not only had the palace and its gardens risen out of the ground with the arrival of spring, it was also as if nature itself had become the servant of the king's desires: 'It could be said of the Trianon that the Graces and Cupids who create perfection in the most beautiful and magnificent works of Art, and even accomplish those of Nature, were the only architects of this place, and they wanted to make it their dwelling'.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover the gardens did not just show the king's power over nature, they also pointed to his power over 'Time' itself. Because they were always full of flowers, they were a sign of eternal springtime and thus of human – and royal – mastery of natural time. According to Félibien, 'one could with reason call the Trianon and its garden spring's normal abode; for in whatever season one goes there, it is enriched by all sorts of flowers, and the air one

24 Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche and Other Tales from the Golden Ass of Apuleius*, edited by W. H. D. Rouse, London 1904, p. 40.

25 Marie Catherine, Baronne d'Aulnoy, *The Fairy Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy*, translated and edited by Annie McDonnell – Miss Lee, London 1892, p. 254. 'Pagoda' here refers to porcelain figurines from China.

26 Sieur de Preschac, *Contes moins contes que les autres. Sans Parangon et la Reine des fées*, Paris 1724, pp. 52–53.

27 A design for a bed from this chamber survives in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm (THC.1071).

28 For a detailed analysis of the gouache see Pamela Cowen, The Trianon de Porcelaine at Versailles, *The Magazine Antiques*, January 1993, pp. 136–143.

29 Ibidem, p. 143. The picture was originally a fan leaf filled by the same hand.

30 Félibien (see note 1), p. 108.

31 Ibidem, p. 105.

breathes there is always scented by those of the jasmine and the orange trees under which one walks.’<sup>32</sup>

Although not unusual in their design, the gardens designed by Michel Le Bouteux at Trianon were unique in the degree to which they featured flowers (over 96,000 bulbs as well as two million pots),<sup>33</sup> mostly fragrant tuberoses, anemones, tulips, lilies, but also Spanish jasmine and carnations, whose dominant colours were white, blue, purple and red, and produced the intense scents that Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan so loved. A *Cabinet des Parfums* was even set up to the north of the gardens to house the rarest scented flowers. However the scent could prove so potent that the duc de Saint-Simon reported seeing ‘the king and the entire court driven out of the garden, although it is vast and built in terraces overlooking the Canal, because the scent of tuberose hung so heavy in the air’.<sup>34</sup> In fact the Trianon came to be known also as the ‘palace of Flora’, as shown by the title of a ballet danced there in 1689, which celebrated Louis’s floricultural achievements: ‘The Palace of Flora and Eternal Springtime which until now have [existed] only in the imagination of the Poets, are veritably found here. [...] One sees these fountains, these gardens, and these parterres always filled with all sorts of flowers. One cannot remember that it is the middle of winter, or one believes that one has been transported suddenly to another climate, when one sees these delicious objects which denote so agreeably the abode of Flora.’<sup>35</sup>

Not only were flowers seen at Trianon during all the winter, the ‘extraordinary and surprising changes [...] whether in the diversity of the flowers or in the disposition of the place’<sup>36</sup> added to the overall impression of magic and illusion. The duc de Saint-Simon explained how ‘all of the compartments in each of the parterres were changed, every day’,<sup>37</sup> if not twice daily. This was made possible by the fact that all the flowers grew in stoneware pots that were buried in the flowerbeds and could be swapped with others at a short moment’s notice. In the same way an ingenious system of collapsible greenhouses that could be assembled in the autumn and dismantled in the spring ensured that orange trees, lemon trees and pomegranate trees could be planted in the ground.<sup>38</sup> The eternal springtime that reigned in the gardens was a season of perpetual renewal offering an inexhaustible variety of the pleasures of sight and smell. It was also another testimony to the apparently limitless power of the king, capable of controlling nature as well as the cycle of the seasons.

Flowers played a central part in celebrating the king’s reign as a Golden Age. With their everlasting blossoms, they were the visible signs that the age heralded by his ‘miraculous’ birth in 1638 had truly returned.<sup>39</sup> As symbols of springtime, they promised fertility and abundance, and suggested the prosperity of the kingdom. As Elizabeth Hyde remarks, Louis XIV ‘was hardly the only early modern monarch to represent his rule as a Golden Age but he was the first to have the floricultural capabilities to demonstrate the truth of his claim’.<sup>40</sup> Flowers also helped to create the image of a luxuriant idyllic paradise, a *locus amoenus*, separated from the world’s bustle and strife, and protected from the ravages of time. The will and powerful magic of the king alone had created it *ex nihilo*, so to speak, for nothing at Trianon had preceded the whim of the royal fantasy. It was a world of leisure and pleasure, whose existence was guaranteed by Louis’s restoration of peace in Europe – or so it was claimed – with the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1659 and more recently of the War of Devolution in 1668.

The *Trianon de porcelaine* and its gardens were used for a number of smaller-scale entertainments entirely dedicated to the pleasures of ‘*galant otium*’. There were leisurely strolls in the fragrant gardens and their *Cabinet des Parfums*, which ‘pleased’ the ambassadors from Siam ‘extremely’ in the autumn of 1686, because, as *Le Mercure Galant* reported, ‘they love strong scents, and they admire the manner of perfuming with flowers’.<sup>41</sup> There were also small dinner and supper parties, *al fresco* concerts such as the performance of Quinault and Lully’s *Eclogue en musique* in the summer of 1674, balls even, to which Louis invited his favourite ladies of the court but without extending his invitation to their husbands. Louis Marin has argued that the *Trianon de porcelaine* must

32 Ibidem, p. 112.

33 Pierre-André Lablaude, *Les Jardins de Versailles*, Paris 1995, p. 104.

34 Saint-Simon (see note 6), Vol. 6, p. 227.

35 *Le Palais de Flore. Ballet dansé à Trianon*, Paris 1689, p. 8.

36 Félibien (see note 1), p. 112.

37 Saint-Simon (see note 6), Vol. 6, p. 227.

38 Lablaude (see note 33), p. 104.

39 His parents, Louis XIII and Anna of Austria, had been married for nearly twenty-three years when he was born.

40 Elizabeth Hyde, The Stuff of Kingship. Louis XIV, the Trianon de Porcelaine, and the Material Culture of Power, *Western Society for French History Proceedings* 30, 2004, p. 196.

41 *Le Mercure galant*, November 1686, No. 11, Part 2, pp. 116–117.

be interpreted as a permanent manifestation of the royal *fêtes* that took place on the grounds of Versailles in 1664, 1668 and 1674.<sup>42</sup> In fact it embodied a more intimate, more exclusive version of these *fêtes*, one that was reserved for the king's entourage or rather those he wanted to favour and whose company he appreciated, and one that was focused on delight and the constant seduction of the senses rather than magnificence and spectacle.

Even more than the *château* and its park, the *Trianon de porcelaine* and its gardens were a living argument that the reign of Louis XIV was a Golden Age, a political pastoral. They were the model of an enchanted retreat where the privileged elite could indulge their taste for luxury and pleasure (admittedly the signs of a rather materialistic conception of happiness). As such they had an essential part to play in the construction of an image of Louis XIV as the 'greatest king in the world' and of the domain of Versailles as one of the 'most delightful and pleasant' places on earth.<sup>43</sup> Le *Trianon de porcelaine* might have been built on a whim and to provide a measure of intimacy for the king and his mistress, but it was undoubtedly also part of a grander artistic and political design.

So why was it pulled down and replaced by another building in 1687? It was said that French winters were too harsh for its porous and brittle tiled exterior, which could not withstand the frosts, and the repairs of each winter's ravages proved very costly, perhaps too costly. It was also rather small and lacked rooms where the king and his guests could spend the night. Madame de Maintenon was also rumoured to find it cold. But perhaps, the marquise, who had supplanted Madame de Montespan in the king's affections and probably became his wife after the death of the queen in 1683, did not want a constant reminder of the king's former mistress and her flamboyant style.<sup>44</sup> The new neo-classical, well-ordered 'palace of pink and white marble, jasper and porphyry, with delightful gardens', that rose in its place,<sup>45</sup> was also better suited to Madame de Maintenon's more sober taste, although she too had a taste for *chinoiseries*.<sup>46</sup> Or perhaps, as the duc de Saint-Simon observed, the king himself had got tired of the miniature palace and wanted something new and grander: 'The king, who liked to have palaces everywhere, was bored by the small *Trianon de porcelaine*, which had been built for Madame de Montespan. He took great pleasure in his buildings'.<sup>47</sup> Although the central pavilion was demolished to make way for a portico with marble columns, the new building by Mansart incorporated the two main side pavilions, this time faced with stone and marble. The gardens were redesigned by André Le Nôtre, who took the opportunity to reinstate his design for the *Jardin des sources* that was once part of the main gardens of the *château*.

Over the years the *Trianon de marbre*, as it was called, became an increasingly welcome retreat for Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. It offered them a relaxation from the formality and constraining etiquette of the *château*, centred around the solemn expression of royal grandeur, all the more so since it had become the official residence of the king and the seat of government in May 1682.

42 Marin (see note 17), p. 237.

43 Félibien (see note 1), p. 4, p. 113.

44 Madame de Montespan seems to have shown both exquisite refinement and a liking for the fantastic and the bizarre. Madame de Maintenon reported that '[she] had a miniature carriage made of filigree that was drawn by six mice, which she harnessed herself and allowed to bite her beautiful hands. She owned pigs and goats as well as rooms panelled with gold' (Letter of 25 January 1718 to the Comtesse de Caylus, in: Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon, *Lettres de Madame de Maintenon* IV, edited by Marcel Loyau, Paris 2011, p. 693). More so than the *Trianon de porcelaine*, the *château* that the king commissioned for her at Clagny and its magnificent gardens displayed her taste and status.

45 Saint-Simon (see note 6), Vol. 12, p. 151. Its construction was as rapid as that of the *Trianon de porcelaine* had been in 1670. The main works took just over six months, from June 1687 to January 1688, to complete.

46 Lane (see note 12), p. 16.

47 Saint-Simon, *Mémoires de Mr le Duc de S. Simon, ou l'observateur veridique*, Paris 1789, Vol. 1, p. 16.





1. Perelle, Perspective view on Trianon de Porcelaine from its entrance

Photo: Public domain



2. Perelle, Perspective view on Trianon de Porcelaine from its gardens

Photo: Public domain



3. Fan leaf, Victoria & Albert Museum in London

Photo: Victoria & Albert Museum in London