

Introduction

Luxury After the Terror explores the production, circulation, and survival of French luxury after the death of Louis XVI by focusing on makers of decorative art objects with strong ties to the monarchy and how they navigated the Terror and the world that it remade. When Louis XVI was guillotined on January 21, 1793, the king's death was to mark the physical end of the monarchy in France and sever the vast networks of luxury that had provided splendor and sophistication to the royal court and constituted the source of its cultural legitimacy (fig. 1). Yet the remnants of the royal collection that were sold, circulated, and absorbed by the French state's new institutions signaled neither a complete rupture with the past nor the total transfer of cultural authority to the body politic.¹ Even as the king's royal possessions—from drapery and tableware to clocks and porcelain services—were dispersed and destroyed, many of the individuals responsible for creating these forms of material finery found ways to survive regime change and forge new meanings for their works in the turbulent and rapidly shifting circumstances of revolutionary France and its aftermath. Covering the final two decades of the ancien régime to the beginning of the Napoleonic Empire, this book traces the ways in which the politics of dispersal, disinheritance, and dispossession conditioned new meanings for luxury. The five chapters function as case studies that investigate the work of specialists in gold, silk, wood, and porcelain. As elite patrons departed and markets dissolved, once-prized rarities became polemical objects of a contested past. While the French Revolution channeled a politics of regeneration into ephemeral materials—circulating patriotic ideals through paper pamphlets and prints, and building temporary festivals out of plaster and



FIG. 1
 Villeneuve (publisher), *Matière à réflexion pour les jongleurs couronnés: qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons: lundi 21 janvier 1793 à 10 heures un quart du matin sur la place de la Revolution, ci devant appelé Louis XVI le tyran est tombé sous le glaive des loix, 1793.* Engraving and etching, 21.5 × 17 cm. G 22985, Musée Carnavalet, Paris. Photo: Paris Musées.

wood—materials that had once been associated with courtly splendor acquired complex layers of association with a repudiated and fetishized past. Loss, exile, and dispossession provided alternative frameworks of meaning for objects that had once functioned as symbols of prestige bound to the taste and identity of powerful patrons.² During this period of intense political conflict and uncertainty, artisans, designers, and manufacturers embarked upon unanticipated futures, forging new careers untethered from the prestige of the monarchy.

The conditions of dispersal, dispossession, and disinheritance affected both people and objects to an unprecedented degree during the French Revolution, yet how they did so has not figured prominently in recent art-historical narratives. Driven by the vision of the French Revolution as the foundational moment in political modernity, art histories of the period, from Philippe Bordes and Régis Michel's groundbreaking publication *Aux armes et aux arts! Les arts de la Révolution, 1789–1799* to the works of anglophone scholars

such as T. J. Clark, Thomas Crow, Ewa Lajer-Burchardth, and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, have primarily been structured around the strong artistic personalities of the period, chief among them the academic painter Jacques-Louis David.³ From his commanding position at the summit of radical politics, David, the “pageant master of the French Republic,” directed public festivals, designed costumes for statesmen, and ran an influential studio, all the while serving as a vocal member of the Committee of Public Instruction and the Committee of Public Safety, voting alongside the Jacobins Maximilien Robespierre and Louis Antoine de Saint-Just as a regicide, in favor of the king’s death.⁴ Ideologically speaking, studies that position David and his studio as the source of an avant-garde artistic genealogy align neatly with the institutional and discursive histories that have focused on the founding of the Louvre Museum as a culminating moment in the formation of a rational, liberated public sphere.⁵ Challenges to David’s position as the founding father of modern art have been accompanied by the “material turn” in the discipline. Scholars have moved the field beyond the academic and institutional milieu of painting to consider a wider field of production, from Richard Wrigley’s sartorial studies in *The Politics of Appearances* to Susan Siegfried’s consideration of postrevolutionary female subjects through the matrix of fashion; Siegfried in particular has drawn attention to the symbolic investment in costume and the parallel evacuation of the body as a site of power after the Thermidorian Reaction.⁶ Beyond corporeal metaphors, architecture and ruins have come into focus in Nina Dubin’s work on Hubert Robert, while Amy Freund, Anthony Halliday, Richard Taws, Rolf Reichardt, and Hubertus Kohle have shed light on the active role

played by portraiture and prints, genres formerly treated as ancillary to history painting, in renegotiating political identities.⁷ Taws’s work on the ephemeral has been instrumental in opening the way for thinking about images not as static and fixed forms disciplined by a “high art” discourse of salon criticism or swaggering patriarchal studio politics but as radically mobile and always in flux, their meanings made (and unmade) by a wide variety of individuals outside the academy.

While building upon prior scholarship on the arts of the French Revolution, the narratives pursued in this book do not settle neatly within the aesthetic paradigms set forth by the academy or the trenchant factional politics and ideological divides of the period. I should state at the outset that the goal of this book is not to offer a synthesized narrative of revolutionary luxury but a glimpse of the fractured forms of subjectivity and errant paths of individual experience that took shape after the end of royal sovereignty and against the calls for an art that would represent the collective will of the nation. Luxury and the decorative arts do not appear as obvious choices of subject for exploring a turbulent political culture, when unchecked violence became “the order of the day” and an institutionalized part of revolutionary governance. After all, no less a person than David himself targeted luxury as anathema to the lofty didactic aims of the newly established Louvre Museum, which opened to the public on August 10, 1793, the first anniversary of the fall of the monarchy and in the midst of the Terror. The artist declared, “The Museum is not supposed to be a vain assemblage of frivolous luxury objects that serve only to satisfy idle curiosity. What it must be is an imposing school.”⁸

Pace David, luxury undoubtedly had a place in the modern political culture that emerged at

the end of the eighteenth century. The question of markets has primarily driven scholarship on the dispersal of collections during the revolutionary era.⁹ By contrast, the idea for this book began in the dimly lit French decorative arts galleries located on the ground floor of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (a universal collection modeled on the Louvre), while I puzzled over how the very things that David had condemned as “frivolous luxury objects” managed to survive his aesthetic purges and eventually arrive in New York. Walking through the eighteenth-century period rooms, one can encounter ancien régime royal splendor in the form of a chair designed by the architect Jacques Gondoin and constructed by François-Toussaint Foliot for Marie-Antoinette at Versailles, located today in the Cabris Room (plate 1). Both the architect and the chairmaker outlasted the monarchy and the execution of the queen on October 16, 1793. The story of their survival and the turbulent circumstances of the queen’s death, however, are nowhere to be found amid the elegant setting in which the chair is now placed, composed of historical assemblages from different collections, sutured together to nostalgically evoke a lost world.¹⁰ What place does the violence of dispersal have in the mythic narratives of the ancien régime on display in this period room? While processing gifts that had been bequeathed to the museum by recently deceased donors, I also began to contemplate how death can be the starting point for new trajectories. Dispersal, I realized, had shaped the historical trajectories of so many of the museum’s objects, in equally important ways as commissions and collections. Where did such things, with their uneasy associations with the privileged world of the monarchy and the aristocracy, go during the Revolution, and how did they end up in

the museum? How did those who made luxury survive the Terror? In fact, the Revolution played an instrumental role in bringing objects like the former queen’s chair into the hallowed grounds of the museum; the American diplomat Gouverneur Morris probably purchased the chair at the revolutionary auctions held at Versailles after the king’s death.¹¹ Alongside ownership and provenance, dispersal has shaped museum collections in untold and obscured ways. Telling these stories allows one to begin the difficult task of acknowledging that museums are not neutral spaces but sites actively shaped by the agonistic politics of the past and present. The ideology of cultural belonging, which we consider so fundamental to the mission of universal museums today, emerged out of a dialectic relationship with the dislocations and dispersals that took place during the Terror, which forcibly sought to turn private possessions into shared forms of national wealth. In this context, luxury accrued different significations.

Picture, for example, the objects contained in the hushed eighteenth-century period rooms of museums in an entirely different scenario, in a counter-image that is captivating for the many ways in which it so forcefully visualizes luxury not as a thing of taste or value but as a repudiated “object of contempt,” against which forms of political violence were meted out.¹² An illustration from Camille Desmoulins’s radical journal *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* deliberately overturns the elements of the ancien régime interior, so beloved by historians of eighteenth-century French decorative arts and enshrined in period rooms as the site of complex games of distinction, manners, and seduction (fig. 2).¹³ In lieu of a wainscoted space organized on the basis of sets, symmetry, and matching fabrics, the picture shows the French

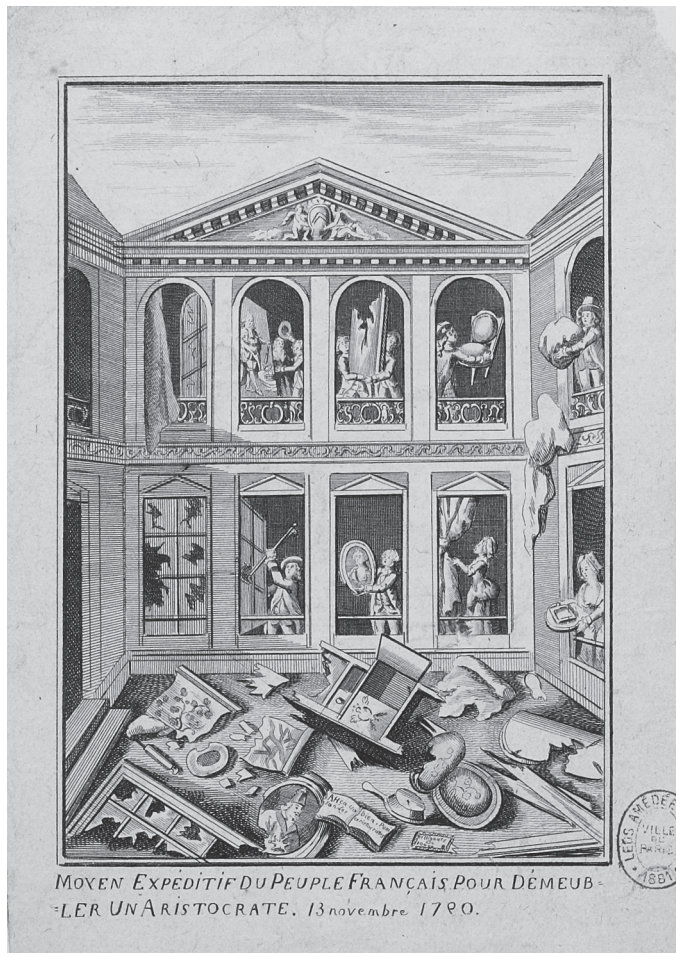


FIG. 2

Anonymous, *Moyen expéditif du peuple français pour démeubler un aristocrate*: 13 novembre 1790, 1790. Engraving and etching, 17.5 × 12.5 cm. G 28272, Musée Carnavalet, Paris. Photo: Paris Musées.

people in the process of defurnishing (the *démeubler* in the print's title) the home of an aristocrat, in this case, the hôtel de Castries.¹⁴ Wrenched out of their carefully orchestrated architectural envelopes, the mismatched fragments of furnishings and decorative objects clutter the courtyard: one can detect among the scattered remnants a veneered cabinet with floral marquetry, an oval portrait of a family member intended to signal the owner's noble lineage, and an upholstered *fauteuil à la reine*, a material "unseating" that perhaps

lampoons the elaborate seating games that took place at court as members of the nobility jockeyed for positions of royal favor (only those closest to the king and queen could be seated on proper chairs; lesser individuals were relegated to stools; still others were forced to stand). The exaggeratedly jagged edges of splintered wood and shattered glass emphasize the brokenness of each symbol of taste. At first glance, this image may be taken as evidence of the horrific vandalism and desecration of private residences and public monuments

wrought by revolutionary zealots that resulted in the loss of countless irrecoverable works of art. But look again at the protagonists. Pause in particular at the woman in the ground-floor window on the far right, as she carefully regards and gingerly fingers the heavy drapes, perhaps made from an expensive and colorful brocaded silk from Lyon that she has never before seen in her life except now, when she's meant to yank them out the window. Her wistful countenance, filled with a mixture of appreciative wonder and a touch of wrathful envy, suggests a moment of aesthetic contemplation at odds with the mindless acts of destruction so often ascribed to spontaneous and typically popular forms of violence. She offers a window into the complex dynamics of desire and rejection at play in the dialectical relationship between the preservation and politicized dispersal of luxury objects, and the mediated loss felt by someone who did not possess the fine things within her grasp. Seeing her, I think about how our possessions come to define us, and what parts of ourselves we lose when things are taken away.

A concise definition of luxury always seems elusive, even as the topic has gained the interest of economic and social historians as well as art historians in recent years.¹⁵ Rather than seeking to define such a capacious term, I use "luxury" to refer to a category of theoretical discourse tied to late Enlightenment culture *and* as a term that characterizes a material field of production outside of the academy, which encompassed the decorative arts. Though the temporal focus of this book resides in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the years around 1800, the cultural position of luxury in the ancien régime constitutes a crucial touchstone for understanding the significance of its survival. Under Louis XIV and the absolutist

system of power established by his influential minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the state control of manufacturing at the Gobelins tapestry works, the Saint-Gobain royal glass works, and the Savonnerie carpet manufactory rendered luxury as a strategic and unquestioned means for consolidating the political, economic, and cultural authority of the French crown.¹⁶ By the time that Louis XV added the Sèvres porcelain manufactory to his royal portfolio in 1759, luxury had become less a symbol of royal magnificence and more a general and diffuse signifier of distinction wielded by courtiers, aristocrats, and, perhaps most prominently, financial speculators and investors who eventually outspent the crown in conspicuous forms of consumption. Social identities were thus shaped by the production, consumption, and connoisseurship of luxury in Paris among the elite of the ancien régime.¹⁷ As John Shovlin has argued, the growing awareness of a fiscal crisis during Louis XVI's reign placed the crown's expenditures on luxury production and consumption in the direct line of fire of fierce public debates about the nation's political economy. While British theorists such as Adam Smith saw luxury's merits for Britain's national wealth, French pamphleteers and philosophers increasingly railed against it.¹⁸ Critics pitted the corrupt and sterile luxury enjoyed by speculators and wealthy financiers who funded the debt-ridden crown against an agrarian virtue born from the land itself.¹⁹

Along with its strong associations with elite sociability, *mondanité*, and the rituals of social climbing prior to 1789, luxury as an abstract category has principally been studied through economic vectors, its rampant consumption and production perceived in direct correlation to a nation's wealth. When it is considered in the context of the

Revolution, luxury is associated with economic liberalism's process of depoliticization, an image perpetuated, for example, in the Musée Carnavalet exhibition of Directory period society, *Au temps des merveilles* (2005). Such frameworks do not account for the ways in which the weaponization of luxury in the debates of the period transformed the perception of objects, such as porcelain or furniture, into palpable threats that had the potential to corrupt the purity of civic virtue and patriotic taste.²⁰ This is evident in the attacks on the first iteration of the Louvre. In the arrangement of art haphazardly organized by style rather than by school, the displays resembled, according to one critic, "the luxurious apartments of satraps and the great, the voluptuous boudoirs of courtesans, the cabinets of self-styled amateurs."²¹ Luxury was evidently so threatening to the vulnerable citizens of the French nation that the museum committee decided to banish the scant examples of Sèvres porcelain initially at the Louvre, even though some revolutionaries, such as the cunning dealer Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun, at one point placed in charge of selecting confiscated works for the museum, recognized exceptional examples of Sèvres and sought to keep them on behalf of the nation.²²

Part of what makes the image of the hôtel de Castries being "defurnished" so unsettling is the tendency to see luxury objects as firmly belonging to the world of pleasure and seduction that existed prior to 1789, not a part of the radical praxis of violence that appeared afterward. The politicized dispersal and recirculation of luxury acquired new meanings during the Terror. And while historians have sought to pinpoint the origins and sources of the Terror, as well as its aftereffects and agents, few have considered, to borrow Timothy Tackett's

concise description, what effect the Terror as a "state policy during the period 1793–94 that used institutionalized violence and the threat of violence—both to punish and intimidate the purported enemies of the nation"—had on luxury.²³ Prior to the Terror, passage of such laws as the d'Allarde law of 1791, which abolished corporations and guilds, and the emergence of new intellectual property rights, which protected those working in the industrial arts as well as the fine arts, had transformed the conditions of production in which furniture makers, designers, and porcelain manufacturers worked. For example, they allowed a variety of artisans who had trained in one material to forge careers in areas of specialization that previously would have been policed by the apprenticeship system of guilds. The political ideals of the period promoted the arts in numerous ways, from the public competitions for architectural monuments and paintings in the year II to smaller commissions for commemorative busts of revolutionary heroes such as Mirabeau, whose portrait was executed by the deaf-mute Claude-André Deseine for display in the Jacobin Club (which ordered that the bust be destroyed after Mirabeau's ties to the crown were revealed in 1792).²⁴ Nonetheless, the end of major state commissions from the monarchy decimated centers of luxury production and contributed to widespread political and economic unrest. The silk industry in Lyon, which had catered to the French court, collapsed after the 1793 Federalist uprisings devastated the city.

Commencing as the Federalist revolts shook France in the summer of 1793, the revolutionary auctions at Versailles had a profound effect on luxury by mobilizing dispersal as part of a bureaucratic system of state violence intended to

deprive the former monarchy, clergy, and aristocracy—and subsequently anyone declared an enemy of the state—of material possessions or property. Because the authority of the new French Republic depended on the liquidation of luxury rather than on its production, the definition of what it constituted became subject to personal inclinations and private habits and eccentricities.²⁵ For example, even with the implementation of the General Maximum Law on September 29, 1793, which placed price regulations on all necessary foods and commodities, “the Incorruptible” Robespierre managed to sneak coffee and sugar onto the list of essentials, arguing, as Ruth Scurr notes, that “these two products of colonialism were nevertheless addictive and the people would be deprived without them.”²⁶ In spite of a public image that preached austerity and moral virtues, Robespierre was a notoriously fastidious dresser who wore formal coats and breeches throughout the Revolution, as suggested by his purported portrait by Louis-Léopold Boilly (plate 2). The Incorruptible had a particular weakness for silk stockings, which proved extraordinarily difficult to provision in the material scarcity caused by the widespread political unrest and fiscal panic of the period. Hoping to secure a few clean pairs from Lyon, then in the midst of a Federalist revolt when the General Maximum Law was declared, his close associate heralded the bad news that the Lyon postmaster general could not secure “hosiery for the Incorruptible and was sending some ham and sausage instead.”²⁷

Frivolity during the Terror, exemplified by Robespierre’s hankering after silk stockings—hilariously swapped for sausages—or his declaration that coffee and sugar were necessities due to their addictive properties, at first appears like a rare

comical character flaw in an erstwhile monstrous historical figure. Robespierre’s quirks also reveal the ways in which luxury became less about elite class formation or signifiers of Enlightenment connoisseurship, and more about idiosyncratic, radically subjective, and even irrational systems of value that were in continual flux throughout the revolutionary period.²⁸ For example, Natacha Coquery points to one of the most surprising facets of life during the Terror: the robust activity of buying and selling during a period of intense political unrest and economic uncertainty: “Supported by the circulation of second-hand objects, the luxury market boasted an almost insolent vitality, as proven by the press of the time.”²⁹ In her analysis of the *Affiches, annonces et avis divers, ou Journal général de France*, a widely circulated eighteenth-century periodical that devoted a large section to announcements and advertisements for the sale of goods, Coquery discovered that the height of the political crisis in 1793 and 1794 saw rampant sales of goods, such as furniture, decoration, jewelry, silver services, porcelain, paintings, and particularly textiles, which took place on the secondary market. Through auctions and the resale of goods, “the French Revolution, a new regime that embodied modernity and the abolition of an inegalitarian ideology and order, far from completing this evolution, appears to have helped strengthen traditional values and luxury.”³⁰ The secondary market forms a rich and complex topic for understanding fundamental changes in revolutionary history. But I want to slightly twist Coquery’s interpretation of the auctions. Rather than helping to “strengthen traditional values and luxury,” I see the auctions functioning as sites that allowed individuals to negotiate the material remnants of the recent past in deeply personal ways, which cut across

the collective forms of aesthetic ideology being established at the national museum. Such personal reconfigurations of the term were part and parcel of France's revolutionary inheritance, and would come full circle in the 1871 Paris Commune, which sought to overturn the elite stranglehold over luxury by declaring it communal.³¹ The question of what endowed a particular object with value was intimately tied to the question of how one chose to view the past. Moreover, the buying and selling of luxury objects presented a different yet no less related set of problems tied to the working through of revolutionary trauma. If, as Taws has argued elsewhere, *trompe l'oeil* images of paper money rematerialized memories of financial ruin, exquisite furnishings became reminders of a prior ancien régime past that could never be fully recuperated.³²

The four protagonists of this book, though joined by their ties to the French luxury industry, present different aspects of what remained of the complicated realm of production that unraveled as the ancien régime world of the wealthy, the privileged, and the elite came undone and was remade by the politically volatile circumstances of the French Revolution. The decision to focus on the makers of luxury rather than its consumers or patrons is deliberate. I do so in order to shed light on how each protagonist's lived experience of rapidly changing historical circumstances shaped the interpretation of the works they made, manufactured, designed, and sold, at a time when the politicized redistribution of property and movable goods dethroned the authority of taste that had once been granted to the patron rather than the makers of luxury.³³ If collecting constituted a primary means through which commerce shaped Enlightenment epistemologies, dispersal and

dispossession played a part in undoing those systems of knowledge upon which their social identities had been constructed.³⁴

This book is indebted to Michel Beurdeley's *La France à l'encan, 1789–1799: Exode des objets d'art sous la Révolution*. A remarkable piece of scholarship written by an auctioneer with intimate knowledge of the trade, *La France à l'encan* drew attention to the importance of the dispersal of the royal collections within the political events of the period. Remi Gaillard has recently advanced Beurdeley's study by arguing that, far from representing an embarrassing tragedy in the loss of national patrimony, the revolutionary sales actually demonstrated the workings of the government's bureaucratic order and efficiency.³⁵ In other ways, the book's narrative trajectories overlap with the work of Tom Stammers, who has uncovered the role of nineteenth-century nostalgic *amateurs* and idiosyncratic *collectionneurs* in constructing the history of the Revolution. The dispersal of the royal collections was seen as a "black legend," equally traumatic as the penury caused by the disastrous inflation of the assignats and the vandalism meted out against priceless monuments. Still, as Stammers points out, the sales made historical artifacts accessible to the same private collectors who deplored the practices of their revolutionary forebears.³⁶ Similar to the eccentric historical figures who populate his study—such as Pierre-Marie Gault de Saint-Germain, "an anachronism caught between two worlds"—the individuals at the center of this book defy easy political categorization, nor do their life dates neatly coincide with regime change.³⁷ Rather than classifying the objects they made on the basis of style or within the history of collecting or taste, I view them as active agents that accrued a variety

of shifting meanings, at times contradictory to the political positions their makers had claimed for themselves.

What determined the value of luxury items after the death of the king, whose privileges had provided their symbolic source of value? Politically and economically speaking, regicide and the dispersal of the royal collections created considerable challenges for the specialist producers who had made a living working for the court and for those who had established their professional reputations on the basis of their ties to the monarchy. The sudden disappearance of strong state support did not automatically mean the adoption of a reactionary position in favor of the Bourbon monarchy in exile. They instead turned to alternative markets. Some makers left Paris in search of patrons elsewhere, while others adopted the patriotic language of the Revolution and duly recalibrated the nature of their work. A variety of artistic experiences that might be called “nonaligned” with predominant political positions emerged out of the period, along with identities that proved resistant to ideological factions. Gerrit Walczak has recently drawn attention to the artists who departed France and migrated to Florence, Rome, London, Hamburg, and Saint Petersburg during the period. Market considerations constituted a key factor in their decision to depart France in search of other places of habitation, in contrast to the reactionary communities in exile populated by noble and aristocratic patrons in royalist strongholds such as Mannheim and Coblenz. Walczak carefully distinguishes between those who identified themselves as political émigrés with strong ideological ties to the exiled Bourbon monarchy and those who were simply artistic “wanderers.” Importantly, he indicates that “none of the court artists of the

Ancien Régime . . . left France in the entourage of the Bourbons. Whichever artists left for foreign countries after 1789 remained autonomous. None of them remained in the continuous services of the exiled French court.”³⁸

Eschewing the typical timelines of revolutionary history that begin with the meeting of the Estates General in 1789, the book opens with a chapter on the dispersal of the royal collections after the regicide of Louis XVI on January 21, 1793. Each ensuing chapter explores the work and experience of a single individual, rather than a synthesizing account of luxury from the Revolution to the first years of the Empire, which has been investigated elsewhere.³⁹ Dispersal and the political meanings of liquidation are explored in the first chapter, which focuses on the 1793–94 auction that took place at the Palace of Versailles. Organized by the government in order to finance its increasingly expensive military campaigns, the liquidation of the royal residence’s furnishings and mobile pieces of décor played a critical role in the formation of a royalist visual and material economy, transforming the novelties of a past age into fetishized relics and historical souvenirs. The trial and beheading of the king are tied to the ways in which the government’s decision to auction off his possessions transformed the systems of patronage, collecting, and production that had defined the luxury industry of the ancien régime.

The term dispossession in the context of eighteenth-century Britain has recently been productively explored in unraveling capitalism’s role in the formation of “dispossessed” figures such as orphans, slaves, and prostitutes, who haunted the literature and cultural productions of the period.⁴⁰ By comparison, in the French context it was not only the economically disenfranchised who were

the subjects of dispossession but the king himself, prompting a crisis of identity for his political subjects. Although the full significance of the king's death on January 21, 1793, on the crowded timeline of revolutionary history marked by *journalées*, battles, and uprisings has been the subject of heated debates, I follow Lynn Hunt's assertion that "whether the king was symbolically dead in 1793, 1789, or before, his actual death in 1793 drew attention to a sacred void," for, in spite of Louis XVI's growing impotence in the face of events, "the king had been the head of a social body held together by bonds of deference."⁴¹ According to Hunt, prints of his execution redoubled the political void after his death by emphatically depicting the empty pedestal on the Place de la Révolution, where a statue of his grandfather Louis XV had once stood and had been forcefully removed by revolutionaries. Such acts of vandalism and the desecration of monuments have been the foci of histories charting forms of violence against the memory of the French monarchy. I suggest that we attend to the deliberate and systemic confiscation and resale of the royal collection after the death of Louis XVI as a palpable extension of state violence that transformed luxury objects as royal expressions of legitimacy and power into polemical signifiers of loss.

The severing of the symbolic relationship between king and subjects and the break in courtly patronage coincided with the emergence of new understandings of art and authorship, predicated upon changing commercial and legal concepts of intellectual property. As artistic privilege was replaced by rights in the course of the long eighteenth century, commercially motivated court cases played an increasing role in adjudicating aesthetic questions of value, authenticity, and genius, a subject that has recently been explored

by Katie Scott. And as the elite patrons, the court, and the professional corporations were eliminated, the individual makers fought for visibility in the fiercely competitive marketplace of postcorporation Paris. However, old relationships lingered on from the past. Amid the rapid dissolution of state sponsorship, the purported absolutism of the French crown had been belied by a social order of the *ancien régime* that to a degree already functioned without the authority and presence of the French crown. Rebecca Comay has described this as the "originary vacancy" of power in her reading of Hegel's philosophy of history as a response to the French Revolution: "Absolute monarchy was already an 'empty name,' a heap of ornaments clustering around an empty throne—legitimacy shrinking even as the emblems and props of power multiplied. It is this originary vacancy that modernity both covers up and transmits. Revolutionary purity brings into view precisely what it most denies: the emptiness at the heart of the symbolic order."⁴² The notion of the king's portrait as an empty signifier of a hollow monarchy even appeared on the early forms of paper currency, which were originally printed with Louis XVI's portraits in a manner similar to metallic specie. However, his execution transformed the very symbol of authority meant to provide the new paper money with credibility into a suspect form to which no one wished to entrust their financial transactions, as evidenced by the rapid inflation that took place only a few short years after the assignats were first issued.

Money and its changing appearances structure the narrative of chapter 2, which considers the unlikely career of Henry Auguste, Louis XVI's former goldsmith, during the Revolution. It traces his transformation from a goldsmith assuming the

trade of his father to an experimental metallurgist who participated in the public debates on the national debt and the creation of a paper currency. Though he was not directly involved in the government's fiscal policies, Auguste's activities reveal the ambiguous aesthetic values that had long conditioned the making of art from precious metals. It turns out that of all the luxury production at the court, the work of goldsmiths had always been the most threatened by money and the possibility of being melted down and used for currency.

Auguste's troubles during the Revolution bring into view the politicized collective anxieties over money that plagued individuals throughout the French nation, alongside the myriad "family romances" that shaped artisanal identities. Hunt's reading of the fraternal politics of the Revolution through a Freudian notion of a "family romance," which entailed childhood fantasies about rewriting the narrative of familial relations, has rightly been challenged. However, Auguste's case shows how luxury workshops were structured by kinship and a family model of politics, at the moment when the heavily policed guild system during the ancien régime unraveled. Laboring on behalf of the king, Auguste had also depended on the prior work of his father to help establish his own reputation and name, both of which he had managed to squander by the Empire period. The most surprising twist in Auguste's story is his death in Haiti. Driven by a desire to escape his personal debts, this final destination allows Haiti to appear on the historical horizon not as an island laid to waste by racial terror and civil strife but as the site of postcolonial futurity and freedom, removed from the bonds of imperial authority.⁴³

Father figures were not the only ones who haunted lives during the Revolution.⁴⁴ Other sorts

of broken family ties, such as abandoned children, lost wives, and dead mothers, played a part in the professional identities of those who made the ambivalent forms of luxury that appeared in the final decade of the eighteenth century and the first one of the nineteenth century. Though the artistic turn to paper as the medium of choice during the Revolution was undoubtedly driven by political ideology, economic uncertainty, and material scarcity, a maternal specter also haunts the works on paper made by the designer Jean-Démosthène Dugourc, who is the subject of chapter 3. From bronze fixtures and chandeliers to furniture, Dugourc designed an array of objects for the competitive luxury market based in Paris, gaining fame for the *goût étrusque*, a style that looked toward classical antiquity, although it was characterized more by fantastical associations and sleights of hand than by the hard and disciplined reconstruction of archaeological fragments that characterized a subsequent generation of designers' work. Dugourc's sudden turn to works on paper, particularly the invention of a set of republican playing cards in 1793, marked not only a reversal of his previous political ties to the French crown but also a striking contrast to the sumptuous materials for which he produced designs.

In many ways, Dugourc constitutes the most enigmatic figure of the book; his family life, political volte-face, and professional trajectories appear as tangled as the arabesque designs for which he became known. Designers are rarely granted the same psychological complexity as painters such as David, whose every aesthetic choice—each jab of the brush, every sinewy limb or swollen cheek drawn—has been scrutinized and analyzed for its ties to the cultural moment and collective unconscious of the period and been read as a harbinger

of modernism. Dugourc's designs evidence an incredibly rich and complicated personality, one less aligned to the rigid genealogies of modernism and instead deeply enmeshed in the factional politics of city and court. In many ways, Dugourc's professional identity was shaped by his close proximity to his more famous brother-in-law, François-Joseph Bélanger, and his slow climb up the ladder of the royal administration, which he entered in 1784 as a designer at the *Garde-Meuble de la Couronne*, which was in charge of the crown's numerous residences and furnishings. Dugourc's activities during the Revolution form a direct contrast to the court designer Pierre-Adrien Pâris, who had served as a head designer of the *Menus-Plaisirs*, the powerful administration in charge of festivals, public celebrations, funerals, and, in May 1789, the orchestration of the meeting of the Estates General. Pâris categorically refused the positions offered to him by the revolutionary government, choosing instead to go into self-imposed exile, first in Normandy and later in his native Besançon. Fleeing the capital after the execution of the king, Pâris went into hiding in Colmoulins, near the northwest coast of France, where he drew the plan of a residence for himself in the former dovecote of an aristocrat (fig. 3).⁴⁵ Shaped as a hermetically sealed, nautilus-like shell, Pâris's rural residential project instinctively reverts to the complex, fussy rococo planning of *ancien régime* architecture, at once a reminder of the outrageously expensive speculative residential projects that crowded the neighborhood of the *Chaussée-d'Antin* and a repudiation of the revolutionary public festival's vast open spaces and monuments. In repurposing a dovecote as a space of habitation, Pâris's drawing simultaneously functions as a reactionary form of symbolic architecture, given that

it was conceived on the heels of the Great Fear of 1789, when rural peasants had vehemently attacked actual dovecotes because they harbored such strong associations with seigneurial privilege.⁴⁶ While hiding in self-imposed exile, Pâris heard of the king's death and began working on a design for an expiatory monument to Louis XVI. Far from being a design commissioned by his exiled brothers, this monument, subject to wistful memories, wrathful fantasies, and his architectural judgment alone, gradually reached strangely overblown proportions and ultimately remained unbuilt, even during the Bourbon Restoration.

Pâris's monument to Louis XVI might be seen as emblematic of the emergence of a royalist art made by former court artists seeking to commemorate the king. However, Walczak's work suggests that any sense of a coherent royalist art and identity was primarily a retrospective act that took place during the Bourbon Restoration, as former court artists and their widows sought to recuperate financial support from the crown by shaping "émigré" identities.⁴⁷ It should not surprise us that Dugourc, too, refashioned his artistic identity during the Restoration by emphasizing his links to the court in order to secure a royal pension, despite the notoriety he had gained as a republican designer during the Revolution. He died in poverty.

Mourning and the politics of exile are central to chapter 4, which explores the work of the wood-carver Aubert-Henri-Joseph Parent, who left Paris and traveled in 1792 to Switzerland, where he became an architect. Unlike Pâris, Parent was a relatively marginal figure at the court of Louis XVI. Nonetheless, he chose to identify strongly with the monarchical regime following the king's death in 1793. In many ways, Parent's

for doing so by focusing on his transformation of the king's image into an aesthetic symbol of loss, mourning, and religious faith, one that would be legible to his Swiss and German clientele.

Scholarship on the visual, medical, and political aftereffects of the guillotine has attended to what made the machine so shockingly *modern*.⁴⁸ I suggest instead that the guillotine and the death of Louis XVI also prompted a recursion to older forms of mourning and memory among the royalists witnessing the spectacle. Within France, remembering the king had to be a private endeavor, since doing so publicly would have amounted to treason. Beyond the nation's borders, commemorating the king took place by means of private devotional objects that mingled early modern ways of religious beholding with politicized forms of vengeance. In contrast to the instant of death made radically visible by the guillotine's *punctum temporis*, invisibility and hidden forms reemerged as signs of monarchist memory rooted in a language of mourning, where the dead royal family was often featured as spectral presences haunting the peripheries of the Revolution's all-seeing eye of transparency—or, somewhat incongruously, silhouettes of the dead king were hidden in fashion items such as fans.

How the tensions between a political language of regeneration and extinction reshaped the meanings of porcelains are explored in the final chapter, which turns to the unique circumstances that led the naturalist and polymath Alexandre Brongniart to take over the Sèvres porcelain manufactory in 1800. In many ways, Brongniart is distinguished from the other protagonists in this book not only because of his interest in, and continuing ties with, the revolutionary scientific community based in Paris but also because he was neither a designer

nor a maker with deep ties to the court. However, with the death of the king, the emigration of elite patrons, and continual worker unrest, the reputation of the Sèvres porcelain manufactory shifted from its distinguished patrons to its highly visible director. Motivated by his interests in the sciences, particularly chemistry, natural history, and mineralogy, Brongniart managed to revive the factory and transform it into a center of research and learning; he conveyed the knowledge he accumulated during his long tenure in the magisterial *Traité des arts céramiques*, which encompassed the history, practice, and theory of ceramics across multiple times and geographies.⁴⁹ At the same time, through his parallel research with his collaborator and friend Georges Cuvier in the emerging field of geology, he inadvertently introduced ideas of extinction into the production of a material no longer as rare and precious as it had once been during the ancien régime. The chapter also explores how the competing private firm Dihl et Guérhard contributed to the changing aesthetics of porcelain. Images of nature as a source of regeneration and extinction appeared on experimental works that both channeled the political turbulence of the city and gave birth to new visions of the history of the Earth.

This book is an avowedly polemical, at times idiosyncratic text that argues for the centrality of the decorative arts in understanding the French Revolution and the fractured forms of individual subjectivity that emerged against (and sometimes alongside) narratives of collective experience. My aim in studying this group of individuals is not to establish a new “canon” but to both broaden and complicate our understanding of the constellation of makers who shaped the material culture of the French Revolution and thereby deepen our

comprehension of the period. I draw upon a broad range of disciplines outside of art history, such as anthropology, literary theory, psychoanalysis, and history—and even fiction—with the desire to break open a decorative arts field that tends to be dominated by a closed discourse premised upon exclusionary and homogeneous notions of French style, belonging, and taste. To get to my protagonists, I felt the need to write honestly and with a sense of urgency, against the grain of history from my own incongruous subject position.⁵⁰ Otherwise, the story of French decorative arts would stay the same: a tale of exclusivity and

cultural heritage belonging to the privileged few. It would remain an undisturbed fairy tale about things that used to belong to the wealthy, the elite, and the powerful. Surely there must be other ways of telling this narrative. There must be a thread that is not solely about exclusive ownership or possession but about makers taking unexpected trajectories and works arriving in unexpected places, about private objects becoming public things, once removed from their original circumstances, and being encountered by unforeseen viewers. Telling that story is crucial to *Luxury After the Terror*.