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978-0-521-59259-8 - The Place Vendôme: Architecture and Social Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Paris

Rochelle Ziskin

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The Place Vendôme

In *The Place Vendôme*, Rochelle Ziskin explores the sociological foundations of domestic design in eighteenth-century France, the acknowledged leader in domestic architecture during this period. Focusing on the Place Vendôme, which was developed by the financiers of Paris, she examines the representational strategies and dilemmas of French elites that were crucial to the formation of a French mode of design. These strategies are illuminated through a study of the socially mobile households of financiers, with their evolving but ambiguous social status. Through analyses of social distinctions and ambitions, Ziskin explores the manner in which the dwellings of the Place Vendôme embodied beliefs about the nature of society, the appropriate relations among social groups, as well as those between men and women, parents and children, and masters and domestics. This study also includes a wide range of illustrated material that is published here for the first time.

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For EZ, GZ, BZ, LZ, JZ, and MPF

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Preface

IT WAS THROUGH the theoretical writings of Jacques-François Blondel that I first became interested in a study of the Place Vendôme. Among Blondel's goals was the codification of rules of representation in the realm of domestic design, an enterprise that revealed anxiety about social mobility in eighteenth-century France. I became interested in how financial families, with their ambiguous social identities, negotiated the rules of decorum in the domestic sphere. The Place Vendôme emerged as my focus because it formed a primary center of the financial quarter of Paris during most of the eighteenth century. Moreover, there had been no comprehensive architectural study of the square, despite its obvious importance, and questions about how it functioned as a site of social representation had rarely been raised.

Many scholars have appreciated the significance of the Place Vendôme, but the fundamental studies have not been architectural. Arthur de Boislesle's meticulous archival study of 1888 was enlarged upon by Maurice Dumolin, who made use of the papers of the archbishop of Paris to provide an outline of those who took up residence at the square (1927); drawing upon notarial documents not readily available to Boislesle and Dumolin, F. de Saint Simon has provided a fuller account of the square's residents (1983). The primary architectural studies had long been the work of Swedish scholars; they tended to focus on drawings housed in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, but nonetheless established an essential foundation. Most significant are Ragnar Josephson's study of facade drawings (1928), Erich Bier's catalogue providing a broader overview (1945), Eric Langenskiöld's monograph on Pierre Bullet (1959), and Runar Strandberg's articles on Jean-Baptiste Bullet de Chamblain, conveniently assembled in a published dissertation of 1971. The most significant recent work on the houses of the Place Vendôme has been that of the late Bruno Pons, who focused on interior decor; most important are his entries on Place Vendôme houses in *De Paris à Versailles 1699–1736: Les sculpteurs ornemanistes parisiens et l'art décoratif des Bâtiments du roi* (Strasbourg, 1986) and his accounts of decorative ensembles appearing in *Grands Décors Français* (published simultaneously as *French Period Rooms* in 1995), and the posthumously published catalogue of paneling installed at Waddesdon Manor (1996).

*Preface***Acknowledgments**xvi

This study began as a Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University, and I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisers, James S. Ackerman and Neil Levine, for their incisive criticism and intellectual generosity. More recently, Robin Middleton, Myra Nan Rosenfeld, and the readers for Cambridge University Press have made valuable suggestions on manuscript versions of this book. Many scholars have offered valued suggestions during the research of this book, including Theda Shapiro, Allan Potofsky, Julia Adams, Jay Smith, and Thierry Claeys. Michael Dennis generously allowed me to reproduce his plan after Blondel, and Robert Neuman and Christopher Mead kindly permitted me to use their photographs.

Among the many museum and archival curators who have assisted my work, I would like to especially thank Börje Magnusson of the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm; Gillian Wilson, Brian Considine, and Jeffrey Weaver of the J. Paul Getty Museum; Bertrand Rondot of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris; Michel Le Moël and Nicole Felkay of the Archives Nationales; Nicole Ambourg of the Bibliothèque Marmottan and Madame Chaleur of the library of the Ministère de la Justice. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the enterprises and individuals permitting me to visit, study, and photograph their premises: Bank of India; Banque N.M.B.; Monsieur Jean-Louis du Boucheron; Chauderer; Chaumet; Crédit Foncier de la France; Monsieur Lucien Dana; Deutsche Banque; I.B.M.; La Ministère de la Justice; Morgan Guaranty Trust Company; the Ritz Hôtel; la Société des Centres Commerciaux; la Société KENLO; Union des Assurances de Paris; Van Cleef & Arpels; and Wella. I thank Gracie Luciani of the Ministère de la Justice for her exceptional generosity.

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