



MADAME DE MAINTENON IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

16 APRIL - 21 JULY 2019

Versailles, 20 February
2019 Press release

To mark the tricentenary of the death of Madame de Maintenon (1635-1719), the Palace of Versailles shines the light on the exceptional destiny of this woman, who was born in a prison but went on to become the wife of the world's most powerful king. On display in the private quarters Mme de Maintenon occupied on the first floor of the Palace, close to the King's own apartments, the exhibition traces the life of this important court figure via around sixty works and documents. Thanks to the evocative staging of the exhibition, visitors can also rediscover the emblematic 17th-century décor, no examples of which remain in modern-day Versailles.



Portrait of Françoise d'Aubigné, by Pierre Mignard, Between 1660 and 1673, Niort, Musée Bernard d'Agesci
© Musée Bernard d'Agesci collections – Niort Agglo

Following a difficult, impoverished childhood, at the age of 16 Françoise d'Aubigné married the famous poet Scarron, who introduced her to prestigious Parisian circles. After being widowed, she was entrusted the role of raising the illegitimate children of King Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan. After the first children were legitimised in 1673, Françoise d'Aubigné moved to the court, where she caught the King's attention. Having been given the title Madame de Maintenon,

she went on to marry King Louis XIV following the disgrace of his former favourite and the death of Queen Maria Theresa. In 1686, continuing her vocation as a governess, she founded the Saint-Louis Royal School for girls in Saint-Cyr for daughters of the impoverished nobility of France, which delivered an exceptionally modern teaching programme. Whether decried or admired, Madame de Maintenon continues to fascinate today.

EVOCATIVE STAGING FOR APARTMENTS TO BE REDISCOVERED

The exhibition is an opportunity to open Madame de Maintenon's apartments to the public and recreate the atmosphere that they would have had when she occupied the quarters from 1680 to 1715.

Relatively modest compared to royal and princely apartments, the quarters are located in a prized and exceptional position, on the first floor of the main wing of the Palace, very close to the King's private apartments. The space underwent a whole host of changes for the occupants who followed Madame de Maintenon, in particular following the major transformation of the palace into a national monument dedicated "to all the glories of France" by King Louis-Philippe in the 19th century. For this exhibition, unique paintings, drawings, engravings, books, medals and

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EXHIBITION COMMITTEE

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EXHIBITION
DESIGN
Jérôme Dumoux

documents are on show in the various rooms of the apartments, retracing Madame de Maintenon's destiny. The particularly evocative staging of the exhibition, with its wall hangings, recreates the colourful atmosphere of this suite of rooms, discreet yet sophisticated, just like their occupant. The wall hangings were woven by Tassinari & Chatel - France's oldest silk factory founded in Lyon by King Louis XIV - based on a description of the original hangings included in the 1708 inventory of the royal furniture depository. In those days, the walls of Madame de Maintenon's apartments were sumptuously decorated with silk hangings, arranged in alternating strips throughout most of the rooms: red and Venetian brocatelle for the first antechamber, red and gold for the chamber and the main cabinet.

This type of emblematic décor of the 17th century is no longer found in today's Versailles, so the exhibition is a unique opportunity for visitors to admire the interiors of a Courtesan's quarters in the French "Grand Siècle".



Château de Versailles, Exhibition Madame de Maintenon, in the corridors of power - Senography project, Jérôme Dumoux

**MADAME DE MAINTENON 1719-2019
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
21-23 MARCH 2019**

This international symposium is an opportunity to take a fresh look at this multifaceted historical figure, reviewing the biographical aspects of the Marquise, as well as her correspondence and the literary and iconographic legend surrounding her.

Deliberately multidisciplinary in nature, the event will bring together historians, researchers, musicologists and others, while Françoise Chandernagor and Gérard Sabatier will host a round-table debate on Madame de Maintenon as a fictional character..
Scientific management: Mathieu da Vinha and Nathalie Grande

PALACE OF VERSAILLES AUDITORIUM - ADMISSION SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY (LIMITED NUMBER OF SPACES)

PROGRAMME AND ENROLLMENT: WWW.CHATEAUVERSAILLES-RECHERCHE.FR, "REGISTER FOR EVENTS"