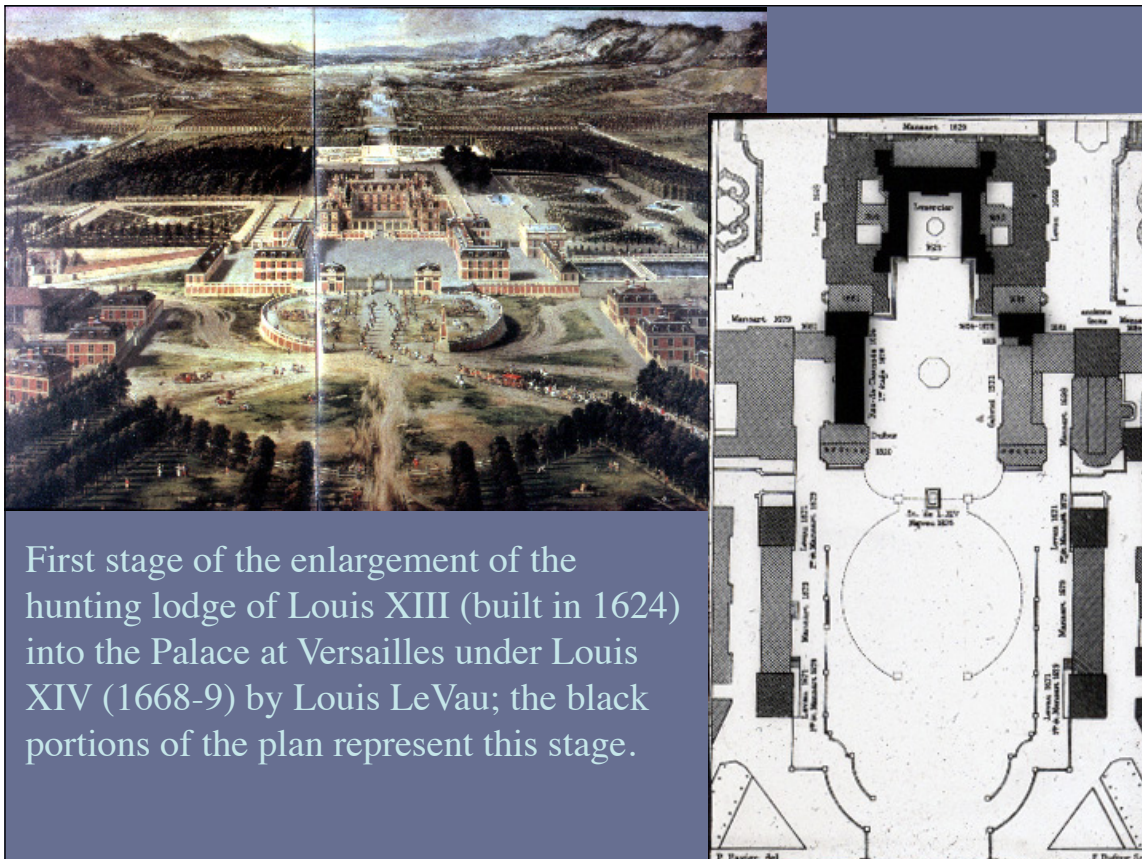


The Royal Palace at Versailles

Architecture and Art in the Service of Absolute Power

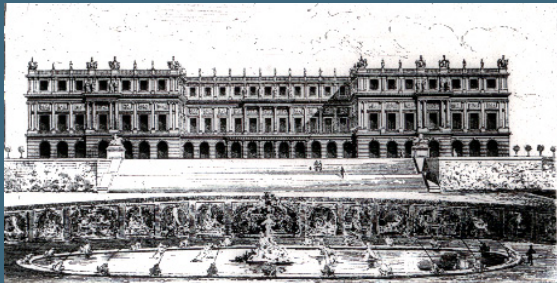
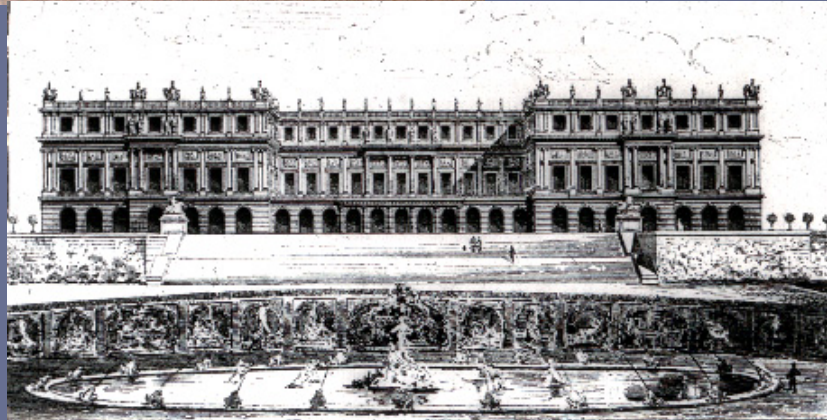


First stage of the enlargement of the hunting lodge of Louis XIII (built in 1624) into the Palace at Versailles under Louis XIV (1668-9) by Louis LeVau; the black portions of the plan represent this stage.



Court of Honor

Garden Façade in the scheme of 1669 by Louis LeVau



In 1678, Jules-Hardouin Mansart filled in the center section of west side to create the Hall of Mirrors (Galerie des Glaces) as part of a major expansion of the palace.



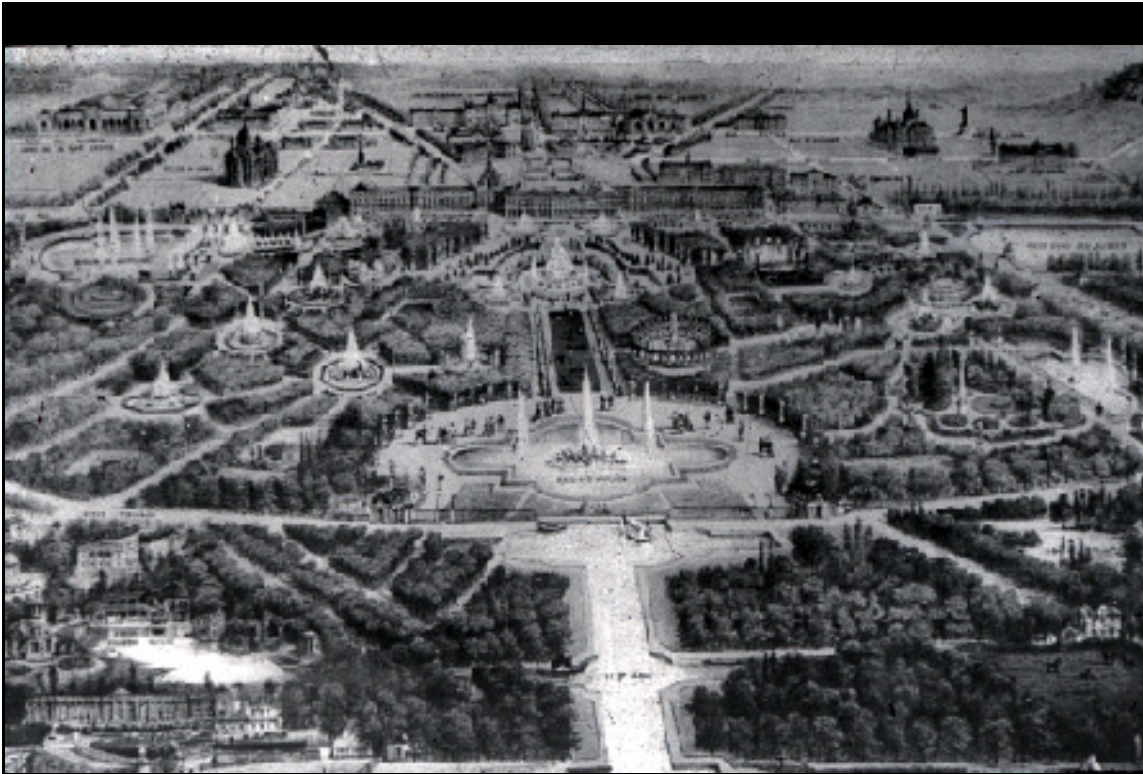


The Mansart expansion of Versailles brought the total length of the garden façade to about one-third of a mile.

Main pavilion with south wing, viewed from the south



The garden façade seen from the “Tapis vert” (green carpet) of the Versailles Park



The fountains from a bird's eye view of Versailles Park

Some facts and information about Versailles

Louis XIV proclaimed Versailles to be the seat of the government on May 6, 1682. In effect, the entire bureaucracy moved from Paris to the suburban villa of the king.

The court consisted of **20,000** persons that included **9,000** soldiers, **5,000** servants, **1,000** great lords and members of the nobility, **1,000** lesser aristocrats (who visited the court on a daily basis) and **4-5,000** bureaucrats to manage the official business.

The court was further supported by 2,500 horses, 200 coaches, and 5,000 hunting dogs.

The great lords and members of the nobility were required to live at Versailles--in the palace--so that the king could keep track of them. They were required to wear entirely new clothing (down to their linens) for the king's fetes and other important social occasions. They could beg permission to return to their lands periodically in order to regroup financially!

A brief history of Louis XIV's reign and his relationship to his principal ministers - -

Louis XIII (father of Louis XIV) reigned 1610-1643, beginning at the age of nine. His principal adviser was Cardinal Richelieu, 1624-42

In 1643, Cardinal Jules Mazarin succeeded Richelieu as Louis XIV accedes to the throne. Mazarin from an Italian family (Mazzarini). Richelieu had been very powerful and influential; Mazarin continued that trend. He continued and expanded state patronage of the arts:

1648: creation of the French Academy of Art with Charles Lebrun as Director

The intention of the academy was to train artists and control artistic style in France. To this end, Mazarin and Lebrun imposed strict rules for admission to membership in the academy and for the form and content of the art produced in the academy.

The absolutist tendencies in this artistic program clearly related to and reflected important characteristics of French politics of the 17th century.

Louis XIV became *Le Roi Soleil* - the "Sun King"

He centralized and concentrated all power in his ministers and/or his own hands.

In March of 1661, Mazarin died. Louis XIV announced that he would not have a first minister but would reign himself without a minister of state.

Jean-baptiste Colbert, who had been groomed by Mazarin, became the king's closest advisor on all matters. They created a tight pyramidal hierarchy of power and administrative authority and imposed it on all fields of endeavor in France.

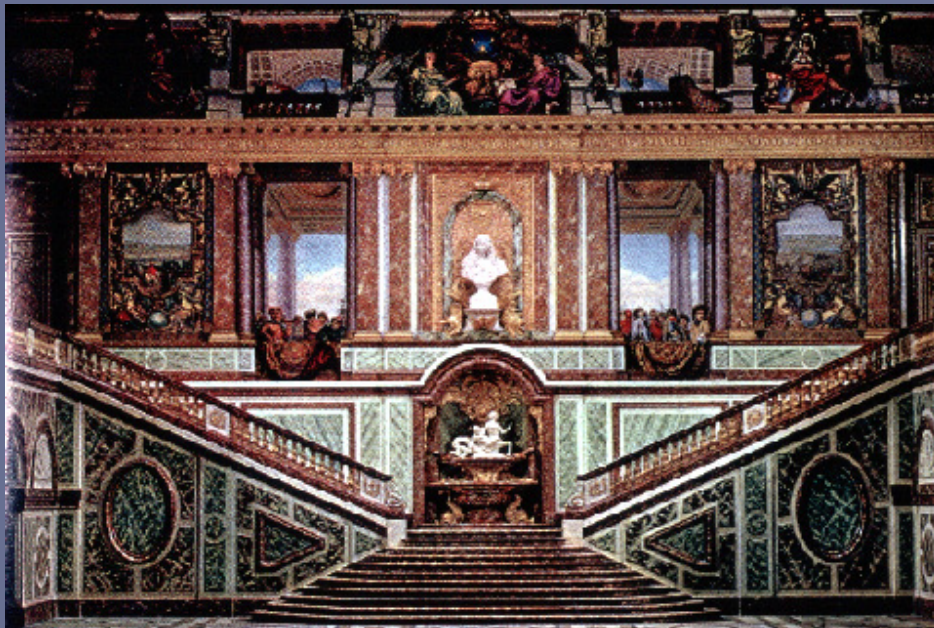
In the arts, Charles Lebrun became Colbert's right arm--he was in essence a dictator of the arts. In 1648, the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture had been established. In 1663, Colbert and Lebrun reorganized it into a state art machine.

The French academy created a strict format for instruction with Colbert at the top. For the visual arts, the assumption all underlying instruction was that the practice of art could be learned by application of certain precepts and that these precepts could be discovered by a process of rational analysis.

However, the style produced in the visual arts represented a compromise. Baroque art appealed to Louis XIV for its richness and grand scale. But baroque art had been developed primarily for religious needs and was thus considered unsuitable for court usage by Colbert and Lebrun. They wanted a more secular, more rational style, one more suitable to the traditions of classicism.

In other words, Italian baroque art was tempered by what the French called *le bon gout* (good taste).

The dictatorship of Colbert and Lebrun imposed this style all over France. Among the many results of this dictatorship was the fact that Paris began to supersede Rome as the artistic capital of Europe.



The Ambassadors' Staircase



La Salon de Guerre (Salon of War) was the prelude to the Hall of Mirrors. The relief portrait by Coysevox is based on...



The Hall of Mirrors: the axis between war and peace crosses the axis of absolute power.

