Persuasion: Nicolas Pineau's Designs on the Social

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Abstract

This essay offers a Latourian account of the wood sculptor Nicolas Pineau's design process via a reading of Jean-François Bastide's novella *La petite maison*. It argues that the conventional form assumed by his drawings or 'inscriptions' – the indications of scale, the delineation of options, the signatures and marginal notes – can be read as traces of seduction that helped 'translate' potential patrons to a taste for Rococo. The essay further suggests that the activation of the taste at the point of commission was kept alive in the designs executed by the bi-modal asymmetry that is characteristic of the *goût pittoresque* because its exercise was considered a mark of refinement.

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[1] In a recent essay Glenn Adamson asks, "Is there a sense in which technique itself can be baroque, in the same way as architecture or painting?" The answer, from "a standard art historical perspective," he claims, is "probably 'no'."[1] Arguably, only a design historian would think to articulate such a question; and only art history of a very traditional kind, one concerned overwhelmingly with style and meaning (of products not processes) would fail to see its pertinence.[2] However, if design history has for some time moved beyond its traditional intellectual territory – industry, economy, technology, function – to explore the emotional bonds that tie us to objects and environments, and to listen to the way (another word for style) things "talk",[3] art history has, in a more recent turn towards the object, become preoccupied with matters of matter and of the manual performance of art. Lines have crossed. This essay aims to exploit the interpretative potential of this entanglement in order to propose a Rococo "yes" to Adamson's question, the better to address the larger issue of relations between art, design and the social.[4] To that end the

[1] Glenn Adamson, "The Real in the Rococo", in: *Rethinking the Baroque*, ed. Helen Hills, London 2011, 143-157.

[2] The question of the cultural meaning of technology has of course long been of concern to anthropology upon which Design History often draws. See, for example, the work of Heather Lechtman and Arthur Steinberg, "The History of Technology: An Anthropological Point of View," in: *The History and Philosophy of Technology*, ed. George Bugliarello and Dean B. Doner, Urbana 1973, 135-160; Heather Lechtman, "Style in Technology: Some Early Thoughts," in: *Material Culture: Styles, Organization and Dynamics of Technology*, ed. Heather Lechtman and Robert S. Merrill, St Paul 1977, 3-20.

[3] I am referring here to Paola Antonelle and Kate Carmody's recent exhibition *Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects*, exh. cat. MoMA, New York 2011.

[4] This essay originated at a workshop held at the INHA, Paris, organized by Philippe Bordes in 2009-2010 on the relevance of Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) to art history and entitled "Art History of the Social". The adjectival form, "the social", is retained here in preference to "society" because it partially overcomes the "tyranny of distance" that according to Bruno Latour

essay draws extensively on the work of Bruno Latour whose writing in the sociology of science and technology challenges directly the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose influence has marked recent sociologies of art.[5] Rather than focusing on social structures and cultural institutions in order to understand practices by relating them to their authors' social positions within those structures and fields, Latour argues that society is better understood in the networked interactions between agents, both human and non-human. He invites us to focus on processes, or techniques to use Adamson's terminology, rather than products; and in order to understand how some cultural phenomena impose themselves, to study their elaboration and dissemination from the native's point of view. For this purpose he advocates an ethnomethodology: closely related to ethnology and famously summarised by Latour in the injunction "Follow the actors," it is not, strictly speaking, a methodology at the disposal of historians.[6] However, by reading a major body of art (Nicolas Pineau's work as a draughtsman and a wood carver) through the critical analysis of a minor work of fiction (Jean-François Bastide's short story *La petite maison*) it may nevertheless be possible to think art, design and the social together without outrageous travesty of Latour's project.

[2] To begin: juxtapose a printed page from the published story (fig. 1) and the red-chalk proposal for an interior ornament (fig. 2). In the sample page from the duo-decimo monthly magazine, *Le nouveau spectateur*, in which *La petite maison* was first published in 1757 and the annotated sheet drawing executed some twenty years earlier of a chimney piece for the ground floor *cabinet* at the hôtel de Mazarin in the rue de Varenne we have, on the one hand, a story about, and a representation of eighteenth-century society, and on the other, the gestural trace of a once projected, later realised, and finally lost work of art. The thread that connects them is Nicolas Pineau, a character in the story – the "Celebrated ornament Sculptor to whose work we owe the greater part of the sculpture in the apartments of our mansions" as a footnote helpfully relates[7] – and also the presumed author of the drawing, one of several hundred produced at the Pineau workshop, rue Notre Dame de Nazareth in Paris in the second quarter of the eighteenth century.[8]

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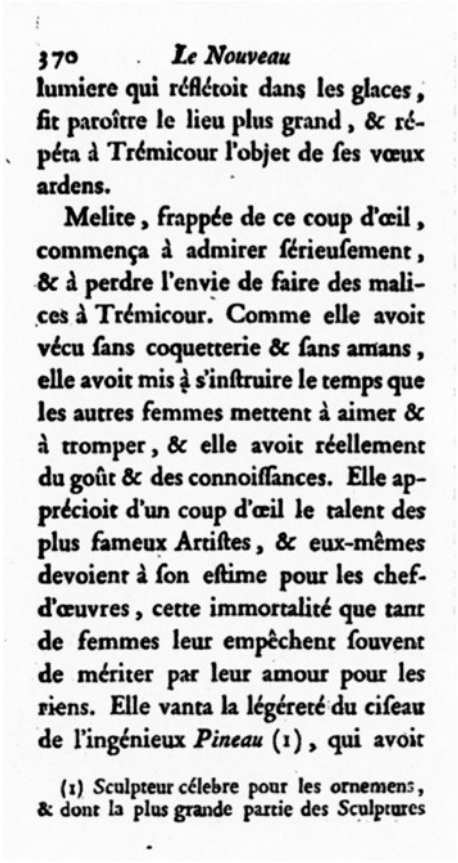
inhibits traditional modelling of the relation between individual and world. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford 2005. This essay is just that: a trial or experiment in ANT.

[5] For France during the *ancien régime*, see notably the work of Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste. Artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique*, Paris 1993.

[6] For examples of this methodology in practice see Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*, London 1979 and *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*, Cambridge, Mass. 1987.

[7] Jean-François Bastide, *La petite maison*, Paris 1993, 30: "Sculpteur célèbre pour les ornemens, et dont la plus grande partie des sculptures des appartemens de nos hôtels sont l'ouvrage." The translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[8] On the corpus of drawings from the Pineau workshop, first brought to public attention by Emile de Bias in 1891, 129 of which were acquired by the Stieglitz Museum of applied and decorative arts (now a branch of the Hermitage), St Petersburg and 391 of which are at the Musée des arts

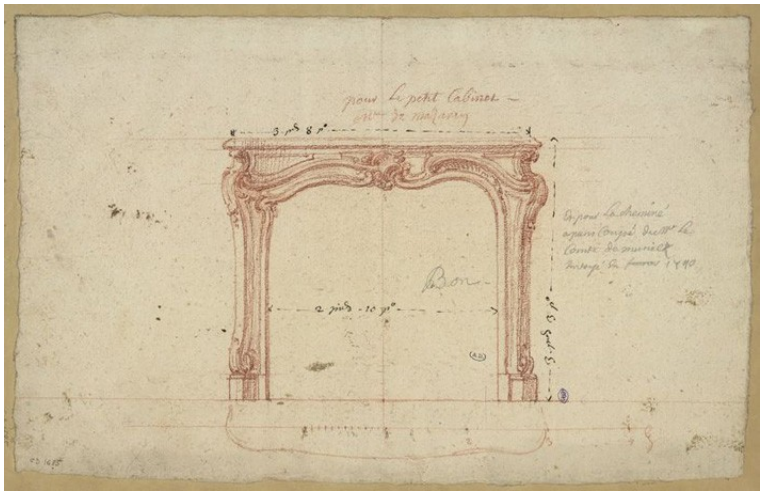


370 *Le Nouveau*
lumiere qui réfléchoit dans les glaces, fit paroître le lieu plus grand, & répéta à Trémicour l'objet de ſes vœux ardens.

Melite, frappée de ce coup d'œil, commença à admirer ſérieuſement, & à perdre l'envie de faire des malices à Trémicour. Comme elle avoit vécu ſans coquetterie & ſans amans, elle avoit mis à s'inſtruire le temps que les autres femmes mettent à aimer & à tromper, & elle avoit réellement du goût & des connoiſſances. Elle apprécioit d'un coup d'œil le talent des plus fameux Artiſtes, & eux-mêmes devoient à ſon eſtime pour les chef-d'œuvres, cette immortalité que tant de femmes leur empêchent ſouvent de mériter par leur amour pour les riens. Elle vanta la légéreté du ciſeau de l'ingénieux *Pineau* (1), qui avoit

(1) Sculpteur célebre pour les ornemens, & dont la plus grande partie des Sculptures

1 Jean-François Bastide, *La petite maison*, in *Le nouveau spectateur* (1757). © Author



2 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for the chimney-piece for the duchesse de Mazarin's* petit cabinet *at the hôtel de Mazarin*, c.1737, sanguine on paper, 27 x 42.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (CD 1685). © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

[3] Pineau's drawing dates from the most brilliant moment of the Rococo, and in providing precious visual evidence of an important lost scheme stands for that which the history of art must give an adequate and convincing account. The work is, in a sense self-selecting, Nicolas Pineau's, whose career unfolded at Lyon, St Petersburg and Paris, having been

décoratifs, Paris, see Léon Deshairs, *Dessins originaux des maîtres décorateurs. Nicolas et Dominique Pineau*, Paris, n.d., 5-6.

amongst the foremost decorators of his day.[9] His family workshop in Paris, active from the late 1720s until his death in 1754 was large and complex: in addition to employing journeymen and apprentices, Pineau entered into commercial partnerships with other sculptors and with *menuisiers*, joiners, in order to integrate into a single unit the various stages of production in the manufacture of wall panelling and other interior furnishings.[10] The workshop rapidly established a reputation. Although his employment by the *Bâtiments du roi* or King's Works was limited, Pineau found clients in all estates of society: church, nobility and the upper, wealthy reaches of the so-called third estate. If none of his schemes survive in its entirety, and only a very few in part, his name continues to circulate as a by-word for *l'art rocaille*.[11]

[4] Bastide's novella is a less obvious choice perhaps. As fiction it is not straightforwardly evidential in the manner of, say, architectural manuals, or etiquette books, or notarial documents. But it was written at the height of the Rococo controversy, that is at a moment when practices enter discourse most conspicuously; in the decade, in fact, that also saw publication of Charles-Nicolas Cochin's brilliant and bitter satires of the style in the *Mercure de France*, a sister paper, whose editorship the ambitious Bastide had manoeuvred unsuccessfully to secure.[12] Moreover, it gives voice, an uninhibited and candid voice, to the imagined agency of art. In it a woman is seduced by a house. Not *hôtel* or *château* but a lower genre of noble habitation, "*petite maison*" referred to the new kind of suburban villa, "pretty abodes" dedicated to "pleasure and freedom," erected along the banks of the Seine in villages on the outskirts of Paris, at Auteuil, Bercy, Clichy, Passy, which provided a rich narrative context for the libertine literature of the period.[13] Gone in such tales are the enfilades promoted as straight and proper for the 'objective' representation and the orderly reproduction of society by such architectural treatises as Jacques-François Blondel in *De la distribution des maisons de plaisance* (1737-38), to be replaced by the "curved space" of seduction where, in the small shell-like dwelling dramatized by Bastide's text, conventional signs of distinction are deflected from their

[9] See Jacques-François Blondel, *Discours sur la nécéssité de l'étude de l'architecture*, Paris 1754, 54, n. a.

[10] For further information on Pineau's workshop in the context of the period, see Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: decoration and social spaces in eighteenth-century Paris*, London and New Haven 1995, 14-20.

[11] See Fiske Kimball, *The Creation of the Rococo* (1943), New York 1980, 162-170; Marianne Roland Michel, *Lajoue et l'art rocaille*, Neuilly-sur-Seine 1984, 154-158; Peter Fuhring, *Meissonnier, un génie du rococo, 1695-1750*, Milan 1999.

[12] On Bastide, see Jean Sgard, *Dictionnaire des journalists, 1600-1789*, 2 vols., Oxford 1999, 1: 48-50. In October 1756 the *Mercure de France* published a poem by Tanevot entitled "Entresol" which is similarly concerned with the relation between the arts and virtue.

[13] Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, 9 vols., Paris 1771-1777, 2: 251-52, "jolies habitations […] demeures consacrées au plaisir et à la liberté." For other examples of fiction featuring "*petites maisons*", see Bruno Pons, "'Le théâtre des cinq sens' in Bastide," in: *La petite maison*, 69-112, here 75-81.

social purpose, turned indeed to act against social order.[14] In contrast to Blondel, Bastide recounts the social from the inside. That is to say, he describes the interactions between his characters and between them and their things without reference to a larger social arena: to society represented as an order of estates.[15] Trémicourt and Mélite are simply "a man" and "a woman";[16] their elite social class is a given. Decorum as an architectural concern is neither mentioned, nor invoked because Bastide assigns built form and decoration powers of affect not distinction, or the force to move rather than to define. However, scandal, the scandal of seduction, momentarily reveals the discreet, everyday performance of those social practices in which the characters are caught by making them unstable, unpredictable (will she, won't she?); the infra-ordinary becomes extra-ordinary, newsworthy, and therefore traceable, like Pineau's lines.[17]

[5] Together, *La petite maison*, and Pineau's designs raise questions that histories of the art have sometimes found difficult to address: how do we account for the Rococo's triumph, and for the success of Pineau's creations more especially? That is, how do we move beyond thinking of Rococo in the terms of its critics as either aberration or accident? If controversy constitutes a privileged moment for tracing the art of the social, where should we look to recover the other, the positive side of the argument, upon the evidence of which any account of Rococo's significance will surely depend?

[6] The form of Bastide's infamous *conte* serves as a vivid illustration of the problem identified by Latour, according to whom reference to society in the disciplines of sociology and the history of science is always to a social structure construed ultimately as exterior to events. Though the power of art is *La petite maison*'s *topos*, the story is told in two discursive and typographic registers: fiction and information, or narrative and notes. The social is staged in the adventures of the marquis de Trémicour and Mélite, a *petit-maître* or libertine and a young, naïve *femme savante*, beneath which unfolds at the foot of the page an interrupted inventory of the arts and artists deployed to seduce her.[18] Whether surrendering to fiction and reading for the plot, or curiously searching for details of the distinctions of the latest taste in the notes, the divided structure of the text commits readers to a constant *papillotage* of focus between particulars and generalities, individuals and types, micro and macro. The shifts and oscillations are abrupt, so much so that the

[14] Compare Jacques-François Blondel, *De la distribution des maisons de plaisance*, 2 vols., Paris 1737-1738, 1: 23, ground-plan no. 2 of a château and the plan reconstructed by Lydia Vázquez from Bastide's narrative description in "La petite maison, ou l'art de séduire raisonnablement," in: *Narrativa francesa en el siglo XVII*, Madrid 1988. On the obliquity of seduction see Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer, Basingstoke 1990, 106-108.

[15] On the relation between the political discourse on estates and architecture and decoration, see Scott, *The Rococo Interior*, 81-117.

[16] Bastide, *La petite maison*, 21.

[17] This is to adapt a point made by Latour on controversy as a privileged site for the study of everyday social practices, see Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 21-140.

[18] Mélite, the narrator tells us, does not herself need the notes, as she recognized and admired the hand of the best artists. See Bastide, *La petite maison*, 29.

connection between Pineau's art work and the social by which it was made instrumental, consequential and thus finally meaningful is obscured, or rather emerges as mere concatenation: a jarring abutment of the frame and en-framed. Of course, the story does not pretend to be an exercise in social theory, indeed, its assumptions and conventions are avowedly prejudiced. Meanwhile, the notes do not, cannot in fact, constitute a joined-up narrative, a coherent, unified discourse and thus do not articulate a social order as such; to the story alone belongs that privilege. But, it is not impossible to imagine the structure and contents of the page-layout reversed. In fact Blondel, in *Discours sur la nécéssité de l'étude de l'architecture* (1754), narrates a story of enlightened art policy supported at the foot of the page with references to specific events of civic patronage by society's named greats: to the maréchal de Belle-Isle at Metz, to archbishop Jean-François de Grignan at Arles, to Michel-Etienne Turgot, *prévôt des marchands* in Paris and magistrate Lévesque de Pouilly at Rheims.[19] One can, therefore, playfully imagine Bastide writing a story of art with notes glossing (and not without irony) the apparently arcane jargon particular to those libertine forms of the social he would merely then have alluded to in such a text: *society*: "a vessel that threatens collapse, and whose pompous and shiny architecture survives relatively well"; *association*: "an important engagement usually contracted lightly"; *attachment*: "feeling, born of desire and undermined by experience"; *mistress*: "possession in which property is never secured, though reaffirmed by purchase daily",[20] etc. The point to register is that society is always displaced, a context, or background that, as Latour argues, is used to explain, or rather to explain away, science, art or the object of a so-called *social* inquiry.[21] If *La petite maison* illustrates the methodological problem, it also narrates the solution: this essay hopes to show how via Bastide we can get art and the artist out of the notes and back into the room.

[7] The means to overcome these problems of focal length, that is of foreground/background, text and context, art and society, contentiously proposed by Latour is, of course, to follow traces or trails, none better than paper ones.[22] He has particularly in mind the reports, logs, notebooks, drawings, grafts, maps, etc. generated in laboratories that together constitute a technology for making "facts," by forming significant social clusters persuaded by this paperwork to recognise them as such.[23] Clearly not all works on paper

[19] Blondel, *Discours sur la nécéssité*, 24, n. a; 27-28, n. a; 30, n. a.

[20] Jean-François Bastide, *Dictionnaire des moeurs*, The Hague 1773, 118, ad. voc. *société*: "c'est un grand vaisseau qui menace ruine, & dont l'architecture pompeuse & brillante se conserve assez bien"; 13, ad. voc. *association*: "action importante que pour l'ordinaire on fait légèrement"; 14, ad. voc. *attachement*: "sentiment né du désir, & affaibli par la possession"; 92, ad. voc. *maitresse*: "meuble dont la propriété n'est jamais bien assurée, quoiqu'on la paie tous les jours."

[21] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 21-25.

[22] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 159-246.

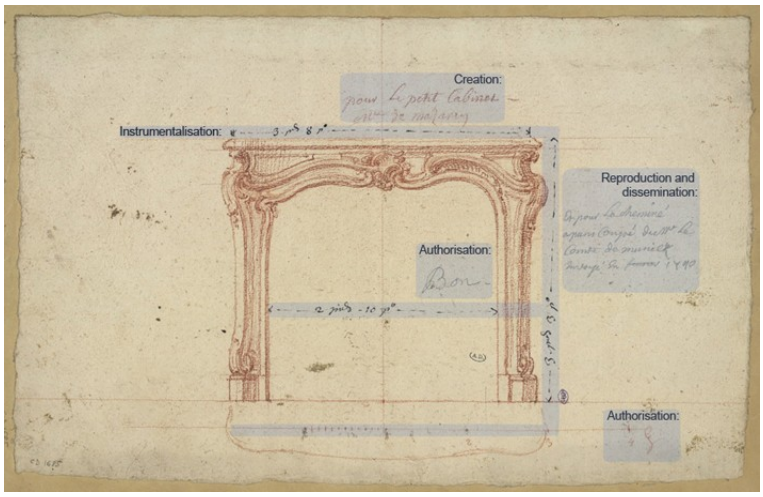
[23] See Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together" (1986), reprinted in Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, eds., *Representation in Scientific Activity*, Cambridge, Mass. 1990, 19-68 and available as a download at www.bruno-latour.fr (article no. 21, last accessed 24 February 2014).

are "paper-work" of this kind. Pineau's red-chalk drawing for a wall sconce with three lights (fig. 3), was selected recently for exhibition because of its aesthetic properties as a drawing and because it was judged a choice representation of Rococo style on account of its asymmetrical design and the bravura mastery of technique that it both displays and anticipates.[24] The power it may have, or may have had, to influence cognition was not touched upon in the catalogue. If Latour notes that in the history of science paper-work is under-valued in comparison to theories, in art history drawings are, by contrast, often over-valued, as works rather than acts on paper, creating obstacles not less stubborn to understanding art in action. However, a case can in fact be made for Pineau's chimney-piece (fig. 4) as a drawing in another sense, as a Latourian trace. Divided by a ruled line down the centre, it offers design alternatives for a mantelpiece to furnish Françoise de Mailly, the duchesse de Mazarin's *petit cabinet* on the ground floor of her hôtel, rue de Varenne. Executed in sanguine it is annotated in chalk, ink and pencil, indicating at least three separate moments in the history of its generation and use: first, moments of creation (sanguine), secondly, of authorisation or validation (chalk and pencil), and of instrumentalisation (ink), and, finally, of reproduction and dissemination (pencil), moments that produced not just a halo of marks on the paper but which organised different manifestations of the social, mobilised, that is, different networks of interacting agents, few named as such but presences acknowledged or anticipated nevertheless: clients, architects, marble cutters, journeymen, packers and couriers.[25]

3 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for a wall sconce with three lights*, c.1735, sanguine on paper, 54.5 x 43.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (CD 1737). © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

[24] See *Designing the Décor. French Drawing from the Eighteenth Century*, exh. cat. The Gulbenkian, Lisbon 2006, no. 36.

[25] On the collaborators in the scheme, see *La rue de Varenne*, exh. cat. Musée Rodin, Paris 1981, 43.

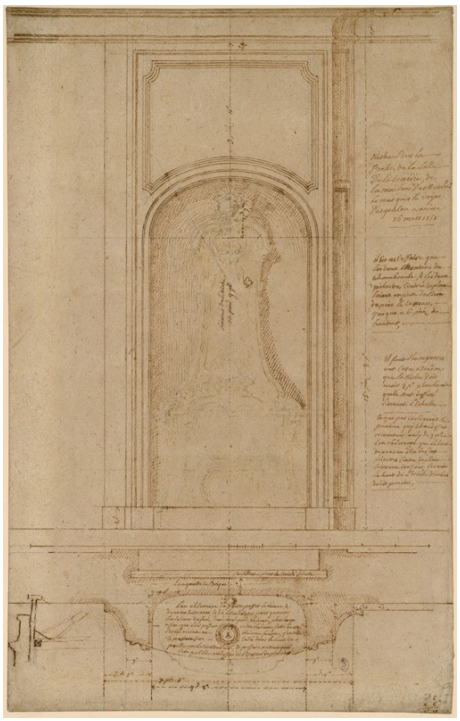


4 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for the chimney-piece for the duchesse de Mazarin's* petit cabinet *at the hôtel de Mazarin*, c.1737, sanguine on paper, 27 x 42.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (with the author's annotations)

[8] The complex illusion of the drawing both departs from the simple gestural flourish of Rococo detail seen in the sconce, and fosters a different spatial articulation of the social collective by comparison to Bastide. The chimney-piece sits on another ruled line that, in addition to serving as the floor, represents the back wall from which the plan of the shelf projects, or rather hangs, completing, squaring off and, most importantly, flattening the design. The crisp pleating of the social fabric encountered in Bastide, which served to hide behind the horizontal fold of text and notes the connections between the producers and consumers of artistic things, is here smoothed out: we see the ingenuity of the sculptor at work not only in the formation of his design, but in his articulation of propositions to the architect of the scheme Jean-Baptiste Leroux, who is secured as an "ally", and who lends his strength, the strength of his signature (bottom right), to act next on the client (Mazarin), the economic consequences of whose "translation" to the cause, puts in motion further chains of execution, transportation and installation. Notwithstanding the implications of the new terminology – that design is not individually but rather collectively realised by a community of allies, that design facts are not diffused but instead communicated by successive strategies of interpretation and displacement, that is, that persons are translated into a design of aesthetic concern – such micro record making of drawing acts seems, at first glance, to promise little more than a return to the descriptive positivism of the 'old' art history. Bourdieu has certainly argued that the undivided attention to textual evidence in the sociology of science tends to over-emphasise the role of agency,[26] presumed by Latour to be largely unconstrained by social determinants. In art Bourdieu identifies this priority with the fetishisation of the artist's creativity.[27]

[26] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Science de la science et réflexivité*, Paris 2001, 55-66.

[27] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, London 1979, 230-259.



5 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for wall elevation with niche and* poële *for the marquis de Voyer's* salle de comédie *at the château d'Asnières*, c.1751, pen and brown ink over graphite on paper, 42 x 26.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (CD 29085A). © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

[9] Such a conclusion is premature. It overlooks the essential point that drawing itself is assigned agency in Latour's account. It is drawing, or to use his terminology "inscription", which via geometry, reduces the wild complexity of the external world to the graspable scope of the page:[28] Pineau's design for a heating unit, a *poële* (fig. 5), for the *salle de comédie* at the château d'Asnières, is represented by the same classic combination of plan and elevation by which the technologically primitive Mazarin fireplace was earlier made known, notwithstanding the infinitely more complicated engineering and installation requirements itemised in the margins and sketched at the bottom left corner. The combination of drawing and mathematics is, as Latour explains, that which both fixes design and makes it mobile, able not only to circulate freely (in a way that chimney pieces and stoves cannot) but also to modify its own scale – that is change size without loss of internal proportion – thereby making itself fit for any number of physical conditions. Latour names such drawings "immutable mobiles".[29] Moreover, it is drawing's assimilability to other forms of inscription, or calculation, which invests it with the power to align and co-ordinate different orders of information: formal, technological, mechanical, economic, even, in the case of paper money, symbolic.[30] Finally, it is the exact and cheap reproducibility of drawing that renders designs local to the workshop

[28] Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition," www.bruno-latour.fr (article no. 21), 1-6.

[29] Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition," www.bruno-latour.fr/ (article no. 21), 7-18.

[30] Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition," www.bruno-latour.fr (article no. 21), 24-30. Some of the Pineau drawings include rough reckonings of price, as well as estimates of measurement, thereby promoting the mapping of one set of calculations onto another.

commensurate, via print, with global appetites in the market. In the late 1720s and early 1730s with a reputation still to make, Pineau was assiduous in preparing design for the print trade, his drawings for interiors and for furniture appearing in such prestigious publications as Jean Mariette's three-volume, in-folio *Architecture françoise* (1727-1738).[31]

[10] While it is obviously nonsense to suggest that drawing creates or causes designs through acts of will, Latour nevertheless makes a persuasive case for things – drawing as a set of artistic and technical conventions in this case – as quasi-agents that "authorise, allow, afford, encourage, permit", in short "render possible", the actions that engage and sustain social networks.[32] Without drawing, primary agents like Pineau could not have succeeded so well; it was rather the secret of his success. In the corpus of drawings from the Pineau workshop at the Musée des arts décoratifs in Paris is a slightly scruffy sheet which bears at its centre a scaled design in pen and ink over graphite for a large Rococo candlestick with *putti*, to the left of it is the sketch, also in black ink, of the quill that made it, and to the far right doodled flourishes in pencil, similar to those found on the back of another sheet, on which Pineau practiced his signature.[33] The drawing together there of the project and of both a representation and a sign of agency suggests that Pineau was not unaware of the power of his line in the conduct of craft. If others prospered, Jules Hardouin Mansart (under whom the young Pineau trained) notably, without being able to draw, allegedly,[34] they did so only by employing those who could.[35] And yet, in the contract between the duchesse de Mazarin and her sculptor for work at her Paris mansion, it had been agreed that Pineau would execute the ornament required in wood, plaster and stone after drawings supplied by the architect, Leroux.[36] Business was competitive, potentially fraught.[37] Each collaboration, each contract, involved a "trial of strength". It was because Pineau could draw, copiously, and with precision and

[31] See Jean Mariette, *Architecture françoise*, 3 vols., Paris 1727-1738. The third volume includes a set of six chimney-piece designs by Pineau. On the Rococo print in reproduction, see Scott, *The Rococo Interior*, 241-252.

[32] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 34-35.

[33] MAD: Inv. 29121, *projet de flambeau*; Inv. 88545.24 verso (on the recto is a project for the paneling for the hôtel de Bonnac). For technical drawing, Buchotte recommended quills made from the wing feathers of a raven. See Buchotte, *Règles du dessin et du lavis pour les plans particuliers des ouvrages et des bâtiments*, Paris 1721, 12, 55.

[34] According to Antoine Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville, Hardouin Mansart "dessinoit grossièrement avec du charbon ou avec une grosse plume," quoted from his *Vies des fameux architectes depuis la renaissance des art*, Paris 1788, 365.

[35] Dézallier d'Argenville names Daviler, Lepautre and Cocheri among those employed by Hardouin Mansart as draftsmen. However, recent assessment of Hardouin Mansart's drawing office suggests that it was only at the height of his career and thereafter that Hardouin Mansart stopped drawing "*au net*" his own plans and elevations. See Alexandre Gady, *Jules Hardouin-Mansart, 1646-1708*, Paris 2010. On the importance of drawings in establishing authorship and as evidence of remunerable work see the fascinating memorandum drawn up on behalf of the architect Pierre de Vigny in his dispute with Antoine Crozat over pay for the development of the Cour du Dragon: Lordelot le Jeune, *Mémoire signifié pour le sieur Pierre de Vigny, architecte du Roy … demandeur contre Messire Antoine Crozat* [1738], 3, 11, 14-17.

[36] Paris, Archives Nationales, Minutier Central, XXVI/384: Marché de Françoise de Mailly à Nicolas Pineau, 26 October 1736.

accomplishment, that on occasion he was able to assert *his* interest, and to assemble, in a manner perhaps more usual to an architect or engineer than a sculptor, communities of knowledge, skill and will at the workshop the more efficiently to fulfil present commissions and generate decorative schemes in the future.[38]

[11] If understanding how production proceeded is a first step to understanding better why it succeeded, it does not, however, tell us much about the historical and cultural components of the technical process. "Immutable mobiles" like Pineau's were in action long before the eighteenth century. What was particular about their performance in the 1730s and '40s? What were the cultural codes, the values, standards and rules, in short the meanings, which were engineered into them and communicated by them?

[12] Where Bastide has nothing to say about such powers of assembly, about *how* people and things get connected, he is, however, eloquent about the *ways* in which they are: about, not scope but modality. *La petite maison* is usually described as a tale of seduction.[39] In it the resistance of an educated but sexually inexperienced young woman, Mélite, is overpowered by the honest (but certainly not *honnête*) blandishments of the worldly marquis de Trémicour. As a criminal offence seduction was, in the *ancien régime*, predicated on deceit: a man misleads a woman into believing that marriage will follow upon her yielding.[40] Bastide gives an original literary twist to this ordinary scandal not only by substituting a house, that is, a seductive object, for the desiring subject, but also by replacing lies with illusion: Mélite's eyes are tricked and seduced by mirrors and *trompe l'oeil* painting, her ears surprised by *trompe l'oreille* music, her sense of smell seized by *pots-pourri* and her touch confounded by spatial disorientation.[41] Although Bastide offers no explicit stylistic description of the interiors, their manifold artifices mark them as "*ingénieux*" (a Rococo synonym), that is to say as pretty, in the Old English sense of "a trick, a wile or a craft".[42] So astonishing and delightful indeed are the

[37] Pineau's relationship and the extent to which he was able to work autonomously varied with architect to architect and even from project to project. In the case of Jean-Baptiste Leroux Pineau seems to have taken complete responsibility for the design process; in the case of Jacques Mansart de Sargonne on the other hand, at least at the cathedral church of Saint-Louis, he executed design assigned to him.

[38] According to this account, Pineau's workshop resembled those analyzed in this collection by Matthew Craske. The notarial documentation is not, however, sufficient to confirm it.

[39] See Michel Delon, *Le savoir-vivre libertin*, Paris 2000, 115-125 and most recently, Paul J. Young, *Seducing the Eighteenth-Century French Reader*, Aldershot 2008, 55-81.

[40] For an extended discussion of the crime of seduction in eighteenth-century France in relation to the depiction of *fêtes galantes*, see Nicholas Mirzoeff, "'Seducing our Eyes': Gender, Jurisprudence and Visuality in Watteau," in: *Eighteenth Century* 35/2 (1994), 135-154.

[41] Bastide, *La petite maison*, 34-35 (*trompe l'oeil*); 36 (*trompe l'oreille*); 46 (smell); 65 (she mistakes the door of the second boudoir for the exit).

[42] For a different view see Rodolphe el-Khoury who argues that the decoration described by Bastide "vacillates between the ageing intricacy of the *Style Rocaille* and the more fashionable simplicity of neoclassicism," between, that is, the work of Nicolas and Dominique Pineau. See Jean-François Bastide, *The Little House: An Architectural Seduction*, trans. and intro. by Rodolphe el-Khoury, New York 1996, 71.

momentary misperceptions provoked by the decoration that Mélite ultimately falls for Trémicour's double bluff: in challenging her to a trial of strength, openly confessing his lust, he correctly anticipates that the pleasure, the rapture, she will certainly experience at the house must lead her to conclude that he is lying. Cock-sure he confronts her:

> Admit it! This is a *petite maison* worthy of its name. If you have reproached me for not feeling love, you must at least admit that so many things capable of inspiring it, pay tribute to my imagination; indeed, I am persuaded that you can no longer conceive how one could have both such sweet ideas and a cold heart. [43]

[13] Trémicourt thus turns Mélite's own weapons, her reason and her taste, against her. Reason says that to have so tastefully furnished the house Trémicourt must once, himself, have responded to the things and skills displayed as the persuaded, if not seduced, feminine spectator; that he must in fact have a heart.[44]

[14] By turning the mirror of this narrative back at production we can interrogate Pineau's drawings further. Instances like the now familiar Mazarin fireplace-design (fig. 6) offer the viewer (the client, or her surrogate, the architect) a choice: A or B, *bon* or *non*. The conventions for mobilizing choice spatially – rather than temporally in a series of proposals – could involve quite tricky paper-work with hinged flaps stuck on to the original support allowing the superimposition of one alternative over, and fully obscuring, a second (fig. 7). More usually in the eighteenth century alternatives were arranged side by side, hinged in the middle, like imperfect impressions of one another. On close inspection, the design for the Mazarin *cheminée* is quite uneven: the left hand option is detailed, the acanthus on the shoulder of the mantle clearly drawn, outlined in dark, brownish sanguine, the surface of the planes in-filled in light tints of orange, moreover the recession of the curve is indicated, exaggerated even, by vertical hatchings of shadow. The accent on the right hand half of the design is not on the impost but rather on the entablature, the curve and counter-curve of which are boldly drawn, the energetic elegance of the springing arch exposing as flaccid, the line of its mirrored self. The gestural character of Pineau's marks, the volume and texture he gives to form by subtle use of shading is not here to be confused with the cognitive properties that Latour recognises in technical drawing – properties of calculated reduction, abstraction and collation stated in the plan and in the ruled measure beneath. Rather, the masterful sweep and vigorous accents of the red chalk by which design options are multiplied and ornament and profiles elaborated, advance by suggestion no less considered *effects* of decoration.[45] They create a playground for interpretation and judgement or the exercise of taste.

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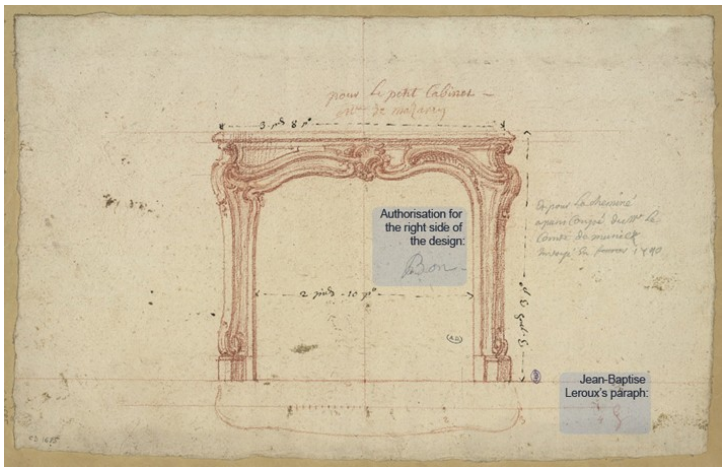
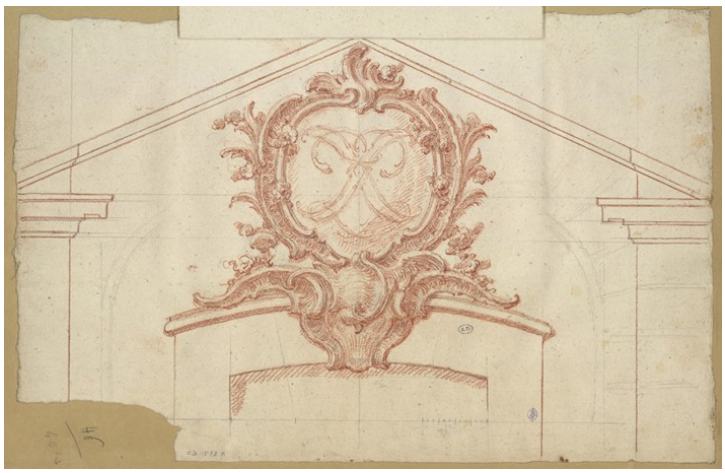
[43] Bastide, *La petite maison*, 42-44: "Avouez que voilà une petite maison bien nommée. Si vous m'avez reproché de ne pas sentir l'amour, vous conviendrez du moins que tant de choses capables de l'inspirer doivent faire beaucoup d'honneur à mon imagination; je suis persuadé même que vous ne concevez plus comment on peut avoir tout à la fois des idées si tendres et un cœur si insensible."

[44] On the archetypal seducer's tactics, see Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 98-117.



6 Nicolas Pineau, *Design for the chimney-piece for the duchesse de Mazarin's* petit cabinet *at the hôtel de Mazarin*, c.1737, sanguine on paper, 27 x 42.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (with the author's annotations)



7 Nicolas Pineau, *Projects for a pediment with a cartouche*, option a, c.1740, graphite and sanguine on paper, 16.5 x 22.5cm. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (CD 1572 B). © Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

[15] If such drawings activate taste, invite participation, this one also aims to persuade: attention is engaged by an outer-detail but won at the centre, in the hearth so to speak. Pineau was endeavouring, it would seem, to determine the viewer's choice, to force her hand, in short, to seduce her. A rapid survey of Pineau's drawings at the Musée des arts décoratifs indicates that in those on which decisions are recorded, preference invariably fell to the right. Further, in drawings of such ornament types in which bi-lateral choice was *de rigueur*, cartouches for instance, the sculptor favoured the right for finish. The survey is hardly scientific, the impression somewhat anecdotal, but it nevertheless serves provisionally to reinforce the hypothesis that Pineau, anticipating Trémicourt, was committed 'to translate' his viewer to his way of thinking by way of a promise to let her

[45] On these pictorial qualities of (architectural) drawings, especially the use of wash, see Henri Gautier, *L'art de laver, ou la nouvelle manière de peindre sur paper*, Brussels 1708, "preface"; Buchotte, *Les règles du dessein*, 34-42; and Nicolas Savage, "Shadow, Shading and Outline in Architectural Engraving from Fréart to Letarouilly," in: *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture*, ed. Caroline van Eck and Edward Winters, Aldershot 2005, 242-283.

realise a freely exercised choice. That in this game of persuasion the value of drawing and panelling was subject to reversal is strongly suggested by Dézallier d'Argenville's remarks on the more-or-less contemporaneous pen-and-ink skill of Gilles-Marie Oppenord: his "bold and seductive handling (*touche*)" prevented this architect's clients, said d'Argenville, from noticing that when executed, his designs failed to live up to their promise.[46] Drawing assumes the status of original. It was worth its weight in gold, apparently. Meanwhile, woodwork ceased to be the object of focus; reduced to the rank of the secondary it risked the tarnish of degraded copy.

[16] Given that the sculptor had an opinion, a position to which he sought energetically to enrol his client, why give her a choice at all? It is a distinctive characteristic of Rococo ornament drawings that they formally stage choice, within as well as between instances. In this regard such designs differ notably from both classical and baroque architectural drawings of the seventeenth century.[47] In a tradition of draughtsmanship that is traced back to the Italian Renaissance the vertical axis is used there rather to construct bi-lateral symmetry by repetition in reverse of one side in the other.[48] Indeed, counter-proofing, in which the axis folds and the folded design is passed through a press, achieves this result automatically, that is, mechanically, in the case of tacky media such as sanguine. By contrast, in a-symmetrical design the vertical axis is transformed into a cleft. Instead of perception being locked-in by the axis's structuring power, which holds equal attractions in perfect balance, it is scattered, pulled in opposite directions by the different ideas produced by the split. Rococo designs, by explicitly inviting choice thus dramatize judgements of taste. As such they would appear both to confront and notionally to resolve anxieties about the knowledge we have of the world, knowledge of art included.[49] Even if some of our intelligible ideas about beauty are innate – a point much disputed in relation to architectural proportion at the end of the seventeenth century[50] – we never transcend our dependence on the senses, and our sensible ideas are always in danger of contamination by the passions.[51] Mélite lusts for knowledge; and curiosity killed the cat. Seventeenth-century philosophy drew a more-or-less sharp

[46] Dézallier d'Argenville, *Vies des fameux architects*, 438.

[47] For an introduction to the history of the conventions of architectural drawing, see J.-M. Savignat, *Dessin et architecture du moyen âge au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1983; Roland Recht, *Le dessin d'architecture: origine et fonction*, Paris 1995; James S. Ackerman, *Origins, Imitations and Conventions: Representation in the Visual Arts*, Cambridge, Mass. 2001.

[48] On symmetry see Heinrich Wölfflin, *Prolégomènes à une psychologie de l'architecture* (1886), trans. Bruno Queysanne, Paris 1996, 25-33; E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, London 1984, 126; and more recently about bi-lateral symmetry on a broader scale, see Georges Didi-Huberman, "Dessin, désir, métamorphose (esquisés sur les ailes d'un papillon)," in: *Le Plaisir du dessin. Carte blanche à Jean-Luc Nancy*, exh. cat. Musée de beaux-arts, Lyon 2007-2008, 215-226.

[49] As Pamela H. Smith explains, distrust of the senses as a source of knowledge increased with advent of empiricism in Europe. See her "Science and Taste: Painting, passion and the new philosophy," in: *Isis* 90/3 (1999), 421-461.

[50] On these debates, see Alberto Pérez Gómez, *Architecture and Crisis in Modern Science*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, 17-47.

distinction between such distorted and misleading passionate ideas or prejudices, and *émotions intérieures*, the pleasure the mind takes in observing itself reasoning, that is in judging what is best. The abbé Dubos described this faculty as a "sixth sense", a sense "without organs", which nevertheless judges the sensual impression that a work of art has on us.[52] Not only is judgement of the beautiful pleasurable, judging that our own judgement is correct intensifies, doubles, that pleasure. Trémicourt is no doubt ruled by his appetites and passions, but he is not over-ruled.[53] Mélite merely mistakes his reason, for his heart. Pineau's strategy of choice, was, it seems, just that: another weapon in Cupid's armoury of persuasion.

[17] Marianne Roland Michel, in an excellent article on Rococo ornament published in 1982, convincingly proposed that that which the eighteenth-century called *contraste*, and which we now refer to as a-symmetry, represented the translation of the bifurcated design proposal into the bi-modal design solution.[54] To articulate the point more explicitly, she recognised as significant stylistic continuities among the formal components and distinct activities that together constituted the phased production of Rococo panelling from paper proposal to carved and painted oak product. If, as Heather Lechtman argues, technologies are "performances" or communicative systems, then it follows that the style of a technology can, as she says, become the source of meaning on a grander scale.[55] I do not, obviously, want to suggest that meaning in Rococo is reducible exclusively to process, but I am making a stand for its embodied cultural values against those eighteenth-century critics who sought to trivialise Rococo signs and syntax as the product of the *chance* inventions or slips of the ornamental sculptor's merely routine and mechanical cuts.[56] The adjectives used to advertise rather than critique the Rococo, or "*goût moderne*" in the eighteenth century, appear to support this case. Pineau's work was described as "*pittoresque*", literally picture-like, a description that registers, among other things, its two-dimensional graphic origin and that points-up the flatness of the open fields circumscribed by his elegant Rococo ornament.[57] Meanwhile *contraste* translates the technology for determining choice into a message about taste: its scope,

[51] On this issue for Descartes and later Cartesian philosophy, see Susan James, *Passions and Actions. The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Oxford 1997, 191-200.

[52] Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, ed. Dominique Désirat, Paris 1993, 277.

[53] Throughout the narrative Trémicourt watches and calculates the effect of each room and its decoration on Mélite: see Bastide, *La petite maison*, 32-33 for the effect of the *salon*, 34 for that of the *chambre à coucher*, 39 for that of the *cabinet*, and 60-61 for that of the dining room. His pleasure is in Mélite's endorsement of his taste rather than in the qualities of the things themselves.

[54] Marianne Roland Michel, "L'ornement rocaille: quelques questions," in: *Revue de l'art* 55 (1982), 66-75.

[55] See Lechtman, "Style in Technology," 276.

[56] See Nicolas Le Camus de la Mezières, *Le génie de l'architecture*, Paris 1780, 53.

[57] Karsten Harries has analyzed the "pictorialization" of Rococo ornament at length in *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism*, New Haven and London 1983, 10-47.

variety, novelty, and mutability, its particular piquant pleasures.[58] Only by dedicated practice of comparison, according to Roger de Piles, is taste in the arts properly formed and then performed.[59]

8 Nicolas Pineau, Panelling, from the salon at the château d'Asnières, c.1750. Cliveden House, Berkshire. © Cliveden House

9 Nicolas Pineau, Detail of the panelling, from the salon at the château d'Asnières, c.1750. Cliveden House, Berkshire. © Author

[58] See the Cartesian Jean-Pierre Cousaz who identifies grandeur or scope, novelty and diversity as the three qualities essential to our taste for the beautiful. See Cousaz, *Traité du beau*, Amsterdam 1715, 74.

[59] Roger de Piles, *Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture et sur le jugement qu'on doit faire des tableaux*, Paris 1677, 35.

10 Nicolas Pineau, Detail of the panelling, from the salon at the château d'Asnières, c.1750. Cliveden, Berkshire. © Author

[18] In 1750 Pineau was charged with the decoration of a *maison de plaisance* built by Jacques-Hardouin Mansart de Sargonne at Asnières for Marc René de Paulmy d'Argenson, marquis de Voyer, a court aristocrat, man of taste and collector.[60] In the painted and gilded panelling of the *salon* (fig. 8) Pineau played with *contraste* not only at particular moments of the overall design – for instance, when off-setting the sweep of the upper and lower rails of the narrower panels – and in particular, privileged, places – the peripheral zones; he also made a theme of it in the play of ornament – in oppositions of line and relief (fig. 9), or drawing and sculpture, and in surprising conjunctions of the natural and artificial (fig. 10), the symbolic and the trivial.[61] Highly conventionalised attributes of the hunt are juxtaposed, even mixed, with ornamental gestures that absolutely refuse to function as signs; with ornaments that are, seemingly, "*only* ornaments".[62] Consequently, ornament does not settle modestly into obsolescence by presumption of repetition that symmetry entails; instead each motif, each crooked cartouche, each twisted flourish, the almost signature use of the single, unbalanced wing, all function as a synecdoche of the a-symmetrical structure of the whole. [63] The effect is to keep the eye moving, guessing, in a to-and-fro movement from detail to detail defined by Marion Hobson as combining the functions of the gaze (or "the acceptance of the object seen") and the blink: "which cuts off the eye from contact with the world and, in so doing, brings the self back to self."[64] Back to the pleasure of its own refined acts of discernment.

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[60] For a full discussion of the scheme, see Bruno Pons, *French Period Rooms 1650-1800*, Dijon 1995, 270-282. On the relationship between Pineau and Mansart de Sargonne, see Philippe Cachau, *Jacques Hardouin Mansart de Sargonne, dernier des Mansart (1711-1778)*, PhD supervised by Daniel Rabreau, 3 vols., Paris (Pantheon-Sorbonne) 1995, 1: 322-347; on Asnières especially, see 2: 1161-1177.

[61] For a discussion of the relation of figure and ground in relation to Rococo furniture more generally, see my "Figure and ornament: Notes on the late Baroque art industry," in: Martina Droth, *Taking Shape. Finding Sculpture in the Decorative Arts*, exh. cat. Henry Moore Institute, Leeds and J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles 2008-2009, 167-175.

[62] Jacques-François Blondel, *L'homme du monde éclairé par les arts*, 2 vols., Paris 1774, 1: 54.

[63] "Almost signature", because it is not a motif exclusive to him but is found in ornament prints, for example, *Nouveau livre de cartouches utile aux peintres, sculpteurs et autres*, Pierre-François Tardieu after Louis van Nerock, Paris, n.d.

[19] This essay began as an inquiry into technique, into the ways in which the resources, materials and strategies of making activated by Rococo can usefully be said to have been historically specific. A broader question has since interposed itself: is technique culturally informed as well as historically determined? Are we, in fact, talking about design? At a meeting of the Design History Society in 2008, Bruno Latour proposed "a few steps towards a philosophy of design."[65] He started with a definition of terms in which the implications of the concept of design were drawn out in contrast to the assumptions that generally subtend notions of making and building. He observed that while discourses on construction and manufacture invoke "matters of fact", of, in this instance, the physical properties of marble (the fireplace), metal (the wall-sconce), and wood (the oak panelling) together with the laws governing their technical manipulation (carving, moulding, casting), design instead concedes its status as mediation and as the outcome of "translations"; as he puts it, it is a "matter of concern". Of the five possible and different senses in which this "concernedness" of design is especially manifest in Rococo, two stand out as significant. First and already discussed, is its activation of aesthetic judgement, or taste. By staging choice and inviting opinion moreover, Rococo, and this is the second point, acknowledges that it is always already an action of re-design, that it re-works materials and forms, if only most obviously the ones proposed on the opposite side of the page.[66] "Design" implies something made new. The double barrel "*goût moderne*" by which Rococo was often named in the 1730s and '40s conveniently registers this double truth: it denotes both Rococo's artifice as taste and as modern it parades its revisions of the "ancient" ornament and syntax of French Baroque Classicism.[67] In summary, instances and performances of Rococo are, by this account, the first of their kind to present themselves unreservedly as "projects" not "objects", to use Latour's terminology, that is, as forms whose meaning, status and value are not self-evident, fixed and immutable but open to the play of interpretation and the vagaries of taste. In Rococo, art, or exceptionally skilled making, emerges as design in this sense for the first time.

[20] What difference does such a change of name make? In terms of Latour's actor-network-theory none at all; or rather, the connotations of design neatly confirm his theoretical position in which knowledge is no more certain than the persuasiveness of its representations, or designs. History, on the other hand, sees things differently. The

[64] Marion Hobson, *The Object of Art: Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France*, Cambridge 1982, 52.

[65] Bruno Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Towards a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)," downloaded from www.bruno-latour.fr (articles no. 112, last accessed 24 February 2014).

[66] The other three "implications" of design identified by Latour are modesty, detail or skill, and meaning.

[67] On the relation of the Rococo on Baroque classicism from which it took its distance, see Scott, *The Rococo Interior*, 121-145.

origins of the phenomenon it calls design are still by general consensus said to be part and parcel of the history of Western capitalism.[68] Design, by this account, eased the development of industrialisation and helped to expand commerce by accelerating consumption. Thus, to propose Pineau as a designer is to charge him with a pioneering role. It is to suggest that we become more attentive to the propositional qualities of his work, to the *contrastes*, and less star-struck by the exquisitely crafted details. Pineau's drawings are not only evidence for the superior wood-working skills native to pre-industrial luxury trades; they demonstrate, more importantly, his designs on the social, that it is his determination to organise his practice by means of paper-work at a superior level. Pineau's wing motif, if it meant anything, is probably a sign for wit (*esprit*), perfectly fit for the social spaces it decorated. However, can one completely reject the possibility that it is also emblematic; more specifically, that it alludes to a late seventeenth-century "emblème de caprice" which, by means of a *putto* or genius with one winged hand stretched heavenwards, the other one weighed down by a stone, cautioned that lack of means, that is poverty, fatally obstructs the growth of talent?[69] Pineau forswore such handicap by the lightness of his drawing hand.[70] Rococo "design", whose best exponents were masters, often officers, indeed, of craft guilds, made way conceptually for the entrepreneur. In Pineau, "celebrated sculptor of ornament", it may have found its original capitalist.

[21] To close I want briefly to consider the Rococo cause and the part Pineau may have played as its advocate. The meaning and therefore the point of Rococo have thus far been construed as commensurate with the taste and appetites of those persuaded to consume it, either directly or in the mediated form of printed reproduction. Through print its audience numbered hundreds, possibly thousands, and not just the handful certainly to be counted among his patrons. Studied as networks these audiences assume the form of a collective but one nevertheless counted and addressed person by person. What about the social as a discursive entity, as a public? The distinction is not one recognised as valid by Latour since it assigns design an ideological function that he does not recognise. On the other hand, early modern writing on taste, by making judgement its principal goal, is crucially concerned with entitlements to judge and positions-taking, and with the conferral of distinction that judgement brings: amateur or connoisseur, refined or vulgar. In the mid-eighteenth century the reaction to the Rococo was, as Thomas Crow has

[68] For a comprehensive treatment of these issues see Matthew Craske's excellent "Plan and Control: Design and the Competitive Spirit in Early and Mid-Eighteenth-Century England," in: *Journal of Design History* 12/3 (1999), 187-216.

[69] The exegesis was published by Gardien in "Discours sur les devises, emblesmes, et revers de medailles," in: *Mercure gallant* (1679), 214-264. See Daniel S. Russell, *The Emblem and Device in France*, Lexington 1985, 107, fig. 19.

[70] Buchotte notes the importance of "lightness" for the success, not just in writing but in drawing. See Buchotte, *Les règles du dessin*, 1.

shown, conducted in class terms if not along class lines.[71] What did the Rococo itself have to say about the interests its forms sought to indulge?

[22] Bastide, once again, suggests a point of engagement. One of the most spectacular rooms in the house is the *boudoir*:

> All the walls are covered with mirrors and the joins between them disguised by the trunks of trees that are artificial but marvellously sculpted, grouped and canopied with leaves. These trees are so arranged that they create the illusion of a quincunx; decked with flowers and loaded with lights, the candles draw forth soft reflections from the mirrors by virtue of the care taken in the depth of the room to veil them more and less densely with gauze. So magical is the optical effect that one truly believes oneself to be in an actual grove lit by the help of art. The niche, on whose rose-wood parquetry floor stands an *ottomane*, or kind of day-bed, is hung with gold fringes mixed with green and strewn with cushions of different sizes.[72]

11 Nicolas Pineau, Pier-glass, from the gallery of the hôtel de Villars, 1732. The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

[71] See for example, the *Lettre à M. de Poiresson-Chamarande sur le sujet des tableaux exposés au Salon du Louvre*, Paris 1741, 4-9, discussed by Thomas Crow in *Painting and Public Life*, New Haven and London 1985, 89-90.

[72] Bastide, *La petite maison*, 34-35: "Toutes les murailles en sont revêtues de glaces, et les joints de celle-ci masqués par des troncs d'arbres artificiels, mais sculptés, massés et feuillés avec un art admirable. Ces arbres sont disposés de manière qu'ils semblent former un quinconce; ils sont jonchés de fleurs et charges de girandoles dont les bougies procurent une lumière graduée dans les glaces, par le soin qu'on a pris, dans le fond de la pièce, d'étendre des gazes plus ou moins serrées sur ces corps transparens, magie qui s'accorde si bien avec l'effet de l'optique que l'on croit être dans un bosquet naturel éclairé par le secours de l'art. La niche où est placée l'ottomane, espèce de lit de repos qui pose sur un parquet de bois de rose à compartimens est enrichie de crépines d'or mêlées de verd, et garnie de coussins de différens calibres."

12 Jacques Aliamet after Charles-Dominique Eisen, Frontispiece, in Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, Paris 1755. Image by courtesy of Courtauld Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London

13 Nicolas Pineau, Detail of the panelling, from the salon at the château d'Asnières, c.1750. Cliveden, Berkshire. © Author

[23] The use of stylised palm trees as frames for *trumeaux* dated from the early 1730s and although not a design innovation that Pineau could lay claim to have originated he did put it to spectacularly effective use in his decoration of the gallery of Louis-Hector, duc de Villars (fig. 11), a scheme engraved and advertised in the 1740s, a few remnants of

which survive at Waddesdon Manor.[73] The point to note is that Bastide takes the motif and develops it in a manner unlicensed by any scheme he could possibly have known. A frame becomes a three-dimensional structure, an ornament grows into a column, at a date shortly after the publication of the second, expanded edition of the abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1756). Charles-Domique Eisen's frontispiece (fig. 12) represents the primitive hut, the so-called origin of architecture whose models are the cave and the forest, and from whose principles all rational architecture must, according to Laugier, derive.[74] The book served and serves still to mark the moment when the tide decisively turned against the Rococo and the aesthetics of *contraste* and *papillotage*. To call Bastide's boudoir a parody is perhaps to over-state the case but his text does seem to engage with the philosophic debates on the origins of art and society and wittily to acknowledge the increasingly clamorous, barbarous, moralising critique of aristocratic taste and libertinage.[75] Likewise, it is not impossible that irony is in play in Pineau's sculptural forms, not, obviously, with specific reference to Laugier's text since it post-dates his last known schemes (Pineau died in 1754), but by juggling those values traditionally held to be incommensurate: *naturalia* and *artificialia*, *amour propre* and love for others, the individual and society. In the *salon* at Asnière, an oak-leaf garland runs modestly round the room beneath the cornice and hints at a floral canopy to crown the pilasters (fig. 13) that, flat, patterned, and gilded nevertheless swell with organic life. The twin origins of architecture and the social, of civilization, by this decoration are to be found not in the vicinity of a lone man lying on a lawn, but in the orbit of a woman awaiting seduction on a sofa.[76]

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[73] On the original scheme, see Bruno Pons, *The James A. De Rothschild Bequest at Waddeson Manor. Architecture and Panelling*, London 1996, 315-355.

[74] On Laugier, see Wolfgang Herrmann, *Laugier and Eighteenth Century French Theory*, London 1962.

[75] In the same year that he published *La petite maison*, Bastide also wrote more positively of a philosophic house in "Peinture abrégé des mœurs et des plaisirs; petite maison philosophique," in: *Nouveau spectateur* (1757) 1, 159-71.

[76] See Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*, New York 1972.