MARC MAISON

120, rue des rosiers
93400 Saint Ouen
(France)
tel: +33.(0)6.60.62.61.90
contact@marcmaison.com



King Charles X in his coronation costume, painted by François Gérard, 1829



Gondola chair for the Duchesse de Berry's Indian salon at the Palais de Saint Cloud, 1828, France, veneer made out of ash tree inlaid with amaranth, Musée des Arts Décoratifs



Félix Rémond (1779-after 1860), dressing table, 1823, Paris, Exposition des produits de l'industrie (oak, veneer made out of gnarl of elm, mahogany, gnarl of amboina, ash tree and lemon tree, gilt bronze), Musée des Arts Décoratifs



Jean-Jacques Werner, chest with drawers bought by Charles X in 1827 for the Trianon, Palace of Versailles

The comte d'Artois – or **Charles X** - was the son of the dauphin Louis-Ferdinand de Franc and Marie-Josèphe de Saxe. He succeeded his two brothers Louis XVI and Louis XVIII and became the King of France in 1824. Thirty years after the French Revolution, he wanted to embody the return of monarchy and became the leader of the catholic party . As the previous kings, he was crowned in 1825 but he was soon overthrown by the revolution in July, 1830, called "Trois Glorieuses". He left then for England, Scotland, Prague and Istria where he died in 1836.

Charles X style lasted **from 1818 to 1834** and happened during the **Bourbon Restoration**. This style did not replace totally the style of furniture from the French Empire but it was different from the formalism in the Napoleonic era, during which strictness and simplicity were inspired by Greco-Roman art. Indeed, artistic fields flourished. In terms of furniture, this renewal was suggested by the softening of shapes. Even though the simple aspect from the French Empire was still visible, shapes became **curvier** with volutes and arabesques. Another distinction is the loss of the massive aspect of furniture and the decrease of dimensions in order to decorate smaller appartments. Handling ability and **comfort** were key-words in the making of furniture. Apartments had essential elements such as chests of drawers, big rounded tables in the dining room, desks or secretaries, armoires and even dressing tables, comfortable fainting couches in the living room, small tables, pedestal tables, as well as gondola chairs. The wavy aspect of the latters certainly represent Charles X style the best.

One of the most emblematic features of this style is the use of ***bois clairs*** – light woods in warm blond tones - and indigenous woods that are varnished in order to highlight the grains. Bird's-eye maple, ash trees, plane trees, yew trees, beech trees, olive trees and cedar trees were most likely to be used. Indeed, at the beginning of the 19th century dark woods were hard to find. In 1806, the Napoleon's Continental System was established in order to ruin the United Kingdom by preventing the country from any business with the rest of Europe. Therefore craftsmen had to find alternatives from mahogany which was the most commonly used material at this time. After 1815, the import of wood was even more difficult because of peace treaties and the European political situation, which contributed to the popularity of the bois clairs and indigenous woods. The furniture was often decorated with fine inlays made out of dark wood representing foliage, which contrasted with the veneer. Even though these patterns can look like bronze decorations from the Empire era, they were far more simple and did not represent any military or mythological attributes. On the tables, trays were sometimes made out of marble as in the French Empire, but it was often put aside and inlaid veneer, Verre Eglomisé – a type of glass with a mirror finish –, mirror or porcelain from Sèvres or Paris were more likely to be used.

Decorative elements from the Monarchy were highly appreciated again as they suggested luxury. Indeed, **marquetry** work was particularly fashionable - ***Boulle*** marquetry thrived around 1820 as the works of the Levasseur family can show. In the same way, draperies and trimmings referred to the monarchist splendour. Fabrics were often white – the traditional colour of the Bourbons – or light coloured as oppposed to the typical green from the Napoleonic era.

One of the most symbolic figures from this period of time might be **Jean-Jacques Werner** (1791-1849), a cabinetmaker who worked for prestigious clients such as the **Duchesse de Berry** who was Charles's step-daughter. His works can be seen at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and at the Grand Trianon in the Palace of Versailles. The duchess's appartments situated at the pavillon de Marsan and at the Palais de Saint Cloud illustrate Charles X style the best with furniture made out of bois clairs and ornamented with dark wood patterns or fine gold decorations.

Chales X style allows a transition between the sobriety of the Empire style and the abundant aspect of Louis-Philippe style. The gothic style started at this time through the **"style à la cathédrale"**, inspired by religious architecture, which thrived from 1827 to 1830. Indeed, at the beginning of the 19th century, Romanticism put the spotlight on the Middle Ages. Cabinetmakers were not inspired by the medieval furniture but rather by architectural elements of churches and cathedrals. For instance the backs of chairs were decorated with arches shaped like rib and serration. In the same way, before Charles X abdicated, pieces of furniture were made out of dark woods – such as mahogany, which was used again in France – and were inlaid with light wood. Romanticism also influenced the layout of furniture in appartments to suggest movement through a mix of various styles, various shapes and various sizes, as opposed to the static aspect of Neoclassicism. The start of industrialisation and mechanisation also influenced this style as early technical developments led to the production of pieces of furniture in series.

Bibliography:

FANIEL Stéphane (Dir.), Le Dix-neuvième Siècle Français, Collection Connaissance des Arts, 1957, Hachette

SASSONE, Adriana Boidi, Furniture from Rococo to Art Deco, 2000, Evergreen



Alexandre-Jean Dubois-Drahonet (1791-1834), La Duchesse de Berry dans son grand salon du pavillon de Marsan au palais des Tuileries (The Duchesse de Berry in her large salon at the pavillon de Marsan in the Tuileries Palace), 1828, Paris, oil on canvas, Musée des Arts Décoratifs



The Duchesse de Berry's bed in her bedroom at the Tuileries Palace, 1820, exhibited at the Château de Compiègne



Chair with a cathedral-inspired shape, 1825-1830, Paris (bird's eye maple inlaid with amaranth, veneers made out of beech tree, seat covered with satin), Musée des Arts Décoratifs