

## Grand escalier du Château de Versailles – Charles Le Brun

### Ornamentation

The Great Staircase of Versailles is a monumental staircase of the Palace of Versailles which was built and decorated between 1672 and 1679. The staircase could be reached via a large anteroom. From the first staircase, which was raised by a few steps, two more stairs opened, each one heading to the opposite sides of the room in a T-formation. The staircase as well as the floor were decorated very brightly and consisted of red, green, white and grey marble. The floor was built in marble inlays set into the floor which patterns formed circles, diamonds, and suns. Visitors crossed this floor on their approach to the first flight of steps. This pattern extended up onto the walls of the first level of the room. Between the first and the next two stairs there was a rather big niche in which there was a large basin of red and white marble, supported by two dolphins of golden bronze and surmised by a fountain. Cascading from the centre of the stair near eye level, the fountain's water formed the focal point of the room. Each of the two staircases faces a drawing room in the apartment where the King received the ambassadors: on one side was the Salon of Diana and on the other side its neighbour, the Salon of Venus. At the top of the staircase above the niche with the fountain was a bust of Louis XIV. This bust drew the visitor's eye apart, because it was the only white spot in this otherwise very colourful environment. In addition to this contrast it was placed in the centre of the stairs which enhanced the effect. The decoration of this staircase, which is of such high quality that it is compared to the Grande Galerie, is signed by Le Brun and also recalled the great victories of Louis XIV, which was shown on the first floor, with different paintings of his victories. On the first floor, columns and pilasters formed an architectural ensemble of ionic style. Right and left next to the bust of Louis XIV there were two deceptively real painted paintings on which different spectators from India, Persia, Greece, Armenia, Moscow, Germany, Italy, Holland and Africa could be seen. The people of every continent were gathered in this perspective galleries. The ceiling vault was covered with entirely fictive architecture, it had no pilasters or columns at all, as on the second level and was populated by an assembly of allegorical and mythological figures.

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