

THE REAL MARIE ANTOINETTE

Paris, Lyon and Vienna

Tuesday, April 30th to Friday, May 10th, 2002



On that famous morning in October 1789, Marie Antoinette, confronted by the angry mob gathering outside the palace at Versailles, raced through the labyrinthine passageways behind the Royal Apartments to the safety of the bedroom of her husband, King Louis XVI. On this program, we bring you into settings so intimate, corners of Versailles closed to the general public, that you will be able to hear the young queen's harried footsteps and labored breathing in those cold narrow stone corridors, and hear the shouts of the crowd outside.

Described on her marriage day as a mythical goddess 'fleeting into rooms like an aerial being, all brightness and grace and without seeming to touch earth'; cheered by adoring crowds; the young Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, was the icon of her age. Her fashion style was mimicked by all of Europe, and France's luxury trades flourished as it attracted foreign princesses who, in imitation, bought yards of ribbons and beaded robes for court appearances. But as the French armies were defeated in the wars of the 1780s with America, the Queen's lavish court life came under criticism. The *Paris Gazette* lampooned her, and cartoonists depicted her in amorous affairs with her various favorites. Her reputation suffered, and she paid the ultimate price for poor public relations: her head.

Marie Antoinette lived and died as a symbol, first of aristocratic charm and privilege, and then of high-born profligacy. For two hundred years historians, bolstering the forces of liberalism and anti-royalism, have portrayed her as frivolous and empty-headed; a foreigner with the interests of Austria at heart

and insatiable in her desires. But time has at last made it possible to revisit her age and reevaluate her character. On this program we will do so, with careful attention to the details of her time and the intricacies of her personality, and through access to her private, exquisite chambers at her various residences.

Through private entrée to locations not open to the public, including her private rooms at Versailles, through access to material at The French National Archives – including rare prints, her private correspondence and the book from which she daily chose her wardrobe; and with the instruction of some of the leading experts on her unique story, we enjoy a rare, intimate view of the private world of Marie Antoinette, and of eighteenth century court life. We will also study her influence on the worlds of art and fashion through visits to private collections, to the Hôtel de Soubise and Hôtel de Rôhan, to the Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris and through private sessions at the Louvre. We will also see how she has shaped the world of contemporary interior design, with visits to interiors created by leading Parisian decorators, sharing her appreciation for soft pastels and mute palettes, blended with a fine eye for exotic objets d'art.

At Lyon we view original silks woven for her chambers and the perfect reproduction of these fabrics through entrée to two of the oldest, most established silk weavers in France, who continue to use handlooms to perform their time-honored work.

The program includes a distinguished cast of speakers, including experts on the eighteenth century, and specifically on the French Revolution, on French furniture, Sèvres porcelain, costume and textiles: **Madame Nicole Blondel**, Conservateur Général du Patrimoine, La Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres; **Monsieur Daniel Alcouffe**, Conservateur Général, Département des Objets d'art, Musée du Louvre; **Monsieur Yves Cartier**, Conservateur au Musée National Château de Fontainebleau; **Ulrich Leben**, expert on French Furniture and Consultant to the Waddesdon Collection, London; **Madame Catherine Join-Diéterle**, Conservateur Général, Paris, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris; **Monsieur Guy Blazy**, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Lyon; **Monsieur Bertrand Rondot**, Curator Musée Nissim de Camondo; **Amanda Foreman**, author of *'Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.'* *At the time of going to press we have invited Antonia Fraser, author of the new book on Marie Antoinette to join us on the program and lecture throughout. We are awaiting confirmation.*

Tuesday, April 30th

Arrival and check in to the Hôtel Trocadero. Our opening reception will be held at a private residence in Paris, followed by dinner at the Hôtel Crillon, where Marie Antoinette is reputed to have had music lessons.

Wednesday, May 1st

The programme begins with a lecture that transports us into the visual culture of the Queen: *'Marie Antoinette and Her Portraits'*. From the time that she was first introduced to the Dauphin throughout her reign as Queen of France, artists, sculptors, and engravers all rushed to capture Marie Antoinette's charm in their chosen medium, and through her image, sought to celebrate the royal ideal more generally. Through these works, we explore her growth from young Austrian princess, to mother and Queen, and appreciate her passion for the music, theater and art of the period with study of works by her contemporaries, such as Joseph Ducreux, Gautier Dagoty, and Vigée Le Brun.

We visit the Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris where we study, through pattern books, prints and costumes how Marie Antoinette's reputation for elegance endured over the centuries and how it influenced the couture trade of France.

We lunch in the Palais Royal at Le Grand Vefour. More than two centuries before, many of Paris's most renowned dressmakers set up their shops in the Palais Royal. Today the Palais Royal is one of Paris' most elegant courtyard boulevard shopping areas, which look out onto manicured gardens. Above the boutiques are private residences where notable characters such as Colette and Jean Cocteau once lived. An interior executed by Serge Luytens is one of the most exotic of the boutiques.

We will take cocktails at one of the most distinguished homes in Paris where, over three generations, a family has dedicated itself to preserving the treasures of eighteenth century fine cabinet making and has assisted in furnishing many of the museums of Paris. We will view furniture from Marie Antoinette's own collection.

Thursday, May 2nd

Amongst the most noted families in eighteenth century France was that of the de Rohan-Soubise, and we will use their story to gain an understanding of Marie Antoinette's cultural and political

milieu. The de Rohan family consisted of an extensive network knitted together through frequent intermarriage within the clan. They had married into the Soubise family, another powerful family and their wealth and past ties to the Royal Court had elevated them to positions of rank and power within the government. Such was the de Rohan's public standing, that when Marie Antoinette accused Cardinal de Rohan of forging her name to purchase a diamond necklace, and Louis XVI subsequently demanded a trial by Parliament, public disdain for the Queen substantially increased. We begin the morning with a discussion of public opinion in 1789 and the incident of the diamond necklace. At Hôtel de Soubise, home to the Prince Francois de Rohan and his wife Anne Chabot de Rohan, a mistress of Louis XIV, the curator takes us through a palatial town house built by the architect Delamair; adjoining this is the Hôtel de Rohan which we also explore.

After lunch we visit the headquarters of France's National Archives, rarely open to the public, housed in the Hôtel de Soubise and containing documents dating back to the early Kings of France. The power of such original material is immense. In this post-epistolary age, we forget how ink and page can capture the soul, and indeed, we will come to feel Marie Antoinette's presence in documents written in her own hand. Included is the marvelous *Gazette Des Atours De Marie-Antoinette Pour L' Année 1782*, containing fragments of fabric and detailed notes listing the Queen's wardrobe; she used the book each day to choose her clothes by taking a long pin to prick the description of the fabric which caught her fancy that morning.

Friday, May 3rd

We take a day trip to Lyon where we visit famous weaving houses where the archives of silks woven for Marie Antoinette are still preserved and which we see both in their original state and rewoven with exact reproduction of color. We see looms dating from the nineteenth century and have lunch in the heart of this ancient Renaissance town which is the centre of the French silk industry.

Saturday, May 4th

At the end of the Old Regime, leading financial families mingled with greater ease among the court and collecting became a means of their self-preservation. We examine The Place Vendôme with particular attention to the evolution of the *salon* – a new kind of room for women – with Bertrand Rondot, Curator of Musée Nissim de Camondo. While visiting the

luxury jewelry trades now established in the area such as Chaumet, Chanel, and Van Cleef & Arpels, we examine also the history of the various buildings, the financiers that lived here such as Francois-Balthazar Dange, and famous salons such as that of Madame Dange whose sphere was associated not only with collecting, but with personal adornment. After lunch, we visit Musée des Arts Décoratifs and we see paneling from several of the boudoirs, salons and private homes, showing us how the wealthy lived on the eve of the revolution. Dinner at Jamin.

Sunday, May 5th

We spend the day outside of Paris, journeying to the Château de Fontainebleau, where every autumn the court migrated for hunting season. On either side of the state bedroom of the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette created two rooms she deeply treasured: the Salon de Jeu, or gaming room with its new classical style, and a tiny, exquisitely decorated boudoir, with its enchanting steel, bronze, and mother of pearl furniture done by Riesener. Amidst the echoes of the barking of the hounds, we will tour these magical surroundings and lunch at Fontainebleau.

Monday, May 6th

Our visit to Versailles begins with an architectural study of The Petite Trianon, built as a pleasure house in the gardens of Versailles for Madame Pompadour by Louis XV. We will tour the grounds and interior rooms with the curator.

In contrast to the colossal, gilded state bedchamber of Marie Antoinette in Versailles where she gave birth to her children in public, are a series of rooms behind the state chambers where she led her family life. To enter this private realm is to view the real Marie Antoinette, to understand the Queen without the mythology, and thus to appreciate her taste all the more. Amongst the suite of rooms is a bathroom in bluish-grey, the walls adorned with stucco decorations on the theme of water. We enjoy a private dinner at Versailles.

Tuesday, May 7th

In the morning we have the exceptional privilege of a visit to the private workshops of Sèvres which are never open to the public. Here we see the delicate processes involved in the making of France's finest porcelain. Visiting the museum we see the evolution in style that corresponds to the reign of each of the Louis, moving from the Baroque to the Rococo and to the neo-classicism

that characterized the end of the reign of Marie Antoinette. In the afternoon we visit The Laiterie at Rambouillet. Louis XVI had bought the estate from the Duc de Penthièvre, later building a dairy with a grotto.

Wednesday, May 8th and Thursday, May 9th

Depart for Vienna. In Vienna we stay at The Imperial Palais Schwarzenberg. During the next two days we visit scenes of Marie Antoinette's childhood and look at the artistic milieu that shaped her personality. We see The Marie Antoinette Room in Schönbrunn, the imperial palace just outside Vienna. At the Musikverein, home of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, which dates from 1860, we enjoy a recital in the most famous concert hall in the world.

Friday, May 10th

Depart for New York.

Registration

The fee for the program is \$13,000 per person double occupancy with a \$1,500 single supplement, including round trip business class airfare to and from New York. This fee includes a donation of \$1,000 per person to Versailles. This includes nine nights luxurious accommodation, first class round trip train tickets to Lyon; most meals, wine with meals, entrée to private collections and to places not generally open to the public, private entrée to museums and palaces, private sessions with curators, expert scholars, extensive scholarly reading material prepared by Arts to Life, cocktail receptions, and luxury ground transportation. Arts to Life reserves the right to make changes to the schedule. A deposit of \$3,000 must accompany registration. Half of the remaining balance is due on November 1st, 2001 and the balance of payment is due on January 5th, 2002. After January 5th, 2002 no cancellations will be accepted and no refunds will be made unless the space can be filled. Any cancellation will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Should any speaker or host withdraw we will endeavor to make a suitable replacement. Arts to Life does not act as a travel agent and any additional reservations at hotels, changes to scheduled airline, or extensions of holiday, are to be made by the participants individually. For more information, please contact Arts to Life on 646-792-2340.