

ITALIAN INFLUENCES

TOPIC

ROOM 8: RENAISSANCE, INTERIORS - 16TH C.

Made in Italy

Velutto e seta / Velvets and silk

The famous Lyons silk industry has its roots in Italy. In 1536 King François I lent his support to two Piedmontese merchants working in Lyons, namely Bartolomeo Nari and Guillaume Turchetti, whose project was to introduce the manufacture silk velvet fabrics. Via letters of patent, they set up the first “*draps d’or, d’argent et de soye*” (*gold, silver and silk fabrics*) workers’ corporation in Lyons and declared them exempt from any tax and any policing or military service. The two men of Piedmont built up their workforce with men from Genoa who settled in Lyons with their wives, families and children.



Origins of the production of silk fabrics in Lyons, Thomas II de Gadagne presenting Nari and Turquet's project for the development of silk to the Lyons Consulate, Oil on canvass, Pierre Bonirote (1811-1891), 1536, Musée des Beaux arts de Lyon [Lyons Fine Arts Museum]

Majolica pottery from Italy and elsewhere

From 1520 onwards, other Italians introduced Lyons to the art of Italian earthenware, produced since the Middle Ages in the famous workshops of Orvieto, Florence, Faenza and Sienna, and, in turn influenced by Islamic and Spanish ceramics. During the first half of the 16thc., Florentine ceramic artists Benedetto di Lorenzo and Maître Georges together with Genoese ceramic artist, Julien Gambyn practised their trade in Lyons. However it was Sebastieno Griffio from Genoa, named after the famous printer, who was granted the privilege in 1554 to open the town's first earthenware manufacturing workshop. All produced majolica pottery and white enamel earthenware decorated in colour and frequently depicting a real or imaginary event*. With a palette dominated by blue and yellow tones, the Lyons style blossomed forth and developed, encouraged by the Consulate, who had a penchant for pottery and purchased it from the craftsmen.



Le passage de la mer Rouge (crossing the Red Sea), pottery, anonymous, 16th c., Inv. 38.27

Antique furniture

The furniture of the affluent classes of the Middle Ages was influenced by Gothic architecture, portraying gables and pinnacles in the form of arches.

16thc. furniture mainly comprised chests (**Inv. 69.6 tall chest**), cabinets, cupboards, dressers (**Inv.51.10 dresser**), kitchen dressers (**Inv. 61.16 two-compartment dresser**), tables, chairs and high-backed chairs known as Chayères* (**Inv. 51.298 and 47.327 Chayères**).

It developed in three successive phases:

→ from 1515 to 1540, the decor changed: Furniture was decorated with pilasters (columns) adorned with low-relief arabesque and grotesque décor together with foliage and medallions.

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→ from 1540 to 1575, the very structure of furniture changed under the influence of Lyons architect Philibert Delorme, who was keen on ancient monuments: furniture was structured with columns, canopies, entablature and architraves typical of classical, architectural styles (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian).

→ from 1575 to 1620, a new style of décor emerged under the influence of Dijon sculptor, Hugues Sambin (1520-1601), sculptures known as termes* took on considerable importance and an element of fantasy adorned door panels.

In the 16thc., printing, the silk industry and furniture followed the same themes: frontispieces and boxed text in books, printed fabrics and furniture decorations.

Lyons – an Italian town?

Lyons – Italian style

Lyons was justifiably known as “Little Italy”. From 1460 to 1575, the Italian presence in the town was very noticeable: the Italians left their mark in the bank, commerce, silk, pottery and printing. In 1571, there were 183 Italians (84% of the foreigners) among the town’s elite merchant bankers. They had a powerful minority: representing only 5.7% of those listed on the tax register compared to 28% on the housing tax register! They also made social contributions, providing supplies for the Aumône générale (General Almshouse) between 1534 and 1560 or, like Thomas de Gadagne, having a hospital built in 1533 for victims of the plague: Florentine architect, Salvator Salvatori, was commissioned to design this annexe to the Saint-Laurent Hospital, known as the Saint-Thomas building.

The Italians who settled in Lyons maintained strong links with their country of origin through marriages and by trading with their native regions. They also set up an administrative, legal and religious framework in Lyons. These practices allowed them to continue to spread a totally Italian culture even if they had lived there for a century!

Resistance to Italian Renaissance architecture

Nevertheless, Lyons architecture remained firmly entrenched in local gothic traditions and was virtually untouched by Italian Renaissance architecture. This was probably due to the inadequate length of time spent in the town by the nobility (kings, archbishops) and a Consulate involved in organising fairs. Bologna architect Sebastiano Serlio put forward two major construction projects for the merchants, neither of which materialised. Today, most of the buildings constructed or commissioned by the Italians have disappeared, e.g. Bonvisi Chapel in the église Notre-Dame de l’Observance or the Saint-Thomas hospital building commissioned by Thomas de Gadagne. Only the famous gallery of the hôtel Bullioud (Bullioud Hotel) constructed by architect Philibert Delorme still bears witness to the Italian Renaissance style (Inv. 1300.4 engraving **Galerie Philibert de l’Orme, rue Juiverie No. 8**). During the 16thc. architectural innovation mainly came to the fore in the surrounding countryside and its specific hotels along with an increasing number of Italian-style galleries*.

The gallery of the hôtel Bullioud (Bullioud Hotel) constructed by Philibert Delorme

Born in Lyons into a family of master masons, Philibert Delorme (1514-1570) was influenced by a stay in Rome between 1533 and 1536, during which he studied ancient monuments. From that point onwards, he promoted ancient architecture in France. His first work was the vaulted gallery in the hôtel Bullioud, rue Juiverie in Lyons, constructed in 1536 and famous for its crested Renaissance arches and dual-style pilasters (Ionic and Doric). Presented to the court of King François I by Jean du Bellay, French Ambassador to Rome, Philibert Delorme worked at the court and even introduced the title of “architect to the King” during the reign of François I. There was no large site that he did not either control or advise e.g. the château de Saint-Maur (Saint-Maur Castle) (Val-de-Marne). The forerunner to Classicism, which pervaded the 2nd half of the 16thc., he influenced Lyons (plans for the Saint-Nizier church porch [built by Jean Vallet]) and French architecture and published his *Nouvelles Inventions pour bien bâtir et à petits frais* (latest inventions for better buildings at lower cost) in 1561.



Gallery of the hôtel Bullioud (Bullioud Hotel), Philibert Delorme, 16th c., 20th c. photograph, Inv. 53.881

glossary

chayère: Rigid, high-backed chair, with or without a chest compartment.

décor historié: decor representing a real or imaginary scene as opposed to floral decor, for instance.

galerie à l’italienne (Italian-style gallery): Open space enhancing the façade.

terme: male or female sculpture, the lower section of which ends in a sheath and which is positioned at the end of paths or in gardens.