

# Hotel de Soubise

Paris Art Studies - Hôtel de Soubise

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– The Connetable Olivier de Clisson builds a fortified hôtel just outside the Philippe Auguste wall on the right bank of Paris. Two turrets and a Gothic gate of this original house are still visible on the rue des Archives. The Connetable's coat of arms was added during the 1847 restoration of the gate. The keep of the little fort was on the site of the current oval salons.

1553 –

The hôtel, now within the city of Paris, is bought by François de Lorraine duc de Guise and his wife Anne of Este. The Guises greatly enlarge the house employing the Italian architect Primaticcio (Le Primatice). The lancet windows of the old courtyard date from this period. Mural paintings by Primaticcio and Abate disappeared in the 1840's. Under the Guises the hôtel became the main center of the Catholic party in Paris during the Wars of Religion. The Saint Bartholomew night massacre of Protestants was most probably plotted here. The duc de Guise and his brother the Cardinal of Lorraine were in the end assassinated by order of King Henri III in Blois in 1588.

1630's –

The hôtel is almost entirely renovated. A few original 17th century garlands of the period of Louis XIV remain in the courtyard.

1688 –

The Guise line is extinguished with the death of Mademoiselle de Guise. The hôtel is inherited by her closest relations the Princesse de Condé and the duchesse de Hanovre.

1700 – François de Rohan, Prince de Soubise buys the hôtel from the Guise heirs for 326 000 livres. His wife, the beautiful and proud Anne Chabot de Rohan was one of the briefer mistresses of Louis XIV. She brought the hallowed Rohan name to the younger Soubise branch. Very conscious of her high rank she convinces

her husband to turn the old building into a sumptuous palace.

1705  
&ndash;The couple's eldest son Hercule Mériade, Prince Bishop of Strasbourg chooses the architect for this task, Pierre Alexis Delamair. Soubise adds to the property a neighboring carousel so as to be able to build a new and much grander courtyard. Delamair convinces the princess to replace the carousel trees with a grand colonnade which he designs using twin composite columns. An existing fountain at the corner of the rue des Francs Bourgeois is rebuilt, the street widened and a semi-circular grand entrance is built to facilitate the turning of carriages into the new courtyard. A grand new façade employing a temple front is built as the new entrance into the house. Sculptures of the Four Seasons are commissioned from Robert Le Lorrain. Two allegorical figures representing Glory and Magnificence of Princes grace the central pediment along with four groups of genii along the base of the roof. The courtyard and the new front are the last examples in Paris of the Grand Style of the era of Louis XIV, which is however

going out of fashion even before the death (1715) of the great King.

1707&ndash;  
Hércule presents to his parents a new and more up-to-date architect, Germain Boffrand and possibly also Hardouin Mansart's successor in Versailles Robert de Cotte. They design the monumental staircase, which was demolished in the 19th century.

1712 &ndash;  
The old Prince dies. Delamair is definitely disgraced.

1732 &ndash;  
Now in his early 60's and a widower, Hércule re-marries a beautiful 19-year old bride Marie Sophie de Courcillon. He decides to completely refurbish and modernize his palace and hires again Boffrand.

1735-38 &ndash;  
Work begins in the interior and an addition is built on the garden side containing the new oval salons. The best artists and artisans of the day are employed: the Adams, father and son and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne II for the sculptures and Boucher, Trémolières, Restout and Natoire for the paintings all executed between 1736 and 1738.

Description of the Hôtel de Soubise:

Ground floor, the Prince's Apartment:

The vestibule was entirely transformed in the 19th century but preserves its original proportions. The Rohan emblems are on the grilles. The staircase was replaced in 1844.

The Prince's official bedchamber:

Sculpted medallions by the Adams and Lemoyne II: By the alcove: Discernment and Wealth, by the windows: Truth and Glory. Dessus de porte: Aurora and Cephalus by Boucher, Mars and Venus by Carle Van Loo on window side. Neptune and Amphitrite by Restout, Hercules and Hebe by Trémolières.

The Prince's Salon:

8 stucco reliefs. 4 by the Adams: Poetry and the Visual Arts, Music, Justice, History before Time and Renown. And the remaining 4 by Lemoyne: Fable and Truth, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Epic and Tragedy.

The Prince's Great Cabinet: Dessus de porte: Jupiter and Juno by Carle Van Loo, Minerva and Neptune by Restout. Two former dessus de porte country scenes by Trémolières and Boucher.

Upper floor, The Princess's Apartment:

The Salle des gardes or Grande Anrichambre has preserved its 16th century walls and windows &ndash; some heraldic emblems are still visible, notably a Breton ermine. The old chapel is opposite the entrance.

The Salle d'assemblée (great drawing room) has preserved its cornice with stucco medallions representing the four continents (the symbolic animals are drawn from Cesare Ripa's Iconologia):

Europe honoring the arts represented by a horse

Africa under a palm tree with a lion

Asia with a camel

America with a bow and a Mississippi alligator

The dessus de porte paintings where originally in the Princesse's small bedchamber:

Venus at her toilette by Carle Van Loo, Venus at her bath by Boucher

The Chambre de Parade (official bedchamber):

Gilded medallions: Danaë and the Shower of Gold, Leda and the Swan, Jupiter and Ganymede, Hebe on the cornice. Jupiter's affairs with Callisto, Semele, Europa and Io on the wall paneling.

Stucco groups by the Adams: Bacchus and Ariadne, representing Drunkenness - Diana and Endymion the Hunt - Minerva and Mercury, Power &ndash; Venus and Adonis, Courtship.

Dessus de porte: The Graces Preside over the Education of Cupid by Boucher, Minerva Teaching a Young Girl the Art of Tapestry by Trémolières.

The bed and balustrade were rebuilt using Boffrand's engravings in 1862. Two Boucher pastoral paintings from the downstairs apartments hang currently in the alcove. The clock is from the Louis XVI apartment in Fontainebleau.

## Salon de la Princesse

8 scenes from the legend of Psyche by Natoire (taken from the original tale by Apuleius, 2nd c AD, and La Fontaine's version of 1699):

Psyche borne by Zephyr, Nymphs offer flowers to Psyche on the threshold of the Palace of Cupid, Psyche shows her treasures to her sisters, Psyche lifts the lamp to contemplate her husband, The Nymphs pull out from the water the inanimate Psyche, Psyche and the shepherds, Psyche faints before Venus, Psyche taken to heaven by Cupid.

## The Small bedchamber of the Princess:

The 4 dessus de porte are from the former apartment of the princely children: The Friendship of Castor and Pollux by Van Loo, The Symbols of Secrecy by Restout, The Characters of Theophrastus or Sincerity by Trémolières, Mercury Teaching Cupid by Boucher. Portraits of Anne Chabot de Rohan and her son Cardinal Armand Gaston de Rohan and the Maréchal de Soubise.