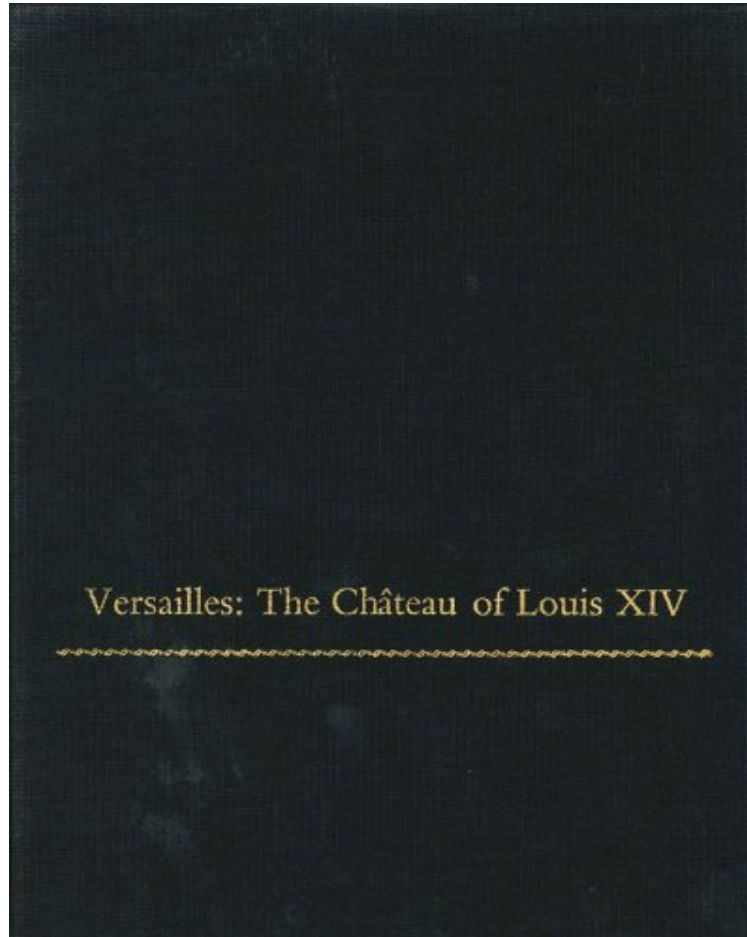


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## Versailles: The Chateau of Louis XIV (Monographs on the Fine Arts)

*Robert W. Berger*

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**Robert W. Berger : Versailles: The Chateau of Louis XIV (Monographs on the Fine Arts)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Versailles: The Chateau of Louis XIV (Monographs on the Fine Arts):

As the author writes, 'Versailles is the most famous palace in the world. Its name evokes, more than that of any other monument, the political institution of absolute monarchy and the aesthetic qualities of vast scale and bombastic display--features which are often evident in Baroque art.' In 1668 Louis XIV decided to enlarge Versailles by preserving his father's building, the Petit Chateau, and by enclosing it in a new structure, the Envelope. This decision, and the history of indecision that went before and after it, are prominent themes in this book about the new Chateau of

Louis XIV and its most important interior spaces. Architect of the Eveloppe Louis Le Vau departed from his usual Italian Baroque sources to draw upon Italian High Renaissance models for the first (and last) time in his career. Inside, the Escalier des Ambassadeurs was designed by Francois d'Orbay, who drew upon a slightly earlier project for a Louvre stair by Claude Perrault. The history of the frescoes in d'Orbay's staircase proves that decorative schemes at Versailles were especially susceptible to bearing imagery directly alluding to or representing contemporary events. Chapters on the Planetary Room and the Galerie des Glaces, then, continue the discussions of decorative themes and the pull between tradition and innovation in design. The palace at Versailles has been the subject of an abundance of published documents and modern art-historical studies; however, the investigator will discover that numerous art-historical problems are unresolved and there are new and fruitful questions to be posed. The author offers new solutions to old problems, explores new questions, and discusses artistic forms within a broader art-historical context than is encountered in past treatments. Though modern scholarship on Versailles has been strengthened by important studies by Alfred Marie, Fiske Kimball, and other who have drawn on both primary published sources and unpublished documents, Professor Berger has discovered that published sources of the late 17th century and the 18th century provide rich material that has as yet been underutilized.

About the Author Robert W. Berger, a Harvard Ph.D., has taught at Brandeis University, Brown University, and The Pennsylvania State University and has been a Visiting Member at the Institute for Advanced Study. His other books include *Antoine Le Pautre* (CAA Monograph) and *In the Garden of the Sun King* (Dumbarton Oaks).