The Small Study (fig. 5)

This room, with walls covered with pekin silk, was furnished by Moïse de Camondo as a small cabinet de peintures. The changes prompted by the mansion’s transformation into a museum are hardly noticeable here. To clear space for visitors, the carpet was moved slightly towards the fireplace and several armchairs (CAM 350) were put into storage. The ‘à la Bourgogne’ table (CAM 345), too close to the public, was moved towards the middle of the carpet. This exceptional piece of mechanical furniture is shown closed but it can be admired open at regular dates. The objects formerly placed on it are now on the flat desk (CAM 344) and the table d’en-cas (CAM 338). On the marquetried chest of drawers by Roger Vandercruse, the pair of silver candelabra (CAM 375) on either side of the bust of Marguerite Le Comte (CAM 412) are now in storage.

The sketches by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (CAM 440) are hung in a very ordered composition. The ninth and last sketch in the series was not bought by Moïse de Camondo. Acquired by donation in lieu of tax by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 2002, it was hung on the left wall, in due compliance with the collector’s taste.

Maintaining the original presentation to preserve the spirit of this exceptional residence for future generations, whilst complying with security and preventive conservation requirements, has thus proved to be a demanding and complex task. Sophie Le Tarnec
Curatorial assistant at the Musée Nissim de Camondo

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The Dining Room (fig. 4)

This large room, with five French windows opening onto the garden, hosted the lunches that Moïse de Camondo occasionally gave. The table (CAM 240) in front of the French windows is on either side of the marble fountain. It was originally laid with a Beauvais carpet (CAM 267), currently in storage because very damaged. The round table (CAM 345), listed as being in this room in the inventory drawn up in 1932, must therefore have been removed for the photograph.

The pair of serving tables by Weisweiler (CAM 242) is displayed with its two semicircular extension flaps deployed. It was originally laid with a Beauvais carpet (CAM 267), currently in storage because very damaged. The round table (CAM 345), listed as being in this room in the inventory drawn up in 1932, must therefore have been removed for the photograph.

To clear space for visitors, the carpet was moved slightly towards the tripod and several armchairs (CAM 350) were put into storage. The ‘à la Bourgogne’ table (CAM 345), too close to the public, was moved towards the middle of the carpet. This exceptional piece of mechanical furniture is shown closed but it can be admired open at regular dates. The objects formerly placed on it are now on the flat desk (CAM 344) and the table d’en-cas (CAM 338). On the marquetried chest of drawers by Roger Vandercruse, the pair of silver candelabra (CAM 375) on either side of the bust of Marguerite Le Comte (CAM 412) are now in storage.

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4. The Dining Room — 1936
Musée Nissim de Camondo © MAD, Paris

5. The Small Study — 1936
Musée Nissim de Camondo © MAD, Paris

*This exhibition was made possible with the generous support of Galerie Kraemer Antiquaires.*
The arrangement of the chairs was changed slightly. The bergerie à la reine by Chavigny covered in embroidered satin (CAM 65), formerly in the alcove, is now on one side, the pair of armchairs by the same joiner (CAM 66) by the fireplace. Since the restoration of their Aubusson tapestry upholstery, two of the eight chairs in the re-arrangement are now on display.

In the alcove, the Nièvre porcelain garniture of vases (CAM 100) on the roll-top desk by Saunier (CAM 55) was protected from theft and dust by a glass bell. The writing table (CAM 57) with a telephone on it in front of the French window on the right of the alcove was put into storage for preventive conservation reasons. The red lampas pelmets and curtains were taken down and identical copies were woven in 1987. The ruffled silk blinds were removed and never replaced.

The Large Drawing Room (fig. 2)

This spacious drawing room, with its natural oak paneling inlaid with Aubusson tapisseries depicting La Fontaine's fables, was photographed from three different viewpoints. To clearly view the space for visitors, the large Aubusson carpet (CAM 196) was partially rolled up, turned the other way round and moved to one side. The pair of Louis XV chairs covered with dark velvet were removed, since there were not part of the donation. Due to its fragility and the difficulty in protecting it from theft, the Chantilly porcelain bowl (CAM 96) on the rectangular table en coquille (CAM 58) was put into storage and replaced by a writing case (CAM 77). Since its restoration in 2002, the table is François I attributed to David Roentgen (CAM 56) formerly in front of the French window on the Large Drawing Room side of the room, is on display at the entrance to the Large Study to avoid having to move it daily to open and close the shutters. As it was originally, the jewel box (CAM 75) attributed to the same cabinateur is on display on the table's mahogany top.

The Large Drawing Room (Cover & fig. 1)

It was in this luxurious drawing room with its double gold paneling that Moïse de Camondo decided to show many of the masterpieces in his collection. To clear a passage for the public, the Savonnerie carpet and several chairs were moved towards the wall. The writing table by Riesener (CAM 127) was moved to the left of the fireplace. The four chairs by Henri Jacob (CAM 137) in front of the French windows were put in store due to their mediocre state of conservation. The table à déjeuner by Riesener (CAM 132), damaged by daily moving to open and close the shutters, was restored, but it is still in storage but its future display is being envisaged.

Regarded as modern in 1936, the pair of corner-cupboards by Saunier (CAM 152) were removed from the Large Drawing Room for a long period. But since their restoration, this reveals the famous cabinetmaker's stamp, they are again on display. For security reasons, certain objects were removed or moved, such as the pair of patinated wood vases (CAM 153) once belonging to Queen Marie-Antoinette, now on display on the pair of chiffoniers of drawers by Weisweiler (CAM 123) on either side of the fireplace.

The Salons des Huet (fig. 3)

This hexagonal-shaped drawing room was designed as a showcase for the French pictures by Jean-Baptiste Huet. Given the arrangement of the furniture, one understands the difficulties the curators had in enabling the circulation of the public while preserving the harmony and symmetry of this arrangement.

The carpet (CAM 178) formerly in the passageway leading to this drawing room was moved to the passageway inaccessible to the public between the Large Drawing Room and the Large Study. Originally on the console, the clock with a Chimére (CAM 162) is now on one of the cabinets (CAM 188) in the Salon des Huet.

The circulation of the public past the windows has necessitated several notable changes. The screen by Bossard (CAM 202) was moved towards the door to the gallery, opposite its original emplacement. The Savonnerie carpet (CAM 234) was moved back slightly, the roll-top desk by Gobin (CAM 191) was placed at an angle to facilitate viewing, and the two bergeries by Sainé (CAM 198) were placed on either side of the screen.

All objects too close to the public were moved for security reasons. Others were put into storage, such as the pair of silver-gilt candlesticks by François-Thomass Germain (CAM 294) and the three small Chinese white porcelain dishes (CAM 227) on the roll-top desk by Gobin.

The steel and gilt bronze writing table (CAM 592) in the middle of the drawing room was in fact made in 1925 by the bronze smith Claude-Olivier, after a marquetried piece by Riesener. Convinced of its authenticity and fascination by this piece of metal furniture, Moïse de Camondo probably thought it fitting to display it with the two console tables in gilt and silvered bronze, made around 1766 (CAM 192). When the deception was discovered in 1936, the museum decided to remove the table, but it was recently reinstated in its original place, out of respect for Moïse de Camondo's wishes and tastes.