

to one side of the bed, an armchair and carved loveseat painted gold and covered with gold brocade are across from it.

The layout of the château was arranged for the practicality of filming rather than living, as the rooms are not connected in a logical fashion. Several archways away from the bedroom is the bathroom, a spacious, rose-colored area complete with a white porcelain and brass bathtub remade to Guffroy's specifications. Again, the walls are trompe l'oeil marble decorated with panels of watery scenes.

Not in any specific room, and winding up to nowhere, is a wide spiral staircase—wood with iron railings. Near it is a large salon, whose open French doors reveal a blown-up photograph of Paris' Hôtel de Sully creating a realistic exterior view. A car still peeks from behind an arch in the picture. It will be painted out when the print, shot in black and white to avoid the tints of colour film, is coloured by hand.

In contrast to the generally lavish settings was one small rustic room that served as an entrance to the château. Its many windows with green iron railings are reminiscent of the balcony in Manet's famous painting of women on a balcony. It contained a plain wood secretary, large red armchair and a simple straw chair with a Versailles green wood back, like the rickety chair in the van Gogh painting of his room. More homey details included a straw wine bottle basket, candle holders and a dusty, red terra cotta tile floor.

Out of the camera's view were side tables stacked with the stubs of plain wax candles that had burned down to their ends and with long, unused tapers—a major part of the film's lighting equipment. "We use candles and chandeliers for lighting as much as possible so there are many scones, candelabra and holders in the sets. It's of enormous importance in creating the right ambiance, especially as all of the sets are closed with ceilings above," states Guffroy.

The work load of decor changes was significant. For the manors' grounds, vases, pavilions, statues, colonnades, and flower gardens were added. Interiors in actual châteaux were refurbished, with period tapestry and drapery hung. In one Parisian neighborhood, street signs, lamps and antennas were removed, streets paved with cobblestones, sidewalks covered, storefronts changed, and whole store interiors redone.

Among places recreated were a second-hand store and two outdoor markets, which required stocking of the quite different looking vegetables and fruits of the era. True antique carriages were used for exterior shots, while facsimiles with detachable sides were made for close-ups. Turning the turn-of-the-century Opéra Comique de Paris



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into an 18th-century theatre was one of Guffroy's more exacting tasks. He lists the changes made: "We added crystal chandeliers, changed the curtains and the entire wings of the stage, added gilding and changed the seating. That was a *bon travail!*"

Of the decor's origins—his influences—Guffroy says, "I thought of the paintings of Fragonard, Boucher, all that was 18th century, this feminine side. The era was the beginning of home charm and comfort. I'm very Parisian like my mother and grandmother—I like Versailles' architecture. It wasn't an effort to try and find an 18th-century feeling. Before the war, we were a lot closer to the 18th century than after—we still had horses, few airplanes," recalls Guffroy.

But that doesn't preclude a large amount of research. He sought out documentation of fabrics, dishes, basically all details. Along with specialised books, Guffroy found the common *La Vie Quotidienne* (Everyday Life) series of books.

The books unfold the minutia of everyday life in different eras, such as in the court of Versailles. Museums like Camando, Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the archives of the Ecole des Beaux Arts also proved valuable sources. As much as this, Guffroy found just walking the streets of old quarters to be inspirational. "Seeing things in the streets, trips—seeing how things are done in other countries makes you understand what's special about your own. It's an accumulation." All the documents to do with the decor of the film were given to the Musée Vacquiavich in Louvier, a museum dedicated to film decor, opened in 1988.

And what of the other *Valmont*? Was the Frears film taken into account? "Never," says Guffroy amid lots of laughter. "I'm absolutely indifferent to others. It's of no importance, they can't do the same thing on the set." Guffroy finished with a nod, "I'll probably see it sooner or later, all the same."