

Up All Night in the 1700s Panels and Labels

OPENING DIDACTIC [one at each entrance]

Living Rooms

Up All Night in the 18th Century

The “Century of Lights,” as the French called it, was an illuminating era of intellectual and technological advancement. But the 1700s was also literally a century of candlelight. In the glow of glittering chandeliers, Europeans stayed up later and later, pushing aside the veil of darkness to preen and play.

Fashionable parties centered on card playing. The rules of the game—and the etiquette—were unforgiving. But the flickering light, the gilded rooms, and the bejeweled dress softened the strictness. You can experience this enchantment here in Mia’s Grand Salon, as the light and sound shifts from day to night, mundane to magical.

Jean Gaillard de La Bouëxière, a royal tax collector under France’s King Louis XV, originated the paneled interior of this room in 1735, when he renovated a house for himself near the Place Vendôme, in Paris. The increasingly powerful royal government fueled his extravagant lifestyle and that of his peers, spreading public street lighting and easing access to imported stimulants like coffee, tea, and chocolate through expanded global trade—essential ingredients for late-night socializing.

This Project is part of Living Rooms, an initiative to present Mia’s historic interiors and decorative arts collections in new ways.

Generous support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and donors at the 2014 Mia Gala. Additional support provided by The Chipstone Foundation.

[NEA Artworks Lock-up]

[Include Met image on intro panel]



Pierre Louis Dumesnil the younger

France, 1698–1781

Card Players in a Drawing Room

Oil on canvas

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Vignette inside Salon [group label with tombstones only – to be displayed on the platform and/or outside near introductory panels.]

Britain

Card table, mid-1700s

Mahogany

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 17.57

Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené

French, 1748–1803

Pair of armchairs (fauteuils) from a set of four, c. 1785

Gilded wood, silk upholstery

Gift of the Groves Foundation 83.146.3-4

France

Andirons (chenets)

“Chevaux Marin” (Seahorse), c. 1745–1750

Gilt bronze, iron

Gift of funds from the Groves Foundation 2013.3.1-2

Claude Burdel

Swiss, 1727–1799

Tarot of Marseilles Playing Cards, 1751

Hand-colored woodcut
Gift of Carl A. Weyerhaeuser P.96.30.1-78

Gallery 316 (Grand Salon Antechamber)

Tea/Coffee/Chocolate Group

Thomas Daniell

British, active c.1771–1793

Teapot and stand, 1787

Silver

Bequest of Philip L. Baldwin 77.22.15a,b

As socializing extended deeper into the night, imported stimulants—tea, coffee, chocolate—kept the conversation going and helped revelers recharge the next morning.

In the 1600s, when Dutch traders first imported Chinese tea to Europe, it was a rarity. By the late 1700s, it was a valuable and contested global commodity—particularly in the British Empire. This teapot was made in 1787, the same year the United States adopted its Constitution following the American Revolution—which had begun with the Boston Tea Party. That event was an angry reaction to Britain’s Tea Act of 1773, which gave the country’s East India Company a monopoly on tea sales to the colonies.

Caughley Works (Salopian China Manufactory), Britain, c. 1772–1799

Child’s tea and coffee set, c. 1780–1790

Glazed earthenware

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 97.41.2.1a,b-.8a,b

The Chinese origins of tea and fine porcelain resonate in this child’s play set made in England. Though made with coarse clay, the blue-and-white color scheme imitates delicate Chinese ceramics, while pagodas and other imagery allude to Asian landscapes.

Children learn adult social skills through play. So when boys and girls used a set like this, they practiced the etiquette and self-control expected of them at the dinner table. They also learned to see imported objects and consumables as a normal part of everyday life.

Britain

Chocolate muddler, c. 1760

Silver, wood

Gift of Mary-Louise Hawkins 2003.51

Spanish explorers first encountered chocolate in the 1500s in Latin America, where the indigenous Aztecs consumed it as a watery, spiced, bitter beverage. Gradually, Europeans adapted cocoa to their palates by adding sugar and milk—sometimes even eggs or wine. Muddlers like this one were used to stir and whisk chocolate into a sweet, thick drink—the original “hot chocolate”—a calorie-rich pick-me-up that both the young and old enjoyed at any time of day, though especially at breakfast.

George Garthorne

British, active 1680–1730

Chocolate pot, 1686

Silver, wood

Gift of funds from the James Ford Bell Foundation 99.28a,b

Chocolate became an important part of daily life in late 1600s Europe, alongside other caffeinated imports like coffee and tea. The South American product was often linked conceptually with these addictive “drugs” from the East that seemed to profoundly boost people’s energy and productivity.

The associations between American chocolate and Chinese tea may explain why the overall shape of this chocolate pot—one of the earliest dated examples—was inspired by Chinese spice containers, known in Europe as “ginger jars.”

Meissen Porcelain Factory Meissen, Germany, est. 1710

Coffee pot and cover, c. 1735

Porcelain

Anonymous Loan L87.73.5.1a,b

For decades, Europeans marveled at fine Chinese porcelain because it was durable yet light and refined. Then, in 1710, Meissen became the first European manufacturer to make true porcelain, comparable to Asian imports. When craftsmen mastered this “white gold,” they fashioned porcelain receptacles for a range of goods other than tea, as seen in this coffee pot.

Though coffee originated in Ethiopia, in Africa, producers in nearby Yemen, in Arabia, were the first to export it in large quantities. In 1715, the French started growing coffee on island slave plantations near Africa. By the 1780s, French plantations in the Caribbean were producing two-thirds of the world’s coffee.

Task Lighting Group

France

Pair of candlesticks, c. 1780

Gilt bronze

Gift of the Groves Foundation 80.3.1a-c-.2a-c

Candles were costly, and lighting a household was a significant expense that steadily increased through the 1700s. Low-quality candles were made of animal fat, or tallow, that emitted an unpleasant odor and a great deal of smoke. Elite households used candles made of beeswax or spermaceti—a waxy substance derived from sperm whales—that had a more pleasant scent, gave off little smoke, and burned brightly.

Positioning flames near reflective surfaces—such as mirrors, cut crystal and glass, and metal—amplified the light. These gold candlesticks would have glowed when in use.

William Adby

British, active 1751–1790

Candlestick, wick-trimmer, and snuffer set, 1787

Silver

Gift of the Charles Bolles Rogers Family: Frederick Van Dusen Rogers, Nancy Rogers Pierson, Mary Rogers Savage 59.11.20a-c

Maintaining dozens of candles throughout a house required a great deal of caution. You would use this handled candlestick, or “chamberstick,” when moving between rooms, or “chambers,” and would need to shield the flame carefully to prevent gusts of air from blowing it out.

This set also includes a cone-shaped snuffer and scissor-like trimmers. Until self-consuming candlewicks were invented in France in the 1820s, wicks required regular trimming to control the flame and minimize smoking and sparking. Clipping a burning wick without extinguishing the flame required great skill. Snuffing candles—rather than blowing them out—was the refined way to avoid a waxy mess.

[supplementary image, downloaded. To be displayed inside the antechamber cabinet alongside the candlestick set and chamberstick. These do not change/rotate.]

Philip Dawe, printer

British, c.1745–c.1809

After Henry Robert Morland

British 1730–1797

The Pretty Maid with Her Apron Before the Candle

1770

Mezzotint

Yale Center for British Art



A maid transports a candle while expertly shielding the flame with her free hand and transparent apron.

[supplementary image, downloaded. To be displayed inside the antechamber cabinet alongside the candlestick set and chamberstick]

John Faber, printer

Netherlands, active Britain, 1695–1756

Drawn by William Shipley

British, 1715–1803

After Godfried Schalcken

Netherlands, 1643–1706

Boy Lighting a Candle

1751

Mezzotint

Yale Center for British Art



Godfr. Schalcken Pinx. W. Shipley Delin.

J. Faber fecit 1751.

Done from the Original Painting at Aleppo, in the Collection of JOHN SPENCER, Esq

*To Whom this Plate is humbly Dedicated,
by His Obliged & most hum^{ble} Serv^t John Faber.*

Sold at the Golden Head by the Church Tobacco-shop Square

A male servant blows on a piece of wood pulled from a fire, increasing the flame so he can light his candle. Self-igniting matches were invented in Paris in 1805.

Jacques Firmin Beauvarlet

French, 1731–1797

Preparing for the Ball, 1757

Etching and engraving

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P.81.22

A lady prepares for a late-night masked ball, surrounded by companions, a maid carefully setting her intricate hairstyle. The group gathers near the dressing table, or toilette table, set with two candlesticks carefully positioned in front of a standing mirror, which reflects their light back to the group.

More late night socializing meant more time at the toilette table, not just getting ready for bed but donning a new suit of clothes for a final round of partying. Candlesticks featured more regularly in costly toilette sets as the 1700s progressed.

Antoine Trouvain

French, 1656–1708

Second Room of the Apartments at Versailles, 1694–98

From *Les Appartements de Versailles*, 1694–98

Engraving

The Minnich Collection, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P.14,503

Antoine Trouvain captured the intimate setting of a room lit by a single candelabra at the center of a gaming table. Playing in close quarters near open flames demanded careful comportment, self-awareness of one's gestures and facial expressions, and strict control of emotions—win or lose.

During French King Louis XIV's rule (1643–1715), the palace at Versailles was known as a gambling den, with fortunes won and lost in an evening. While Louis preferred billiards, his courtiers favored cards. By the late 1690s, when Trouvain made this engraving, the king was spending less time at the evening entertainments and Trouvain instead captured the younger members of court at play.

Clock

Jean-Antoine Lepine

French, 1720–1814

Joseph Coteau, painter

French, 1740–1812

Clock, c. 1789

Marble, gilt bronze

Gift of funds from Mrs. Carolyn Groves 88.88.1a-g

In earlier epochs, when people were mostly active during daylight, this clock would have been unnecessary: a sundial would have sufficed. But as nighttime socializing surged in the 1700s, people paid less regard to the sun and mechanical time triumphed.

This ambitious clock by Jean-Antoine Lépine, clockmaker to France's King Louis XVI, measures time in several different ways. Its central face displays mechanical time: the hour in Paris and in 12 other cities. The dial on the left tracks astrological time: the sun's position relative to the constellations of the zodiac. On the right, rising and falling markers track the times of sunrise and sunset in Paris.

Prints: Night time festivities outdoor/public socializing

Jean Le Pautre

French, 1618–1682

The Fêtes of 1674, First Day: The Performance of Jean-Baptiste Lully's Opera "Alceste" in the Marble Court, 1676 (later edition)

Etching and engraving

The Minnich Collection, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P. 17,021

In 1674, the French court hosted six days of elaborate festivities at Versailles, the royal palace, celebrating the recapture of the Franche-Comté region near the Swiss border. On day one, an opera took place outdoors in the Marble Court. The nighttime performance was illuminated by thousands of candles. King Louis XIV sat in the front row—the only person, as dictated by court etiquette, to enjoy the privilege of wearing a hat and sitting in an armchair.

Louis XIV, the self-titled "Sun King," was especially fond of nighttime festivities with arresting displays of light. These occasions when night turned into day proclaimed his rule not just over France but nature itself.

Jean Le Pautre

French, 1618–1682

The Fêtes of 1674, Sixth Day: Illuminations around the Grand Canal, 1676 (later edition)

Etching and engraving

The Minnich Collection, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P.17,026

Jean Le Pautre's print depicts a seemingly endless line of torches illuminating Versailles's gardens—the magical conclusion of the 1674 festivities celebrating a military victory. Courtiers in gondolas (boats), on horseback, and walking along the water's edge marvel at the firelight reflecting off the palace's fountains and Grand Canal (almost a mile long).

Seven years earlier, in 1667, the French government began Europe's first major public lighting project, in the interest of improving policing in Paris. To pay for the endeavor, a direct tax "on mud and lanterns" was levied on citizens for street cleaning and lighting. By 1702, Paris had 5,400 candle lanterns throughout the city. Other major European cities soon followed Paris's example.

Charles-Nicolas Cochin I

French, 1688–1754

After Charles-Nicolas Cochin II
French, 1715–1790

Decoration for a Masked Ball Given by the King, 1746

Etching and engraving

Gift of the funds from the Print and Drawing Council P.97.10

The French King Louis XV held this masked ball for the wedding of his son—the 16-year-old dauphin, or heir apparent—to the Spanish Infanta Marie-Thérèse-Raphaële. It was held on February 26, 1745, and was reportedly one of the grandest evening parties ever staged at the royal palace of Versailles. In this print, the Hall of Mirrors—a dazzling corridor flanked with 17 windows on one side and 17 grand mirrors on the other—is filled to capacity, glittering with the light of thousands of candles reflected in the mirrors and crystal-encrusted chandeliers.

At this very ball, it was said that the king began his famous love affair with his mistress, Madame de Pompadour, who reportedly came dressed as the chaste goddess Diana.

Jean-Michel Moreau the younger

French, 1741–1814

Fireworks Display Presented to the King and Queen by the City of Paris for the Birth of the Dauphin, 1782

Etching and engraving

Gift of Janet and Winton Jones 2001.96.1

The Chinese invented fireworks and gunpowder around 800. By the 1400s, this technology had spread to Europe, with fireworks increasingly part of public celebrations. The festivities surrounding the birth of a son to King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette culminated with a grand spectacle. Fireworks were launched near City Hall, lighting up the night sky, and Jean-Michel Moreau captured the dramatic streetscene beautifully (though he probably exaggerated the size of the crowd).

Well-lit streets improved safety, expanded opportunities for socializing in public, and facilitated late-night travel to and from private soirées. But many French citizens protested public lighting programs as an extension of state surveillance and unfair taxation.

Games and Gaming Group

William Hogarth, artist

British, 1697–1764

Bernard Baron, engraver

French, c. 1696–1762

The Tête à Tête, Plate 2 from Marriage à-la-Mode, 1745

Etching and engraving

Gift of Dan Pedoe P.95.11.2

A couple collapses after a late-night card game, the clock showing 1:20 a.m.—way too late for responsible revelry, according to artist William Hogarth. The costly candles are burning into overtime, almost to extinction, an extravagant expense that seems to bother only the servant who throws up one hand in frustration and carries a stack of unpaid bills in the other. The attendant in the background struggles to stay awake.

Helped by a cup of tea, the wife intends to play on, despite being at odds with Lady Luck. At her feet is Edmund Hoyle's best-selling book on the card game known as whist—a copy of which is displayed in this gallery.

[L2016.34.4 – Pages need to rotate after 6 months]

Edmond Hoyle

British 1679–1769

The Polite Gamester: Containing short treatises on the games of whist, with an artificial memory, quadrille, backgammon, piquet and chess.

Dublin: Printed by J. Joey, 1776

Letterpress

Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota

Edmond Hoyle was an authority on card games, particularly whist, a game first played in London coffee houses in 1728. He quickly gained notoriety as an expert by instructing men and women of the upper classes on the rules of the popular game.

In 1742, Hoyle published *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist*, immediately received as the definitive guide. It was referenced so often that the phrase “according to Hoyle” emerged and remains in use today when one cites expert opinion on any subject. *The Polite Gamester* is a collection of a number of Hoyle's publications; his treatise on whist is among them.

[L2016.34.5 – pages need to rotate after 6 months]

Pierre Ribou

French, 1654?–1719

Le Jeu de L’Hombre, 1709

Paris: Pierre Ribou

Letterpress

Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota

The card game Hombre—or Ombre, as it was known in English—was the direct ancestor to whist. Hombre originated in Spain in the 1600s, and was one of the earliest card games to emerge within Europe. Its name comes from the phrase “Yo soy el hombre!” (“I am the man!”), which players exclaimed according to game rules.

Earlier card games from the Middle East and North Africa had entered Spain and Italy in the 1300s. But it wasn't until the 1600s that Hombre and other card games—along with coffee culture—obtained cult-like status when European elites sought to emulate Middle Eastern courtly elegance.

Claude Burdel [SHOW A SPREAD OF CARDS, SPREAD TO CHANGE AFTER 6 MONTHS]

Swiss, 1727–1799

Tarot of Marseilles Playing Cards, 1751

Hand-colored woodcut

Gift of Carl A. Weyerhaeuser P.96.30.1-78

Today, tarot cards are associated with fortune-telling, but they were developed in 1400s Italy for the purpose of gaming. Tarot decks and tarot games altered as they grew in popularity and spread throughout Europe, but a common feature is an extra suit that could be elevated above its rank for “trumps”—a key ingredient in complicated trick-taking card games: card games that have rounds (tricks) that can each be won (taken) by a single player.

It was not until the 1800s that it became more common to use tarot cards for making predictions.