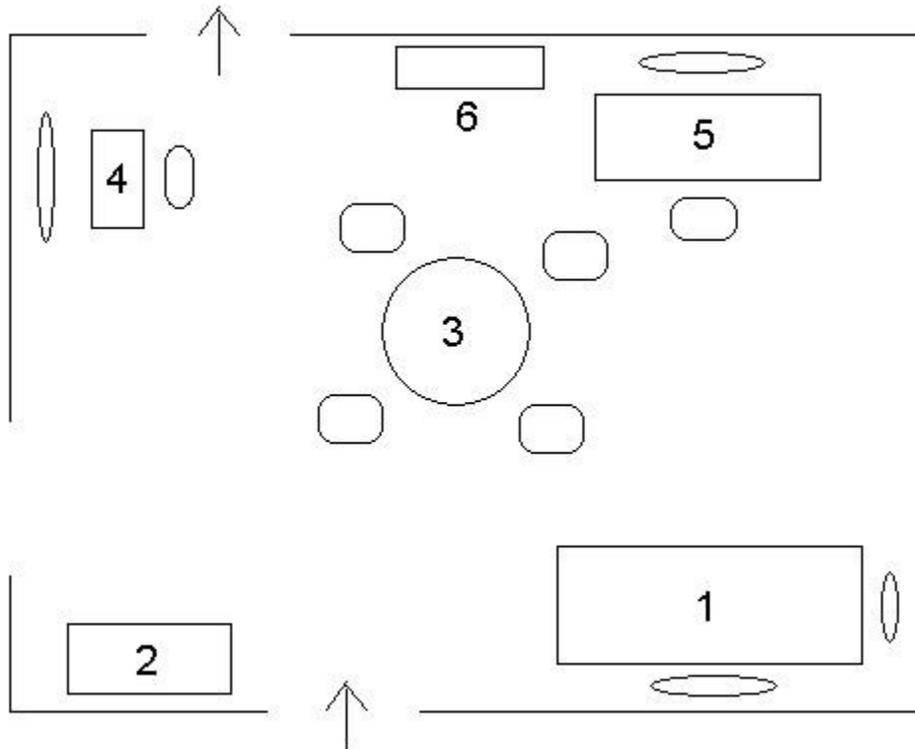


EMPIRE ROOM  
or DUCHESS ROOM (16 E)



- (1) Above the bed hangs the portrait, painted by F Gérard (1770-1837), of the second Duchess of Beaufort, Ernestine von Starhemberg (Brussels 1782 - Florennes 1852) and an engraving of one of her parents' houses, Dürnstein on the Danube. Her dress of thin muslin (the fashion of the day) didn't leave men indifferent. In her defence, it should be said that her husband was the age of her father. Frederic of Beaufort-Spontin married her after the death of his first wife, Leopoldina of Toledo, from whom he had no surviving son. Ernestine was the same age as the eldest daughter from the first marriage.

Ernestine descended from Ernest, Earl of Starhemberg, who defended Vienna against the Turks in 1683 until the troops (80.000 men) of John Sobiesky, King of Poland, rescued him by attacking the Turks (200.000 men) from behind. This was the beginning of the withdrawal of the Turks from Central Europe.

Her grandfather, George Adam, Prince of Stahremberg, Ambassador of Maria-Theresa at the Court of Louis XV negotiated the marriage of Louis XVI with Marie-Antoinette. He was also our governor during the interregnum between Charles of Lorraine and Maria-Christina.

One of the intimate diaries of Ernestine can be found in Weinern (Lower Austria). There were several of them. In a letter from her children to a priest, it is clear that the others were burned "to keep the pious memory of their mother..."

This diary recounts the era when the Duke (the sole member of the Belgian aristocracy not won over to Napoleon) was appointed Governor of the Southern Netherlands and received in Hotel Beaufort, Wool Street in Brussels the heads of various allied armies before and after Waterloo.

The priest recommended that the diary be kept in view of its historic value, a diary that reveals also the deep interest that the Duchess had in men (but this is another story...)

- (2) A Curious piece of furniture: this is a false writing desk, a useful hiding place for oneself or for a visitor during those troubled times or even a way of leaving home unseen when moving house ...
- (3) Empire-style table. Just as for the other pieces of furniture, one encounters here the same patterns: bronze sphinxes on the writing desk, elbow rests shaped like swans' necks on the armchairs, and table legs looking like lions' paws.
- (4) The engraving on the right of the window showing the Vienna Congress reminds us that the delegation led by Frederic of Beaufort-Spontin, did not succeed in obtaining the establishment of a younger branch of the Habsburgs to reign in Belgium, which would have avoided us being attached to Dutch Netherlands.
- (5) The engraving above the secretary depicts Napoleon reviewing his troops.
- (6) The construction of the corridor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century removed one third of this room's surface area. In addition the original oak boards on the floor were changed for laths. However the mantelpiece, unlike others in the castle, remained perfectly centred because only the wall facing it was moved.

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