

#### 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) 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 241), 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) in front of the French windows on either side of the marble fountain are now placed between the two mahogany tables to avoid daily manipulation. We have added the wine cooler by Canabas (CAM 271) formerly displayed in the Porcelain Room. The magnificent pieces of silverware, shown on a rotary basis, are protected by plastic bells.

4. *The Dining Room* —  
1936  
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4.

5. *The Small Study* —  
1936  
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5.

#### 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 marquetry 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.

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# From residence to museum

Photographs of Count  
Moïse de Camondo's mansion in 1936



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MUSÉE NISSIM  
DE CAMONDO

On the cover:  
1. The Large Study —  
1936  
Musée Nissim de Camondo  
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1.

The Musée Nissim de Camondo was inaugurated on 21 December 1936, a little over a year after the death of its legatee, Count Moïse de Camondo (1860–1935). His very precise will, drawn up in 1924, subjects the bequest to formal conditions, including the future museum's organisation:

“[...] The mansion's interior arrangement must be maintained as it is at my death, that is, no piece of furniture or *objet d'art* must be moved, except certain chairs or small tables that could hinder the circulation of the public but which must remain in the same room. As far as possible, the installation of handrails should be avoided [...], to enable visitors to see the objects more easily and also to not destroy the mansion's present harmony.”

Photographs of each of the mansion's rooms and certain works were taken early in 1936. The twenty-one photographs on display give an idea of the residence as it was during the Count's lifetime. With time, his will's restrictive clauses proved difficult to implement regarding the lighting, preventive conservation and security of the works. As soon as the museum opened, handrails had to be installed to keep the public at a safe distance, despite the Count's instructions to the contrary in his will. This study details the principal changes made.

### The Large Study (cover & fig. 1)

This spacious drawing room, with its natural oak panelling inset with Aubusson tapestries depicting La Fontaine's fables, was photographed from three different viewpoints. To clear a viewing space for visitors, the large Aubusson carpet (CAM 116) was partially rolled up, turned the other way round and moved to one side. The pair of Louis XVI 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 99) on the rectangular *table en cabaret* (CAM 59) was put into storage and replaced by a writing case (CAM 77). Since its restoration in 2002, the *table à la Tronchin* 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 cabinetmaker is on display on the table's mahogany top.

The arrangement of the chairs was changed slightly. The bergère à la reine by Cheigny covered in embroidered satin (CAM 65), formerly in the alcove, is now near 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 *chaises à la reine* by Foliot (CAM 69) are now on display.

In the alcove, the Niderviller 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



2.

### The Large Drawing Room (fig. 2)

It was in this luxurious drawing room with white and gold panelling 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. 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 125) were removed from the Large Drawing Room for a long period. But since their restoration, which revealed the famous cabinetmaker's stamp, they are again on display. For security reasons, certain objects were removed or moved, such as the pair of petrified wood vases (CAM 153) once belonging to Queen Marie-Antoinette, now on display on the pair of chests of drawers by Weisweiler (CAM 121) on either side of the fireplace.

2. The Large Drawing Room —  
1936  
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3. The Salon des Huet —  
1936  
Musée Nissim de Camondo  
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3.

### The Salon des Huet (fig. 3)

This hexagonal-shaped drawing room was designed as a showcase for the pastoral 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 whilst 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 Chinaman (CAM 182) 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 Boulard (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 Cæben (CAM 191) was placed at an angle to facilitate viewing, and the two bergères by Sené (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-Thomas Germain (CAM 216) and the three small Chinese white porcelain dishes (CAM 227) on the roll-top desk by Cæben.

The steel and gilt bronze writing table (CAM 192) in the middle of the drawing room was in fact made in 1925 by the bronze smelter Chauffete, after a marquetry piece by Riesener. Convinced of its authenticity and fascinated 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 190). When the deception was discovered in 1958, 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 taste.