

# FORGING THE RENAISSANCE

## ON THE USE OF GLASS PIECES IN SPITZER'S (IN)FAMOUS COLLECTION

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### ABSTRACT

The figure of the *marchand* and *collectionneur* Frédéric Spitzer (1815-1890) shines with particular intensity in the empyrean spheres of 19th century collecting.

Among the various sections making up his famous collection, the admirable group of glass pieces that he skillfully assembled has a place of honor. As a wise businessman, Spitzer was an interested witness of a renewed attention paid to the *industrie du verre* and carefully observant of its *mise en scène* for both national and international expositions — and as seen in focused pages in periodicals — practically dovetailing toward an aesthetic (and commercial) goal in his Parisian *hôtel particulier* in 33, rue de Villejust.

The picture emerging from this study enriches the complex tale of the phenomenon of 19th century collecting in which the sometimes (in)famous “Spitzerian” microcosm is revealed as paradigmatic of an European scene characterized by a closely woven network of players: *marchands*, collectors, *connaisseurs*, museum curators, art critics and craftsmen.

### KEYWORDS

HISTORICISM | 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY COLLECTION | ART MARKET | STAINED GLASS WINDOWS | FAKES

### RESUMO

A figura do comerciante e colecionista Frédéric Spitzer (1815-1890) brilha com particular intensidade nas esferas imperiais do colecionismo do século XIX.

Entre as diversas partes que compõem a sua célebre coleção, o grupo admirável de peças de vidro habilmente reunido por Spitzer tem lugar de honra. Como sábio empresário, foi testemunha do interesse e da renovada atenção dada à indústria do vidro, bem como um observador atento da *mise en scène* de ambas as exposições nacionais e internacionais — e como pode ser visto em páginas focadas no tema em publicações periódicas — adotando uma perspectiva estética (e comercial) no seu palácio particular na Rue de Villejust, 33, em Paris. O quadro que emerge a partir deste estudo enriquece o conto complexo do fenómeno do colecionismo do século XIX, no qual o microcosmos Spitzeriano, por vezes infame, é revelado como paradigmático dentro da cena europeia caracterizada por uma rede de intervenientes finamente tecida: comerciantes, colecionadores, *connaisseurs*, curadores de museus, críticos de arte e artesãos.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

HISTORICISMO | COLEÇÃO DO SÉCULO XIX | MERCADO DE ARTE | VITRAIS | FALSIFICAÇÕES

Celebrated by Édouard Garnier in the pages of the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*<sup>1</sup>, the glass collection of Frédéric Spitzer must be read, studied and interpreted in light of his formidable unifying encyclopedic and taxonomic project<sup>2</sup> that was arranged in the Parisian *hôtel particulier* in rue de Villejust (now rue Paul Valéry), **[FIG. 1]**, formerly owned by Charles Frédéric Jules, Baron de Nagler, Grand Chamberlain of Prussia<sup>3</sup>. In addition to being a peephole onto a world of unfolding private and social life, this “machine à voir” (Poulot 2008) was a museum space in which the different artistic expressions gave life to an “encyclopédie tangible et très complète de la production artistique des seize premiers siècles de notre ère<sup>4</sup>”. It was unanimously recognized that the completeness of such an ensemble was comparable for consistency and quality only to the illustrious collections of the South Kensington Museum and the Musée de Cluny.

Among its peculiarities was its indissoluble integration into the home of the owner, who had entrusted the set up of the rooms with the image of his tastes and personality. In perhaps a too radical way, we could say that Spitzer planned the mansion to provide more than mere access to an art gallery. Instead, he also planned to offer a progressive sensorial experience realized through an actual itinerary indispensable to the understanding of the spaces of the entire museum and of its underlying philosophy, proceeding — just like then-contemporary decorative and industrial arts exhibitions — through a sequence organized first by type, then by chronology or by artistic school. An inescapable point-of-reference, in other words, even for a city like Paris, capital of the

art market and a crossroads of immense economic and political interests.

In the 1885 *Livre des collectionneurs*, the name of Spitzer as a glass collector is cited as a *hors pair* personality **[FIG. 2]**, together with other French and Belgian *curieux de verrerie*. Among the Parisian collectors the names of Édouard André, Alexander Petrovich Basilewsky, Edmond Bonnaffé, Jules Charvet, Aimé Desmottes, Paul Gasnault, Émile Gavet, Victor Gay, Albert Goupil, Julien Gréau, Mme Jubinal de Saint Albin, Alfred de Liesville, Lebeuf de Montgermont, Patrice-Salin, Adolphe de Rothschild, Charles Schefer and Charles Stein appear. This growing interest in collecting vitreous pieces might explain the reason why the decorative arts market registered a significant increase in their monetary value, as is confirmed by the previous Soltykoff (1861)<sup>5</sup> and Castellani (1869) sales<sup>6</sup>.

«Coupes, vases, cornets, calices, ampoules, bouteilles en verre de Venise de XV<sup>e</sup>, XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles» (Maze-Sencier 1885: 1, 298) **[FIG. 3]** cut fine figures in the display cabinets in Spitzer’s home, together with German glass pieces (serie XXVIII), stained-glass windows (serie XXVIII) and reverse paintings on glass (serie XXX)<sup>7</sup>. The goal of completeness — his collection was made up of about a hundred pieces — probably guided the collector’s choices in the individuation of types, together with various formal, chromatic and technical qualities, that is, painting on enamel, *graffito*, filigree and opalescent milk glass. Even the set up of the pieces from the “Arabian” world (namely from Damascus and Alexandria of Egypt) has to be considered in this matrix. Placed (not by chance) nearby Venetian (Murano) or Bavaria (the German and Bohemian glass pieces)

<sup>1</sup> The vitreous materials (glass, ceramics and painted enamels) were the object of research of Édouard Garnier (1840-1903), who was able to examine the examples housed in public and private collections (Bing, Spitzer, Mannheim and Stein, among others). He was the author of the studies of the glass objects in the Spitzer collection, and later was involved in the writing of the catalogue. Garnier 1884: 293-310; Garnier 1891, 75-87. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Starleen K. Meyer for her sensitive and evocative English translation of my Italian original.

<sup>2</sup> In this sense, completely analogous were the Soltykoff, Nieuwerkerke, Basilewsky, Wallace and Ferdinand Rothschild (Waddesdon Manor) collections. On this theme and on the recovery of the *Ars Vitraryia*, Higgott 2011, 19-22.

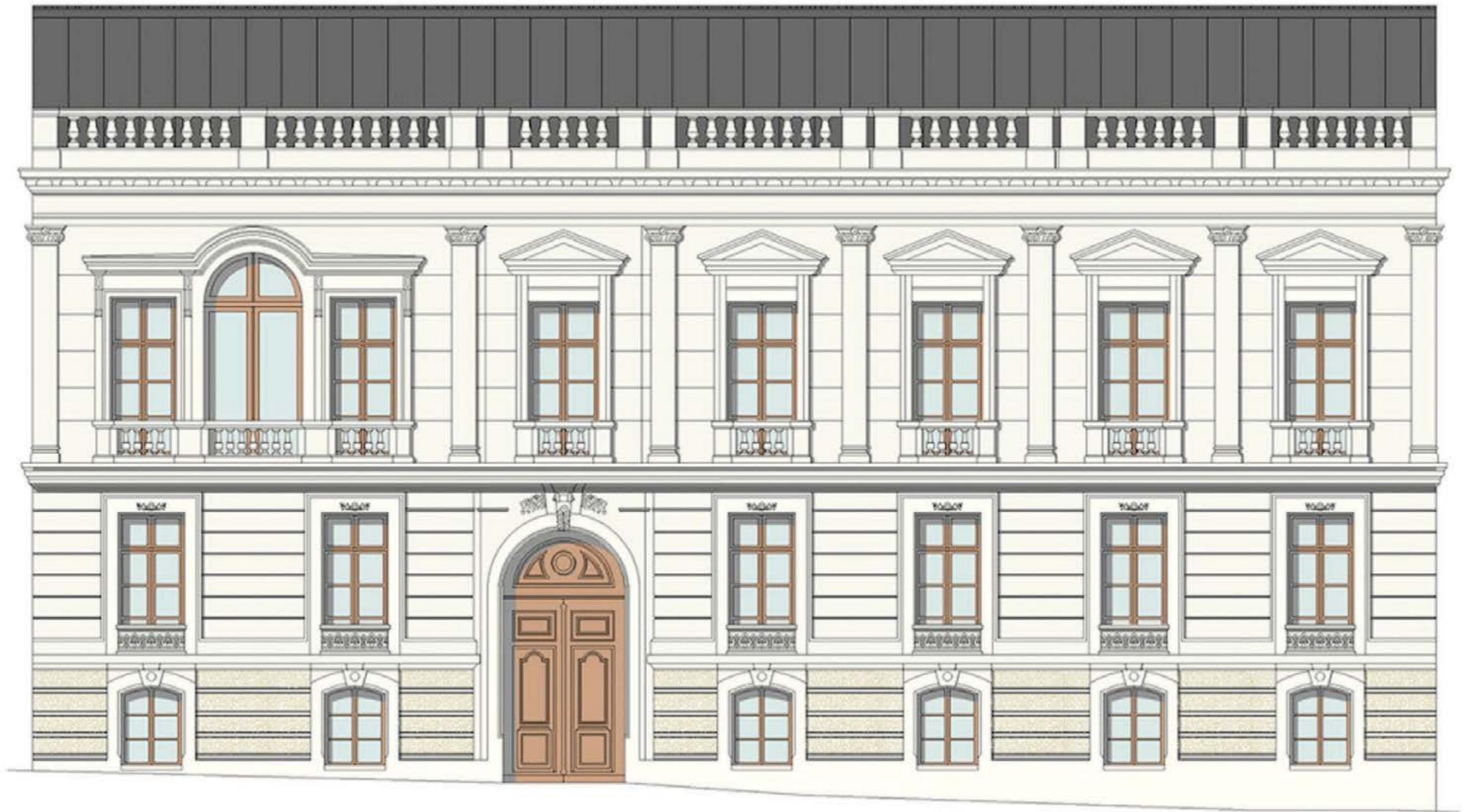
<sup>3</sup> On this theme, Cordera 2015 (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Ministre de l’Instruction publique, des Beaux Arts et des Cultes, Paris, Paris 26 March 1893. Paris, Archives Nationales, F/21/4036. On the multi-faceted figure of Spitzer as a *marchand* and a *collectionneur*, Cordera 2014.

<sup>5</sup> The Soltykoff glass collection could have contained 76 examples, coming from the Debruge Duménil collection. The Spitzer collection was ideally associated with such illustrious collections, also for the identical aspirations «à offrir à l’historien des témoignages du goût [...] et fournir à l’artiste des types et des modèles mais encore réunir des objets en assez grand nombre [...] qu’on pût étudier dans sa collection les diverses applications de l’art à l’ornementation des productions de l’industrie [...]» (Dubois 1858, p. 7).

<sup>6</sup> Reitlinger 1963, 2: 452-456.

<sup>7</sup> Of this last type of object, Spitzer was among the most important collectors,



**FIG. 1** P. Cordera and E. Albricci,  
Hypothetical reconstruction of the Parisian  
*hôtel particulier* of Frédéric Spitzer. Façade  
facing rue de Villejust (drawing by E.  
Albricci). Copyright © 2014 Paola Cordera



## VERRERIES



**D**ANS l'ensemble si complet des industries d'art dont les merveilleux produits composent les diverses collections formées par M. Spitzer, une de celles qui se trouve représentée dans ses plus belles manifestations est sans contredit l'industrie du verre. C'est là surtout, dans ces vitrines qui renferment les pièces les plus remarquables de ce que le temps a respecté parmi les œuvres si fragiles sorties des ateliers de Damas, d'Alexandrie, de Murano ou des montagnes de la Bavière, que l'on peut étudier sous ses différents aspects, du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, cet art privilégié qui, dès ses débuts, semble déjà avoir atteint à un haut degré de perfection, et dont les hypogées de l'ancienne Égypte et les chambres sépulcrales de Cære ou de Vulci nous ont montré des spécimens qui ne le cèdent en rien à ce que nos modernes verriers ont produit de plus complet en ce genre. Et cependant, quoique ce soit, de tous les arts, un de ceux qui paraissent avoir le moins souffert dans la grande conflagration où l'ancienne civilisation s'effondrait et disparaissait avec ce qui restait de l'Empire romain, un de ceux où il y ait eu le moins d'efforts à faire pour renouer la chaîne du nouveau à celle des temps passés, il est bien difficile, dans l'état actuel de la science, de reconstituer son histoire pendant les premiers siècles du moyen âge. Il n'existe pas, en effet, de documents matériels connus, d'œuvres indiscutables, auxquels on puisse assigner une date précise aussi reculée, et ce n'est qu'en s'appuyant sur des textes plus ou moins obscurs que l'on arrive à suivre la filiation de cette belle industrie, à Constantinople d'abord, puis en Égypte et en Syrie ensuite.

Mais, à partir du XI<sup>e</sup> ou du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la lumière se fait, et s'il est encore à peu près impossible de déterminer d'une façon certaine les caractères des verres qui remontent à cette époque, nous avons du moins des preuves de la situation florissante où se trouvait alors l'art de la verrerie dans les provinces orientales. Nous nous bornerons à citer à l'appui

FIG. 2 La verrerie (Garnier 1891, 3: 75)

COLLECTION SPITZER

Verreries PL.V



VERRERIES VENITIENNES

Fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle

FIG. 3 Verreries Venitiennes. Fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Verrerie, plate V (La Collection Spitzer: Antiquité, Moyen-Âge, Renaissance. Paris: Maison Quantin, 1891, 3)



**FIG. 4** Phototypie Berthaud Frères, *Collection Spitzer. Verrerie*, plate XLIX, 1893 (Bonnaffé and Molinier 1893)

glassware in the center of the *planches* XLIX and L of the sales catalogue [FIG. 4], the emphasis on these pieces then gaining growing consensus in the world of collectors in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century again attests Spitzer's shrewdness and his unequalled foresight first and foremost as a *marchand* and as a collector<sup>8</sup>.

Spitzer's *corpus vitrearum* shone, almost like the crowning of the museum itinerary, in the last rooms of the museum: one dedicated to the Renaissance, the other to the dramatic arms gallery. Even if the photographs of the Musée Spitzer

only partially convey the display of the architectonic space, the plates illustrating the sales catalogue succeed at least partially in rendering the ways in which the works would have been placed on the shelves in the display cabinets: in measured symmetries and skillful arrangements<sup>9</sup>.

Extraordinarily able in the «art du groupement, l'art des rappels, l'entente des effets de clair-obscur» (Müntz 1890, IV), there is no doubt that Spitzer could have imagined the polychrome exuberance of the vitreous pieces — majolica and *faïences*, gilded metals and jewels in addition to the

together with Alessandro Castellani and Vittorio Emanuele Tapparelli d'Azeglio.

<sup>8</sup> A not secondary role in this sense probably was played by his friendship with the Baron Charles Davillier (1823-1883) and the interest of this collector for Iberian culture and for the Hispano-Moorish *faïences*. On this topic, see «Collectionner l'Autre et l'Ailleurs: de la curiosité à la reconnaissance?», Journée d'études organisée par Dominique Poulot (Hicsa — Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne) et Mercedes Volait (Laboratoire InVisu — CNRS/INHA), Paris, June 24, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Bonnaffé and Molinier 1893.

**FIG. 5** Paris, Musée Spitzer, Renaissance Room, 1890 (Bonnaffé 1890)

glassware *stricto sensu*, as found in both the Baron Alphonse de Rothschild and the Émile Gavet collections — as a counterpoint to the metallic glints bouncing off of the arms and armor in the subsequent room. In this way, the aesthetic values of the single materials and the overall effect of the whole were highlighted at one and the same time. Even criticism less benevolently disposed toward Spitzer was ready to recognize the significance of the collection as an integral whole, more than the value and importance of the individual pieces.

The accentuated theatricality of the ensemble, of which, in all probability, Spitzer was the main designer, was to be even more emphasized by the skylights inserted into the ceiling directly over the objects in the Renaissance room [FIG. 5]. Adopted by Spitzer in the room dedicated to enamel work — but also by Alexandre Charles Sauvageot<sup>10</sup> and Prince Alexander Basilevsky in their own galleries<sup>11</sup> — this solution probably seemed particularly ingenious in that it permitted the homogenous fall of light filtered through a glass ceiling with white and gold-edged coffers.

This system, already applied at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the gallery of the Duke of Orléans in the Palais Royal of Paris, was perfectly in line with the innovative suggestions coming from new museum displays in which particular attention was paid to the illumination and to the exposition set up, as seen, for example, in the Louvre Museum of Paris, the Alte Pinakothek of Munich, the Glass and Ceramics Gallery of the British Museum and in the National Gallery of London. The (probably red) fabric on the floor was perhaps a way to avoid the inconvenience of the light rays that, cascading from above, would have been



reflected upwards, thereby compromising the aesthetic vision of the whole. Furthermore, it probably contributed to creating a kind of “display cabinet environment” in which the “magnetic” characteristics of each single piece were translated and put in relationship with the architectonic scale.

The provenance of the individual pieces of the Spitzer collection is generally vague or full of lacunae, even if this may not derive from the difficulty of historic witnesses. «[...] l'indication des provenances fait-elle défaut aujourd'hui pour certain nombres d'objets, et il nous faut attendre du hasard la reconstitution de leur état civil» (Müntz 1890, II). As a matter of fact, references to unknown *obscurs villages*

<sup>10</sup> Alexandre-Charles Sauvageot (Paris, 1781-1860) was a musician and art collector. The famous painting by Arthur Henry Roberts *Vue intérieure d'une des pièces de l'appartement de Monsieur Sauvageot, 56 fbg Poissonnière*, 1857 (Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MI 861) celebrated Sauvageot himself in his dining room surrounded by his collection of medieval and Renaissance art objects.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Petrovich Basilevsky (1829-1899) was a Russian diplomat and art collector in Paris in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Celebrated for Early Christian and Byzantine objects, his collection was reorganized in the *hôtel particulier* at 31 rue Blanche. Put up for sale in 1885, it was acquired *en bloc* by the Tsar Alexander III. Dating to about 1870, a watercolor executed by the Russian

adventurously discovered in England, Germany and Russia were constantly made. This incompleteness, which officially could be ascribed to the rapidity with which the collection was formed, seems more due to an undisputed acute opportunism (when not a deliberate mystification), rather than to a supposed defective memory or to the material impossibility of meticulously registering the provenance of individual acquisitions.

Such considerations appear even more pertinent in light of the by now documented network of artists and craftsmen working for Spitzer. Taking up the hypothesis formulated by Rudolf Distelberger (Distelberger 2000), Charles Truman (Truman 2012) has imagined a number of artists (namely Reinhold Vasters and Alfred André among others) at the center of truly an (in)famous network of ‘forgers’ working for Spitzer who, bolstered by the consensus derived from his expertise as guarantor of the authenticity of the objects sold, acted instead as author and coordinator of the fraudulent release on the antique market of heavily refurbished objects sold as authentic originals.

Spitzer probably reserved for himself the role of intermediary, perhaps even suggesting to the artists/artisans working with him particular interventions of re-composition and assembly of objects that often were available on the art market only in a fragmentary state. In their hands, the objects were assembled into an (imaginary) unity. In all likelihood, he also probably commissioned such pieces. In this context must be seen the research of Juanita Navarro and Suzanne Higgott highlighting how some glass pieces formerly in the Spitzer collection have to be considered hybrids, that is, the re-composition and assembly of glass

fragments into a whole (invariably ringed) in order to offer to clients an exhaustive reading of the single pieces and, consequently, to facilitate the admission of the pieces onto the antique market<sup>12</sup>.

The few pieces for which provenance can be established — coming from the collections of Albert von Parpart of Cologne<sup>13</sup>, the prince of Liechtenstein<sup>14</sup>, Debruge Duménil, Soltykoff and Saint Seine<sup>15</sup> — belonged, obviously, to those famous collections that could give luster to Spitzer’s collection, thereby implicitly attesting to the indisputable quality of his pieces and conferring on them a kind of “noble seal of approval.” This *modus operandi* was influenced by that *goût Rothschild* that Spitzer, an assiduous frequenter of the prestigious house and eager for continuous social affirmation, invariably had taken into account. In other words, the aura of the individual *objets d’art* was amplified by the prestigious provenance, and reverberated throughout his entire collection. The elegiac tones of the comparison made shine, almost by symbiosis, the (artistic, but also strictly venal and market) value of the pieces of the collection and, consequently, the collection as a whole.

Together with others, Spitzer’s glass collection was part and parcel of an age that can be identified truly as an apogee of a cognitive journey that researched glass under the guise of theoretical treatises<sup>16</sup>, in addition to *ex-novo* productions<sup>17</sup> and of its exhibition/promotion, even for the public-at-large in the setting of then-contemporary expositions. At the same time, it was intended to be an incentive for the then-contemporary production. The weave of research, rediscovery and, last but not least, new

painter Vasilij Vereschagin shows him in the background of his own collection, while intent on reading (Saint Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, inv. 45878). On his collection: Kryzanovskaya 1990. On the theme of the set up of collectors homes, Emery and Morowitz 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Navarro and Higgott have identified pieces of this type at the Victoria & Albert Museum of London (inv. 698-1893) and the Musée Curtius of Liège (inv. B/1057). Similar pieces belonged to the contemporary collections of Alessandro Castellani (1823-1883) and of Alfred Beurdeley (1808-1882). Navarro and Higgott, 2013-2014.

<sup>13</sup> Bonnaffé and Molinier, 1893, n. 1997.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, n. 1992.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, n. 1979.

<sup>16</sup> Among others, see Lenoir 1856; Salviati 1867.

production had to collaborate in the success of these artistic adventures.

In this context, the *exposition rétrospective* of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs taking place in Paris in 1884 assumes particular importance. For this exhibit, ample space was given to the *arts du feu* (*faïences*, ceramics, porcelain, Limoges enamels and *verreries* of all kinds). *Sans precedents* was the space dedicated to stained glass windows set up “dans son ensemble et d’une façon générale” in a room arranged according to the instructions of the architect, Lucien Magne (1849-1916)<sup>18</sup>, a consultant for Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) and later the *deus ex-machina* of the Musée du Vitrail that opened the following year<sup>19</sup>.

Already widespread in England in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the interest in such objects — to be interpreted in the climate of revivals prevalent in Europe that especially were focused on highlighting Gothic culture in its various local declinations<sup>20</sup> — enjoyed renewed favor on French soil after the secularization of ecclesiastical goods following the storms of the revolution. Consequently, an important market was forming in Europe, and important sales were held, for example, in Norwich and London in 1804 and in Cologne in 1824. To purely historical interests were joined ornamental evaluations, that is, the possibility that the windows offered for the creation of particularly evocative spaces, in a way not dissimilar from that intended by Alexandre Lenoir for the Musée des Monuments Français with the windows from Saint Denis (1795-1816). Analogous criteria most probably guided the forging of the collection of the *vitrier* Louis Huin (1756-1821) and the following analytical study and

reproduction of the French medieval stained glass windows undertaken by Ferdinand de Lasteyrie (1810-1879)<sup>21</sup>. As the collections of Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherr vom und zum Stein (Baron vom Stein) in Nassau and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in Weimar attest, even the German world, to which Spitzer always remained tied, manifested interest in collecting these kinds of objects and in their theatrical display.

With similar intent, Count Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau had acquired five 15<sup>th</sup> century stained glass windows coming from the Carmelite church of Boppard-am-Rhein in Rheinland-Pfalz<sup>22</sup> [FIG. 6]. After they were restored at the Königliches Institut für Glasmalerei Berlin-Charlottenburg at an unknown date after 1878<sup>23</sup>, Spitzer acquired these very objects to complete his Parisian *galerie d’armes et d’armures*, “formidable vaisseau long de 17 mètres sur 8 mètres de hauteur” (Bonnaffé 1881, 289).

Particular importance had to be given to this *galerie* and to the *Cabinet de Travail* since they were built between 1877 and 1880 as part of the refurbishment of the mansion in rue de Villejust in the years just after Spitzer had bought the building. Even if the documentation for these interventions presents today a number of lacunae, they probably were originally intended to help the mansion be a worthy framework for the collector’s stage: thus, the gallery of arms and the *Cabinet de Travail* probably were planned to accommodate the stained glass windows, harmoniously. On Renaissance tables the objects were «coquettement couchées sur un vieux velours génois» (De Beaumont 1882, XXV: 472) and protected by glass cases [FIG. 7]. The tables were positioned along the sides of the armory, especially

<sup>17</sup> Soon the practice of *ex-novo* production joined that of the restoration of figured stained glass of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as masterfully interpreted in the 1839 *Passion* window by Louis Steinheil and Rebouleau for the Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois church in Paris. This and other sites were to contribute in a fundamental way to the development of the production. On this subject, see Pillet 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Magne 1885; *Idem* 1886.

<sup>19</sup> On the success of stained glass in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Emery and Morowitz 2003. The authors have noted that, in addition to constituting a remarkable witness to the renewed interest for these kind of objects in such a context, these items were studied and exhibited as fragments (even where it would have been possible to do differently), as already had happened on the occasion of the Universal Exposition held in Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> Think of the re-use of 13<sup>th</sup> century windows from the cathedrals of Lincoln and Canterbury at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

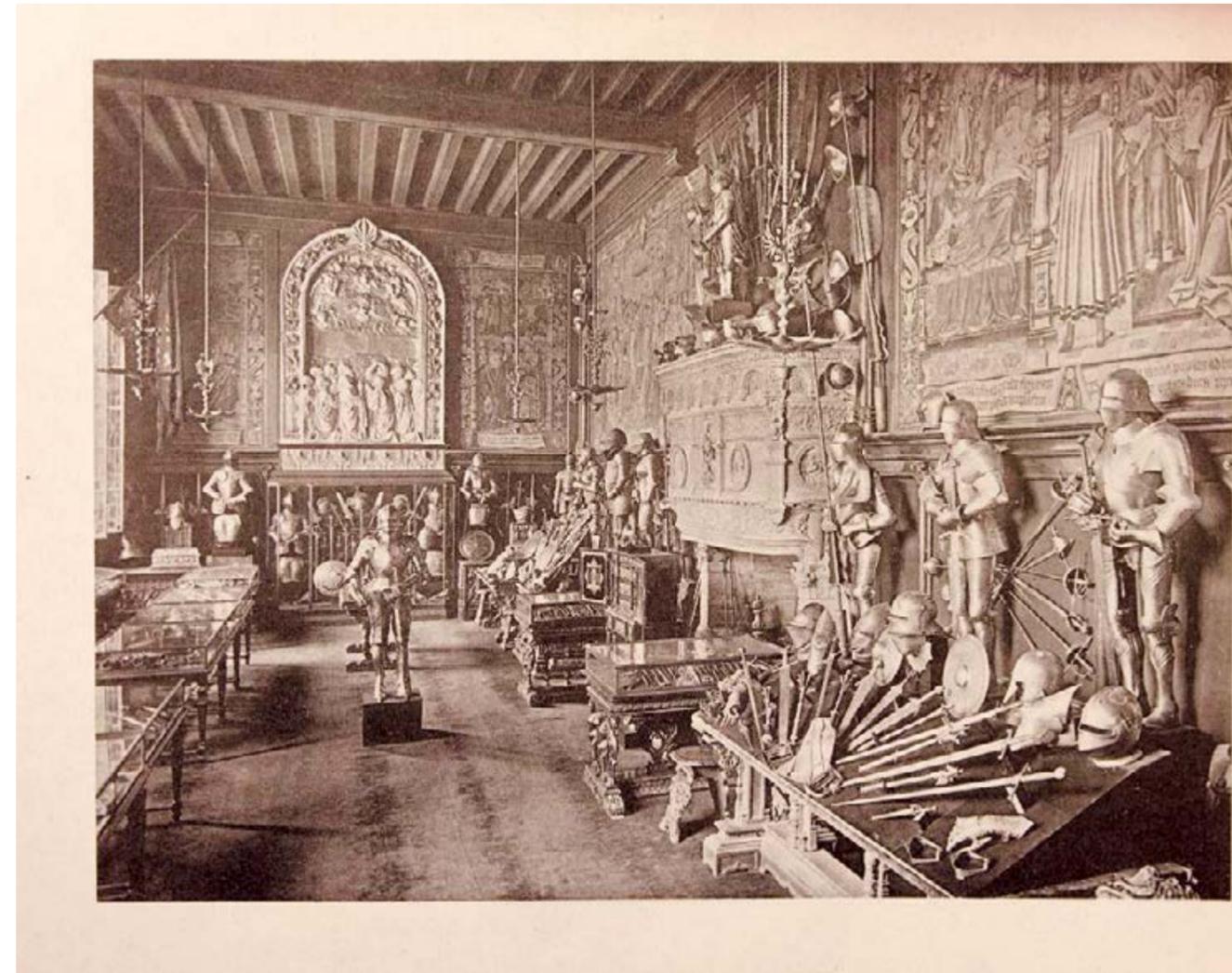
<sup>21</sup> De Lasteyrie du Saillant 1853-1857.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion about such a *Corpus vitrearum* and the location of its dispersed objects, Hayward 1969, 75-114. On the *Glasmalereisammlung* of Count von Pückler-Muskau, Bednarz and Fitz 2010, 383-396.

<sup>23</sup> These objects, known by Spitzer through photographs, had to have been acquired between 1878 and 1881. In Boppard-am-Rhein in 1878 (Prusser 1878, 12), “douze vitraux gigantesques” were described in the gallery of arms in 1881 (Bonnaffé 1881, 289). On their acquisition, possibly using the intermediation of the collector and art dealer Charles Mannheim, see Datz 2006, 128-129. Accessed October 1, 2014. <http://ubm.opus.hbz-nrw.de/volltexte/2013/3514/pdf/doc.pdf>.



VITRAIL  
TRAVAIL ALLEMAND. XV<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE



**FIG. 7** Paris, Musée Spitzer, Arms Gallery, 1890 (Bonnaffé 1890)

**FIG. 6** *Vitrail. Travail allemand XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.* Vitraux, plate II (*La Collection Spitzer: Antiquité, Moyen-Âge, Renaissance.* Paris: Maison Quantin. 1891, 3)



**FIG. 8** *Vitrail. Travail français XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.*  
Vitraux, plate III (*La Collection Spitzer: Antiquité, Moyen-Âge, Renaissance.*  
Paris: Maison Quantin. 1891, 3)

next to the windows, in order to receive the light filtered by such monumental palimpsests. The overall theatrical results probably were perfect for parties and high society *rassemblements*.

As opposed to this room in which the many colors of the light filtering through the stained glass windows prevailed and contrasted with the dull gray of the metals, in the *Cabinet de travail* the *grisaille* windows were set up<sup>24</sup> [FIG. 8]. This room was intended to be a kind of resplendent antechamber to the sacred space of the museum where friends and companions were generously welcomed carefully following a scrupulous ritual that they knew well, but which was obscure to the un-initiated. As a matter of fact, the *calmes et doux* grey tones of the *grisaille* were considered appropriate for harmonizing with «les meubles de la Renaissance, les orfèvreries, les bronzes, les faïences, les tapisseries» (Bonnaffé 1890) constituting a programmatic synthesis of the collections in such a room. The French Renaissance glass windows were desired in order to slash the semi-obscurity of the room with an ingenious contrast of light and dark in which the preciousness of the gilded oak ceiling interacted with the gleams off of the panoply of arms and the reflections off of the Hispano-Moorish ceramic plates hanging on the walls.

If the practice of adorning private homes was already known in Paris — as is demonstrated by the modern windows set up next to antique ones in the homes of the writers Émile Zola and Pierre

<sup>24</sup> This kind of room, always present in the hagiographic description of collectors' homes, was realized under the direction of Spitzer, himself, as part of the project of the building's renewal in 1877. Moreover, it was given a glassed-in space, set up like a green house, as the then-contemporary bourgeois life style dictated. On this last subject, see Long 2007.

Loti — quite theatrical was the way in which they were exhibited by Spitzer, perhaps influenced by the way in which the windows in the then-contemporary English *ateliers* were displayed in the Stained Glass Gallery at the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations of 1851<sup>25</sup>. Heretofore, not enough importance has been given to the fact that Spitzer, himself, was documented in London right during the entire crucial period of the spectacular epiphany of the Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* and to the relevance this legendary event might have had on his following career as a collector and on the *mise en scène* of his Parisian hôtel<sup>26</sup>.

Untiring voice of the “Spitzerian” epic together with Edmond Bonnaffé, Émile Molinier never lost a chance to celebrate the incomparable wisdom shown by Spitzer in such a display, but above all when seen in light of the difficulty of setting up such wares inside the exhibition spaces: museums and collectors’ houses<sup>27</sup>. The fact that these windows displayed religious subjects and that they had been stripped from a sacred (Christian) space, far from seeming dissonant — still more in the home of a Jewish collector — emphasized even more, perhaps also thanks to the contrast, the sacredness of the museum space, considered as a sort of shrine and as a mystic place of pilgrimage for aristocrats who were enthusiasts of the decorative arts. Their practical and decorative uses, values and functions were thereby masterfully synthesized, almost as if they transformed into concrete form the ideals promulgated by Viollet-le-Duc to support the principle of the unity of the arts and the elimination of the distinction between “pure” art and “decorative” art.

Similar ornamental values and opportunities for use, together with the legibility of the whole, probably encouraged the practice of integrating heterogeneous

pieces to form a new whole, as would seem demonstrated by recent scientific research on and traditional stylistic analysis of the Spitzer windows<sup>28</sup>. His *microstoria* is revealed as paradigmatic of a cultural stage marked by an interwoven international network of art dealers, collectors, connoisseurs, museum curators, art critics and craftsmen not infrequently acting within the antiques market with fraudulent intent (namely deliberately introducing negligible replicas or *mariages* validated as old, valuable masterpieces).

Such an approach was made possible by the extraordinary manual, imitative and mimetic abilities of the experienced craftsmen and those practicing the industrial arts to eliminate every stylistic dissonance in a whole that was to be harmoniously contextualized. This aspect interweaves closely with the question of the serial production of objects for which the past constituted an inevitable model and fundamental presupposition for the successive developments of *ex novo* glass production.

For all intents and purposes, the *Musée Spitzer* and its collections — promoted within a dramatic, overarching and unified project — can be considered a model of 19<sup>th</sup> century collecting focused on constructing a home exemplary for its unity of style and the stylistic consonance among the structure, the furnishings and the artistic collections. This kind of model, progressively abandoned in the subsequent lifestyle culture (at least among the most illuminated personalities in Europe), was eventually reflected in the following century in the creation of museum exhibits (or, *Epochemuseum*) and in the homes of the yankee millionaires on the other side of the Atlantic.

<sup>25</sup> «The principal stained glass gallery in 1851 [...] may have been a ‘discrete display’ [...] but it grabbed the attention of reviewers and artists alike, and set a precedent for future displays of the medium at later International Exhibitions, museums and art galleries across the world» (Allen 2012, 4).

<sup>26</sup> On this, see Cordera 2014, 55-71.

<sup>27</sup> «Les vitraux forment toujours dans les musées une série encombrante. On ne sait où les mettre; dans les salles contenant des objets d’art, ils suppriment la lumière et parsèment les oeuvres qui les avoisinent de paillettes lumineuses qui sont parfois d’un effet pittoresque, mais font la terreur des gens d’études [...] Leur placement est donc un véritable problème et c’est pour cela que beaucoup d’amateurs ont renoncé à les collectionner autrement que comme les accessoires d’un ameublement d’un style plus ou moins somptueux [...] M. Spitzer dans l’incomparable musée réuni rue de Villejust avait su tourner la difficulté: les fenêtres du hall qui lui servait de cabinet de travail avaient été pourvues de beaux vitraux du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle [...] La salle d’armes reçut une ornementation plus sévère [...] C’est donc une série très restreinte de vitraux que nous avons ici à étudier. Mais cette série, par l’importance des pièces qui y figurent, nous a paru néanmoins de nature à motiver une notice particulière destinée à assigner à ces monuments leur place dans l’histoire d’un art qui a jeté au moyen âge, en France et en Allemagne, un si grand éclat» (Molinier 1893, 113-114).

<sup>28</sup> Fragments of these stained glass window are preserved, today, in the Detroit Museum of Art, the Ochre Court and Seaview Terrace in Newport (Rhode Island), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne and at the Glasgow Museums. On this subject, see “Boppard Conservation Project”. Accessed April 27, 2014. <http://boppardconservationproject.wordpress.com/about/>.

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