



Unfinished Business? Informal Privacy and the Private at the Perpetual Construction Site of the First Christiansborg Palace (1740–1794)

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On 26 November 1740 the Danish royal family took up residence in the new Christiansborg Palace, located at the center of Copenhagen. As was the case for many other European court residences, construction, especially on the interiors, continued well after the inauguration of the palace. In this paper we look at examples of different notions of privacy and how the spatial organization of the first Christiansborg Palace contributed to the living experiences of the residents. While the surviving floor plans show a magnificent residence, the actual living situation must have differed considerably from the ideal evoked by these widespread drawings. The inventories depict a residence that is only partly used, with empty rooms and unfinished spatial sequences. The most ceremonial routes in particular, including the great hall or the king's staircase, were incomplete. The hierarchical structure established by the succession of rooms was hence nullified by shortcuts and the daily use of actual accesses and connections. Court instructions and reports of foreign visits give more insight into these accesses that were ad hoc or improvised.

Keywords: privacy; court architecture; Denmark; Christiansborg



Introduction

By the end of the 17th century, the main royal residence, Copenhagen Castle, proved to be insufficient. Already referred to as ‘antiquum magis quam splendidum’ in the 16th century (Mercier 1588: 339), it became an embarrassment for the Danish absolutist monarchy.¹ After several restoration and modernization attempts, Copenhagen Castle was finally demolished in 1731, after which the construction for a grand and marvelous residence began. Built on the site of the demolished Copenhagen Castle, Christiansborg Palace, the name referring to its commissioner, King Christian VI of Denmark (1699–1746, r. 1730–1746), was built entirely new (Jensen 1925). This tabula rasa approach means that the architecture and spatial organization of the first Christiansborg Palace (not the same as the one that exists on the site today) can be seen as a yardstick for the Danish courtly ceremonies and regulations at the beginning of the 18th century. When the royal family officially took up residence in 1740, large parts of the palace were unfinished and would remain incomplete until the fire of 1794, which destroyed the central part of the royal residence.

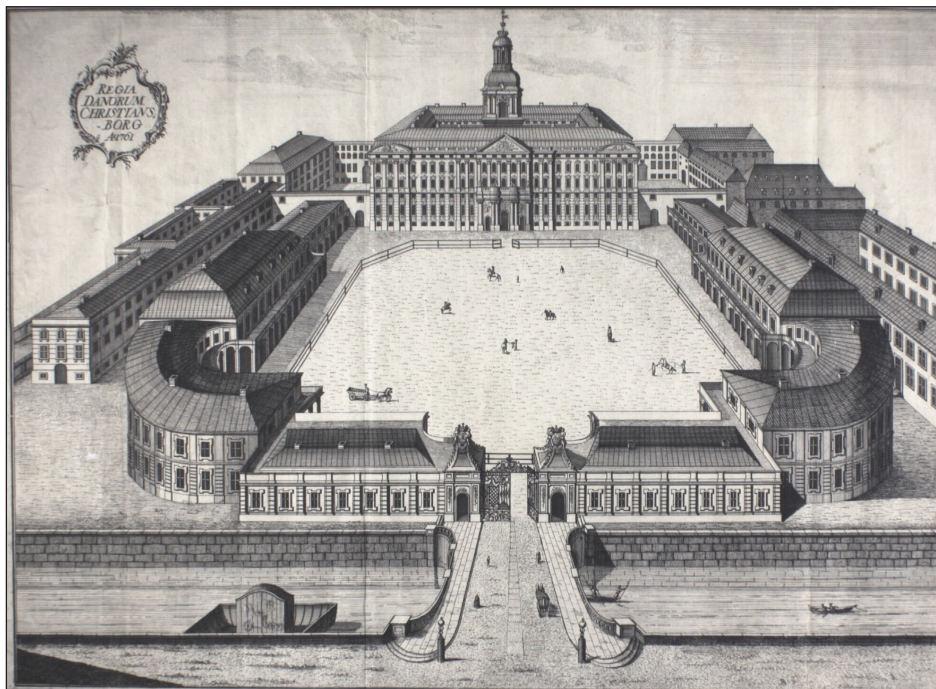


Figure 1: ‘Regia Danorum Christians-Borg A(nn)o 1761, ridebane set fra Marmorbroen’. View of the first Christiansborg Palace from the southwest, 1761. Billedsamling Kongelige Bibliotek.

In this paper, we will look at different notions of privacy and how the spatial organization of the first Christiansborg Palace contributed to the living experiences of the residents. In a courtly context, privacy rarely means being alone, as the monarch

is always accompanied by courtiers, servants, or staff (Orlin 2008: 324–325; Persson 1999: 45–46). The ability to control the physical environment and who accesses it is, however, of major importance for the experience of privacy of the monarch. Architectural markers, court instructions, and *Hofartikler* (court ordinances) play a vital role in this sense of control (Altman 1977: 66–84; Raeymaekers and Derks 2016). Since access was the prevailing standard of power and honor, visitors of high standing continued to have certain expectations about their reception (Raeymaekers and Derks 2016). The control of entrances thus became a negotiation, and violations of this privilege were not uncommon.

We will first examine this ideal residence's architectural design and spatial sequence based on the surviving floor plans and iconography. The works of the Danish art historians Christian Elling (1944) and Hakon Lund (1975a; 1975b) serve as a departing point for an in-depth analysis of accessibility, privacy, and seclusion as expressed in the different drawings of the first Christiansborg Palace. Formalized access can be traced in the building through the sequence of gates, courtyards, doors, and rooms (Jütte 2015). However, this formal organization of the courtly space was supplemented with an array of informal access points, which are more difficult to detect in the source material. Reports from foreign visits and instructions on 'how to behave at court' therefore provide insight into those accesses that were ad hoc or improvised.² The fact that Christiansborg Palace would remain an incomplete construction site led to additional particularities in the day-to-day access and use of the building. Nevertheless, the half-finished palace was home not only to the royal family but also to many high-ranking officials and ministers (Olden-Jørgensen 2002: 65–76). Including extensive staff and servants, more than 800 people lived within the walls of the royal residence, which was characterized by its vast volume and multitude of rooms.

Background

In 1730, when Christian VI succeeded his father, King Frederik IV (1671–1730, r. 1699–1730), Copenhagen, the capital of the dual monarchy of Denmark–Norway, was in very poor condition. Two years earlier, a fire had destroyed almost half of the medieval areas of the city, leaving one-fifth of the population homeless. Although the new part of Copenhagen, north of the medieval city, and the satellite town of Christianshavn, with their orthogonal street patterns, followed the ideals of the Renaissance and the Baroque, only a few houses in Copenhagen could live up to modern architectural standards. Most of the dwellings were half-timber structures, with some notable exceptions whose façades facing the street were all brick (Langberg 1955: 264–265). Few public buildings, mainly those commissioned by Frederik IV, featured a type of unostentatious Baroque, but in the urban context of the time such structures must have appeared relatively outlandish.³

The dual monarchy of Denmark–Norway was a vast territory on the outskirts of the early modern European mainland. The control of access to the Baltic Sea and the Baltic states alternated between Denmark and Sweden. This control was the main cause of the ongoing rivalry between the two countries, which resulted in several wars, beginning in 1643 and ending with the Great Northern War in 1720. This enduring conflict exhausted the public finances and forced Christian VI's predecessors to focus on the fortifications of Copenhagen as well as on consolidating their absolutist regime rather than making grand architectural gestures. Therefore, at the beginning of the 18th century, the state of Copenhagen's royal residence was mediocre at best. Nevertheless, plans for a new royal residence had begun in 1660, with the introduction of absolutism in Denmark (Hvidt et al. 1975: 167–178).⁴ None of these projects, not even that of the renowned Swedish court architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1654–1728), were executed.

Frederik IV instigated several building campaigns for the royal residence between 1710 and 1729, which gave the existing structure a new regular exterior with aligned windows and eaves. The irregular shape of the medieval castle encircling an inner courtyard was maintained, as was the big and original entrance tower called the Blue Tower. Compared to Nicodemus Tessin the Younger's new layout for a magnificent royal Baroque residence, which was to replace Stockholm Castle (burned down in 1697), this attempt by King Frederik IV, along with his master builders, Johan Conrad Ernst (1666–1750) and Johan Cornelius Krieger (1683–1755), to make a Baroque castle out of a medieval structure in Copenhagen looked dilettante and unresolved.

His successor, Christian VI, must have been aware of this. Upon his accession to the throne, he did not hesitate to demolish the newly renovated Copenhagen Castle, officially due to its insufficient foundation (de Thurah 1746: 29). For some of the inhabitants of Copenhagen, this demolition was probably perceived as provocative, as they were still rebuilding their homes after the big fire in 1728. In addition, Denmark–Norway was experiencing a severe crisis caused by low prices on agricultural products, the main export in the dual monarchy. However, the king must have seen the construction of his residence as part of a necessary symbolic consolidation of Denmark–Norway as an important Northern European state. He thus defended his architectural endeavors, which included the construction of other castles outside Copenhagen, by stressing that Christiansborg Palace did not cost his subjects anything.⁵

Designing a Royal Residence

In 1731 the old castle was demolished, and in 1740 the new Christiansborg Palace was officially inaugurated, although the execution of many interior spaces was to continue for decades. Unfortunately, the main part of the first Christiansborg Palace burned

down in 1794, forcing scholars to rely solely on drawings and written sources to reconstruct the palace of Christian VI.⁶ When the decision to build this residence was made, the dual monarchy did not have an architect who was qualified and experienced enough to design a modern royal residence. Christian VI initially commissioned his former teacher in architecture, Elias David Häusser (1687–1745), who had been trained as a military architect in Saxony–Poland and in 1723 became the head of military construction for Denmark. However, an early project proposal designed by Häusser in 1731 demonstrated his lack of design skills and the urgent need for foreign assistance. Inquiries about potential candidates at the courts of Sweden and various German states were unsuccessful, but suddenly, in 1732, a new set of approved drawings, the so-called Projekt II, appeared (Figs. 2, 3). Although these drawings are signed by Häusser, the details of the façades and the site plan indicate the work of an artistically experienced Central European architect, maybe from Austria or Franconia (Lund 1975b: 181–215). This unknown figure must have assisted the king in the radical improvement of the design. Häusser was later outmaneuvered by the younger and more talented Danish architects Lauritz de Thurah (1706–1759) and Nicolai Eigtved (1701–1754). The French sculptor Louis August le Clerc (1688–1771) was responsible for the sculpture and stonework of the palace from 1737 onward (Alstrup 1998: 108–121, Alstrup 2019: 44–78).

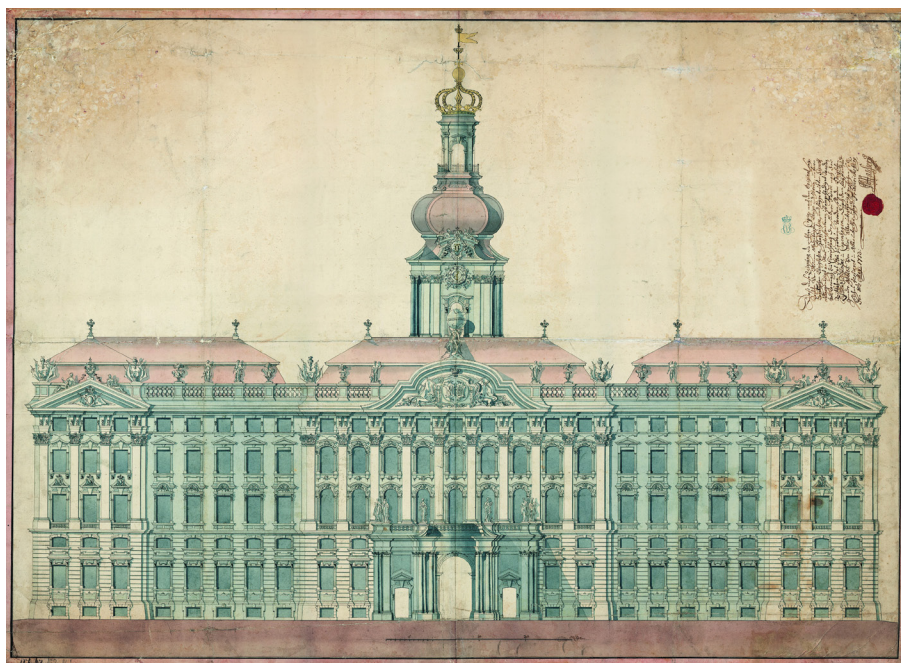


Figure 2: Projekt II, drawing for the façade toward the riding court. The decorative work surrounding the windows accentuates the nine central windows and the three outer bays on either side. HM The Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Danish Collection.

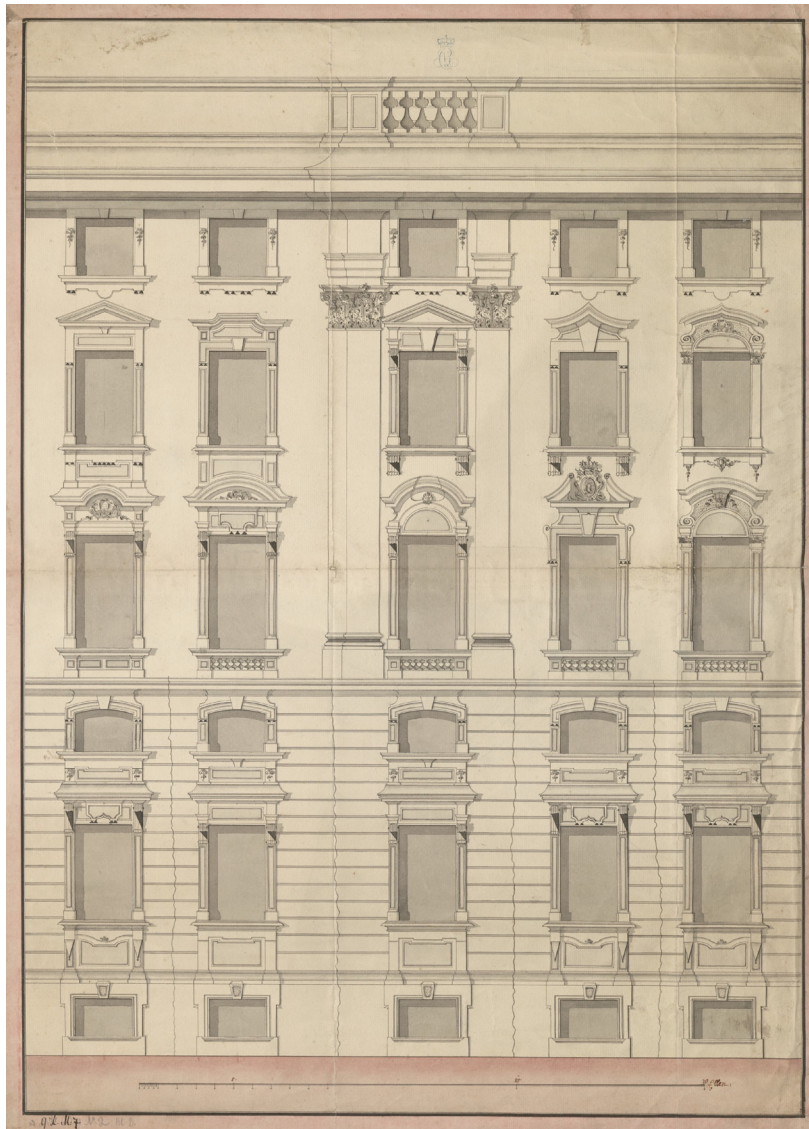


Figure 3: Composite drawing showing the different window types for the various façades and a part of the balustrade, dated 17 September 1733. HM The Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Danish Collection.

The approved project was finally executed, although some details were slightly modified during the construction, and the chapel was moved from the main building to an external pavilion. Located at approximately the same place as the demolished Copenhagen Castle, the palace comprised a main residence consisting of four five-story wings surrounding an inner courtyard. The new main block repeated various elements of the old castle: the inner courtyard, the entrance tower, and the layout of the floors, consisting of a high basement, a ground floor, a low mezzanine, a high first floor with

the king's and queen's apartments, a high second floor dedicated to the crown prince couple's apartments, and finally a low mezzanine under the eaves.

At the same time, Christiansborg Palace offered some new solutions that made the palace fit more logically into the surrounding urban context. It was placed parallel to the existing arsenal (*Tøjhuset*) and its adjacent structures, while a large riding court was placed symmetrically in front of the palace, a bridge linking it to the neighborhood south of the islet of Slotsholmen (**Fig. 4**).⁷

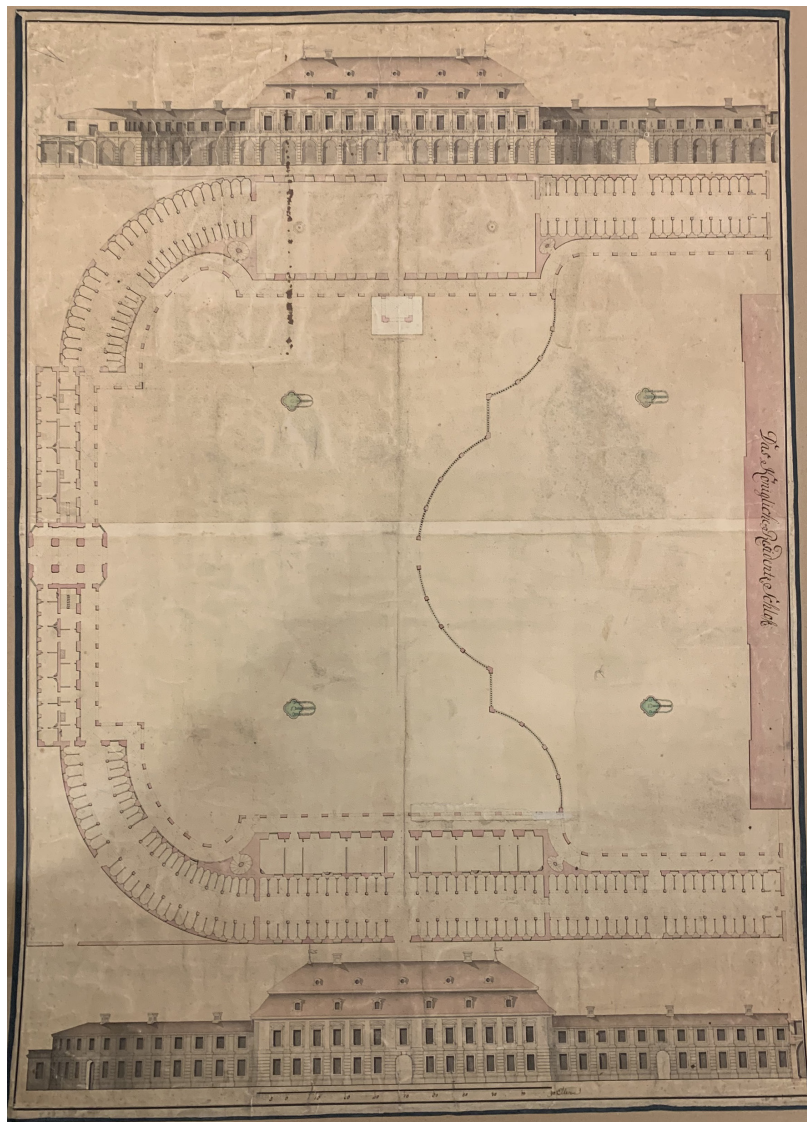


Figure 4: Design for the riding court in front of the first Christiansborg Palace. Signed by Häusser in 1738. Rigsarkivet, Rentekammeret Danske Afdeling, Bygningsadministrationen: Ældre bygningstegninger 1738.

The layout of Christiansborg Palace, comprising a perimeter block containing the main residence and a riding court in front of it, was inspired both by a previous and unbuilt project from the 1680s by the Danish master builder Lambert van Haven and by Tessin the Younger's already mentioned design for a royal residence, not executed, at Amalienborg Garden, north of the medieval city. A high, rusticated base, vertical bays defined by different window frames, and a central arrangement with pilasters are all elements of the Amalienborg design that return in the drawings for Christiansborg Palace (Snickare 2002: 108–110). The central part of Tessin's Stockholm Castle also consisted of four wings and had the same organization of floors. The ongoing rivalry between Sweden and Denmark probably led to competition in the respective kings' architectural endeavors. In addition, the Danish royal couple probably kept a keen eye on German court culture and architecture, especially in Bavaria and Saxony and the recently finished renovation and enlargement of the Berliner Schloss, through Christian VI's marriage to the German princess Sophie Magdalene.

Despite the pragmatic solutions and the references to an earlier medieval castle, Christiansborg Palace appeared impressive from the outside (see **Figure 1**). This perception was further enhanced through the subtle balance between the individual elements of the exterior, enabling both variation and coherence. The importance of each story was emphasized by the decorative work around the windows. The nine openings in the central portion of the main building were accentuated by a frontispiece, pilasters, and sculptural gateways, which gave this part more weight over the side *risalti* (avant-corps) of the façade, in which only the three outer windows were emphasized the same way (see **Figures 2 and 3**). The same type of balanced hierarchy was used in the buildings surrounding the riding court, as they both accentuated the center and gradually prepared the ceremonial access to the main palace. This crescendo of the entire composition culminated with the tower that was considered an indispensable symbol for a Danish royal residence, despite its awkward protrusion from the façade.⁸

The Architectural Rhetoric and the Intricate Organization of Various Zones

If an educated spectator of the time looked at the palace's exterior, they would have easily deciphered the individual role of the various parts in relation to their use and importance. The architecture of the first Christiansborg Palace can be described as an intricate system, where all the elements of the composition work together and gradually lead to ever more splendor culminating in the *corps de logis* at the king's floor. The art historian Caroline van Eck links this way of thinking to the ideals of classical rhetoric, which characterize the early modern arts and motivated the prominence of 'disposition':

Architects, like painters and orators, must compose their works. There is no persuasion without disposition. They must order all parts of a building, give some prominence by making them stand out, and make others subordinate by hiding them in the shade, or make important parts of a building catch the eye through their prominent decoration, whereas the background is handled more discreetly through a uniform and inconspicuous handling of materials. (van Eck 2007: 127)

The buildings around the riding court revealed, through their modest size, plastered façades, simpler decorations without pilasters, and use of roof tiles, their secondary role compared to the main *corps de logis* that was instead clad with sandstone and had pilasters and a copper roof. Only the central axis of the riding court was emphasized, with Nicolai Eigtved's small sculptural entrance pavilions clad with sandstone and the 'marble' bridge in front of them. In addition, the riding court was subdivided by a low balustrade that defined an inner courtyard, a so-called *cour d'honneur*, in front of the *corps de logis*. A visitor entering the palace from the riding court thus had to pass through a sequence of thresholds: the marble bridge, the iron entry gate between Eigtved's pavilions, the first part of the riding court, the *cour d'honneur* after the balustrade, and then, finally, the entrance in front of the *corps de logis*, which was framed by a triumphal arch-like portal with coupled columns and an undulating entablature.

At the same time, the façade of the *corps de logis* clearly distinguished between a high architectural base, consisting of the basement, the ground floor, and the mezzanine on the one hand, and the two finest floors, the king's floor and the crown prince couple's floor, on the other hand. The 'base' had not pilasters but a horizontal banded rustication and simpler frames around the windows, indicating the secondary function of these floors, primarily used to accommodate courtiers, guards, and staff. In contrast, the two main floors had a smoother cladding, with pilasters adorning the central portion and both sides of the main building, and more elaborate frames around the windows including elaborate pediments. At the level of the king's floor, both the windows of the central part and the two external sides of the building had balustrades, thus enabling people to open the windows and be visible to the public. Although containing the 'private' apartments of the king and the queen, this floor was evidently the most 'public', providing the possibility to also be seen standing in front of the window.

Other elements indicated movement and rupture. The entrance portals of the *corps de logis*, for instance, had undulating entablatures, and in three cases they presented a broken pediment, as if forces from the inside had pushed their way out. The frames around the windows in the *corps de logis* were also vertically interconnected, thus generating a complex interplay of connectedness and separation. The buildings around

the riding court were joined together through arcades with a partly curved ground plan, a solution that provided the entire complex with a dynamic character. A person walking along the side wings of the still-preserved riding court may experience the ascent toward the *corps de logis* from various angles, yet at the same time as an unbroken movement.

The Ideal Floor Plan

Several sets of floor plans for the five different floors exist. A complete set is included in *Den Danske Vitruvius* (The Danish Vitruvius), the book on Danish monumental architecture commissioned by Christian VI and executed by Lauritz de Thurah (1746). Some of these floor plans have a letter indication for each room, which corresponds to the different inventories drawn up for the palace (Fig. 5).⁹

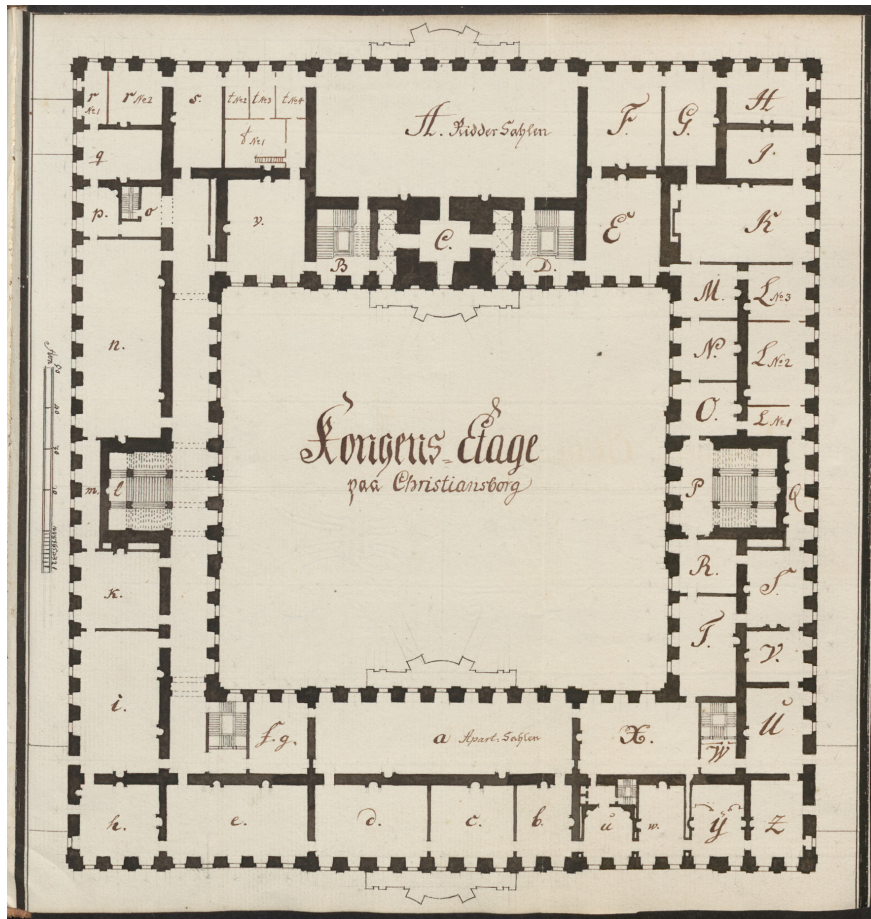


Figure 5: Floor plan of the King's floor (Kongens Etage) (containing the apartments for both the King and the Queen) at the first Christiansborg Palace, made by CT Norup in 1767, HM The Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Danish Collection. The room names are based on the 1741 inventory (RA, OM, F: Inventarieregnskaber) and Hvidt, Ellehøj, and Norn (1975).

Key to floor plan in Figure 5

A: Ridder sahlen — (great hall)

B, C, D: Ridder sahletrapper og durchgang (tower staircases and tower)

Queen's apartment

E: Dronningens yderste parade for eller laquaj gemak (queen's first stateroom)

F: Dronningens andet parade forgemak (queen's second stateroom)

G: Dronningens inderste parade forgem(ak) (queen's state antechamber)

H: Dronningens parade audientz gemak (queen's state audience chamber)

I: Dronningens parade sovegema (queen's state bedchamber)

K: Gyldne spisesal (golden dining room)

L: Dronningens store galleri (queen's long gallery)

M: Forgema (antechamber)

N: Prinsessens af Würtenbergs sove gemak (bedchamber)

O: Prinsessens af Würtenbergs forgema (antechamber)

P: Dronningens trappe (queen's staircase)

Q: Dronningens lille galleri (queen's small gallery)

R: Lakajgema (valets' chamber)

S: Inderste forgema (first antechamber)

T: Yderste forgema (second antechamber)

U: Dronningens garderobbe (queen's closet)

V: Audiensgema (audience chamber)

W: Trappe (staircase)

X: Eremitagegema (private dining room)

Y: Sovegema (bedchamber)

Z: Gule gemak (yellow chamber, or closet)

King's apartment

a: Apart[ements] sahlen (king's gallery)

b: Conseil gemak (council chamber)

c: Kongens audientz gemak (audience chamber)

d: Inderste forgema (first antechamber)

e: Yderste forgema (second antechamber)

f, g: [no description]

h: Lakajgema (valets' chamber)

i: Drabantsal (guards' hall)

k: Gardersal (guards' room)

- l: Kongens trappe (king's staircase)
- m: Galleri (king's gallery)
- n: Højesteretssalen (supreme court)
- o, p, q: [no description]
- r: Kongens parade audiensgemak (king's state audience chamber)
- s: Kongens inderste parade forgemak (king's state first antechamber)
- t: Kongens andet parade forgemak (king's state second antechamber)
- u: Sovegemak (bedchamber)
- v: Kongens yderste parade for eller laquaj gemack (king's stateroom)
- w: Kabinet (closet)

While the architect of the final design is unknown, it seems reasonable to assume that Christian VI had a big influence on the final layout of the castle. He was trained in architecture under Häusser and his library contained several architectural handbooks, among them Paulus Decker's *Fürstlicher Baumeister oder architectura civilis* (1711–1716) and Leonhard Christoph Sturm's edition of Nikolaus Goldmann *Complete Instruction in Civil Art* (1696).¹⁰ The influential treatise on palace architecture by Sturm, a German architect, contains similar plans for princely residences (1718). The inspiration from Sturm becomes particularly evident if one compares Christiansborg Palace with Sturm's floor plans for ideal princely castles in French (Plate XIV) and Italian (Plate XV) fashion, respectively.¹¹ At Christiansborg, the typical Italian disposition of a corridor around the inner courtyard was combined with the French ideal of a double enfilade of rooms through all wings. Indeed, the southeastern wing, which housed the king's staircase, had a long gallery along the inner courtyard. A load-bearing wall divided the width of the other three wings in two, creating a double enfilade of rooms. The organization of apartments on the *Kongens Etage* followed the basic ideals for princely private apartments in contemporary treatises. The king and queen had their own separate apartments, each a sequence of rooms that began at the public audience chamber and ended with the bedroom and closet. The sequence of the king's quarters, as represented by the ideal floor plans, was organized according to the 'German system', though in an extended version (Murray 1967: 170–199). The guard chamber was split into two rooms: a smaller guards' room (*Gardersal*) and a larger guards' hall (*Drabantsal*), followed by the valets' chamber (*Lakajgemak*). Two rooms (*Inderste og Yderste Forgemak*) preceded the audience chamber. This German influence can be attributed to the close ties between the two territories, as the Danish royal family often brought home spouses from the German lands. This was also the case for Christian VI when he married Sophie Magdalene of Brandenburg-Kulmbach, who had spent her youth at court in Saxony.

Adjusted to an increasingly affluent court culture of the 1730s within the European elites, the king's apartment had five rooms before the audience chamber, followed by a council chamber (*Konseilgemak*), the bedchamber (*Sovegemak*), and finally a cabinet (Elling 1944: 20–21). These spaces, however, should not at all be considered private. Directly adjacent to the king's bedchamber was the council chamber, which served as the meeting room of the secret council, the sequence of the rooms thus reflecting the closeness of the council to the king (Lyngby, Mentz, and Olden-Jørgensen 2010: 107). The matters of state came therefore very close to what can arguably be considered the most private places of the royal apartment, such as the bedrooms.

The royal apartments at Christiansborg Palace did have some peculiarities. While both the king and queen had their own grand staircase at opposite sides of the inner courtyard, their apartments were not organized symmetrically. The queen's apartment, located in the northwestern wing, facing the church, took up only half a wing and almost crept around the corner to adjoin with the most private rooms of the king's apartment, which took up the entire northeastern wing and part of the southeastern wing. This disposition enabled the king's audience chamber to be placed almost in the middle of the palace, facing the *Slotsplads*, while the royal bedchambers were almost next to each other. In this way, the sequential movement through the rooms preceding the audience chamber was doubled, as the king's gallery (*Appartementssalen*) lay parallel to this sequence and could be used as a very large anteroom to the private dining room (*Eremitagegemak*) for state dinners.¹² The sheer size of the palace led to an excess of rooms, and there were more public staterooms located in the complete opposite southern corner of the complex, adjacent to the great hall (*Riddersalen*) and the two staircases flanking the tower.

In the king's apartment, the many rooms had the same layout, with a chest-high dado separated from the rest of the wall and subdivided by frames (Alstrup 1998: 108–121). Closer to the audience chamber, this decoration became more sophisticated, with richer moldings, extra gilding, and additional ornamentation in the stucco ceilings and on the panels. The paintings were another indicator of the 'rank' of each room. In the audience chamber, one could find an overdoor by the French artist Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700–1777) called *La gloire du prince accompagné de l'immortalité, la paix et l'abondance, la force et la prudence, l'amitié et la fidélité*, while the four *supraportes* in the more intimate cabinet were the less laudatory *Les quatre poèmes* by François Boucher (1703–1770). The interiors in the king's floor were designed by Nicolai Eigtved (king's apartment) and Lauritz de Thurah (queen's apartment), who both worked closely with the French sculptor Louis August le Clerc.

Living at a Construction Site

On 26 November 1740, the royal family moved into the palace, after a large and pompous moving-in ceremony (de Thurah 1746: 34). The procession, which went from Frederiksberg (then outside the city center of Copenhagen) to the new Christiansborg Palace on Slotsholmen, located four kilometers east, had to be diverted since the main entrance to the palace, leading over the still-extant marble bridge and the riding court to the large gate, was not yet finished. Instead, the procession moved from Vesterport to Kongens Nytorv, then turned back around and arrived over Holmens Bro to Christiansborg Slotspladsen (the Castle Square) with a much less ceremonious entry. In fact, large parts of the first Christiansborg Palace were not yet finished by the time the royal family moved in. Facing the riding court, the two-story-high great hall and the adjacent staterooms were not completed until 1766. Consequently, that entire suite was not used from the beginning, and larger gatherings took place in the king's and queen's apartments, next to the public Slotspladsen in the northern part of the palace. According to a 1741 inventory of the palace, many rooms remained empty upon the arrival of the royal couple, some of them until the palace burned down in 1794.¹³

Nevertheless, Christian VI, his wife Sophie Magdalene (1700–1770), and their two children, Prince Frederik (1723–1766) and Princess Louise (1726–1756), found their places in their respective apartments. The personal taste and character of the reigning monarchs played a major role in the accessibility and use of the residence (Starkey 1987: 8). The reign of Christian VI was the first during which Denmark was not entangled in military conflicts and, despite the economic crisis, this led to a building mania on behalf of the king, who built several royal residences and pavilions in and surrounding Copenhagen. Christian VI was also known to be a pious king, and he banned theater, opera, and other kinds of entertainment (Lyngby, Mentz, and Olden-Jørgensen 2010: 143). He and his wife tried to avoid too much publicity.¹⁴ For that reason, the second largest room in the palace, the king's gallery (*Appartementssalen*), located next to the king's apartment and facing the inner courtyard, was barely used during their reign and had only preliminary decoration. Accordingly, the palace originally had no theater, and the king's representative, who was commissioned to purchase appropriate paintings for the interiors from Paris, had a hard time following a pious instruction and avoiding too much nudity (Lund 1975b: 290).

The same line was followed in the 20 regulations included in the so-called *Hofartikler*, drawn up in 1740 to regulate daily life at the palace.¹⁵ The necessity of imposing these rules points toward a violation of what we would now consider a basic code of conduct. For instance, it was a minor offense (Article 10) to throw dirt out of

windows. If discovered, the perpetrator had to remove it in broad daylight. If the kitchen chefs came across a drunk servant (Article 19), the servant would be dismissed on the third offense, indicating a problem that was not uncommon. The first such offense would result in a fine, while the second would entail imprisonment in Blaataarn, a jail for courtiers, civil servants, and non-Copenhageners at Frederiksholms Kanal, located close to the palace. Dismissal was obviously a more severe punishment than short-term arrest, and it could happen to a servant who in general conducted an 'untidy or disorderly life' (Article 15), but only after several reprimands, though a direct revelation of fornication at the pietist court led to immediate expulsion. According to the *Hofartikler*, it must also have been common for courtiers to cheat by replacing nameplates on their doors to get better accommodation (Article 13), to get into fights (Articles 3, 4, and 5), and to have difficulty maintaining sufficient food hygiene (Articles 18 and 20). The carefully designed architectural 'rhetoric' that constituted the palace's design did not necessarily mirror the actual life within its walls, and the architecture alone did not always persuade courtiers to lead a healthy and regulated existence. The *Hofartikler* can be seen as a necessary part of an ongoing civilizing process, to use a term by the German sociologist Norbert Elias, imposing an internalized 'self-restraint' on people through regulation of manners involving sexual behavior, violence, and bodily functions (Elias 1939).

Things changed when in 1746 the pietist King Christian VI was succeeded by his son, King Frederik V, who together with his English wife, the popular Queen Louise, introduced a more hedonistic lifestyle, which resulted in the revitalization of public amusements, such as theater, opera, dance, gambling, and gatherings at court. The new royal couple continued to use Christiansborg as their principal residence, but from around 1750, Frederik V's increasing alcoholism paved the way for scenes in the residence that would have been unthinkable during the reign of his father (Bobé 1909: 25–66).

Charlotte Dorothea Biehl, the most renowned female Danish writer of the 18th century, author of 13 theater plays and operas, knew many of the courtiers of the time. Her correspondence with the courtier and landowner Johan Bülow provides some insights about Frederik V. In a letter dated 1 March 1784, she describes how Frederik V's chamberlain, Henrik Adam Brockenhuus, used his own private chambers at Christiansborg Palace for promiscuous and even violent gatherings to impress the king, who took great pleasure in flogging the invited prostitutes.¹⁶

Although these events were secret and took place in Brockenhuus's apartment at Christiansborg Palace, the rumors quickly spread. Public discontent increased

when the king took one of the attending ladies, Mrs. Dyssel, as his regular mistress and accommodated her in a comfortable house close to the palace. The powerful first minister, Count Adam Gottlob Moltke, who had unsuccessfully tried to prevent the assemblies in Brockenhuus's apartment by, among other things, taking control of the wine supply in the palace's cellar, persuaded the king during a private face-to-face meeting to expel the mistress and send her to Hamburg (Bobé 1909: 43–44). As Biehl describes in a letter dated 5 March 1784, the expulsion happened the very day after Brockenhuus had given Mrs. Dyssel keys to the gate of the northwest wing between the palace and the church, where a staircase gave access to the king's bedchamber on the *bel étage* of the main building. Mrs. Dyssel never had the opportunity to use this privileged access.

Staircases and Connections

According to de Thurah (1746: 39), the palace had four large staircases worth mentioning. Two beautiful stone examples with artistically crafted iron balustrades flanked the tower in the entrance wing. Two larger staircases leading to the king's and queen's apartments were included in the wings on either side of the inner courtyard. When *Den Danske Vitruvius* was published in 1746, the queen's staircase was well underway. Construction of the staircase across the courtyard, known as the ambassador's staircase, leading to the king's apartment had not yet started. De Thurah mentions that the entire structure (steps, balustrades, wall decorations) was supposed to be done in Norwegian marble, in contrast to the other staircases that had only marble wall ornamentation, suggesting that it was at least in an advanced stage of planning. The ambassador's staircase would not even be finished before the palace burned down in 1794. For official court ceremonies the two staircases next to the tower and the unfinished great hall were used most often.

Daily access to the palace, directly to the king's and queen's apartments, however, was via two secondary wooden staircases located at the corners by the inner courtyard in the northeastern and northwestern wings, respectively (Lund 1975b: 262–265). Prince Frederik lived in the suite facing the Slotspladsen on the third floor, precisely above his father's apartment, while his sister, Princess Louise, lived in the rooms facing the church, above the queen's apartment. The king's sister, Princess Charlotte Amalie (1706–1782), lived in the apartment in the northwest corner. The floors above the crown prince's floor and below the king's floor were reserved for the staff. The queen's chambermaids lived below her suite and had direct access by way of a staircase leading from her inner audience chamber and adjoining bedroom. No fewer than three small staircases led to the king's apartment, the smallest behind his bedchamber.

On the top mezzanine, the rooms for the two chamberlains to the crown prince were similarly connected through small staircases to Prince Frederik's apartment. The kitchen quarters were in the basement. The spatial relation between the staff and the royal family was thus rather direct, through a vertical organization of rooms around the axes of the staircases. This allowed staff to enter directly into the innermost rooms of the king or queen, from their own servant quarters, without having to pass through the more ceremonial horizontal axis of access, as expressed in the floor plan of the king's floor.

Hospitality at a construction site

In the context of hospitality, a household is often perceived as a place of generosity, but at court the distinction between the household (a group of people who live together, often a family) and the court (the political, administrative, and cultural institutions that support the king's authority) becomes blurred.¹⁷ In the same way, the private life and home of the king and his public representation and functions are intertwined (Gaylard 2013; Murray 2020). Hospitality is necessary to demonstrate the conspicuous spending and magnificence expected of a royal household. This reception of guests and ambassadors often took place in the living quarters of the monarchs, making privacy a temporal experience — if we define privacy as something opposed to a professional or public realm. Foreign visitors were given a certain amount of access to the enfilade of rooms that constituted the royal apartment, the access to privacy gradually increasing through the suite, to culminate in the most private rooms of the royal bedchambers and closets. At the same time, visitors of high standing had certain expectations when it came to their reception at court, meaning that the different thresholds were often flexible and subject to negotiation, depending on their rank.

The rules of hospitality at the magnificent Christiansborg Palace were subject to the taste of the reigning monarch. The *Hofartikler* of 1740 state that no member of the staff could invite guests into the palace, while Article 14 stresses the importance of keys and punishes the use of fake or copied keys with immediate imprisonment (RA, OM, O, b). This implies that access to the residence under Christian VI was relatively limited; gates and doors were locked. During the reign of Frederik V and Christian VII, however, things seem to have changed. While a daily journal recorded the audiences taking place at court (so-called *dagjournaler*), additional, more detailed, descriptions were written about the reception of envoys and visiting princes (RA, OM, O, a and c). Despite the still massive and imposing presence of the palace, there were now varying degrees of ceremony in place, depending on the nature of the audience and the status of the visitor.

While Christian VI had no need for a great hall, the engagement of his grandson Christian VII to the English princess Caroline Mathilde necessitated a suitable hall for the wedding festivities — a space appropriate for an English princess.¹⁸ For this purpose, the French architect Nicolas Henri Jardin was asked to design the interior of the great hall (*Riddersalen*). The drawings were signed in the summer of 1765 and the wedding took place at Christiansborg Palace on 8 November 1766 (**Fig. 6**).

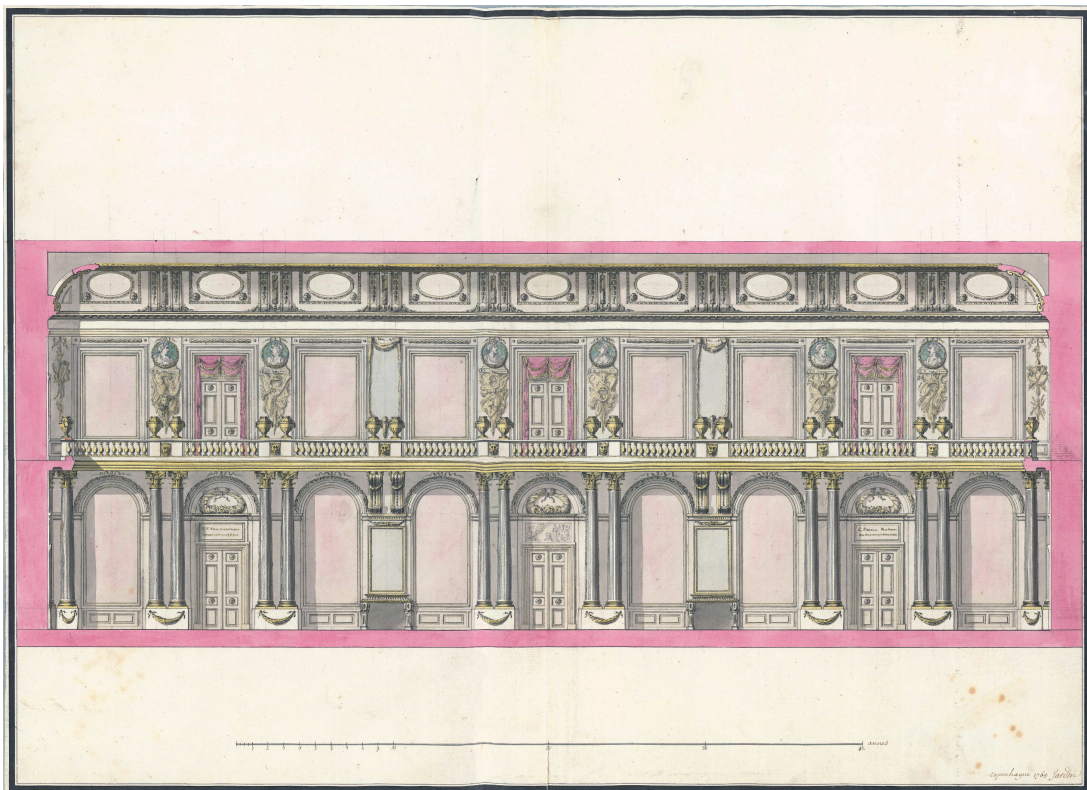


Figure 6: Draft for the decoration of the great hall of the first Christiansborg Palace by Nicolas Henri Jardin, 1766. The drawings are part of Queen Juliane Marie's Atlas, Vol. 28. HM The Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Danish Collection.

Together with the hurried decoration of the great hall, two adjacent rooms were upgraded. One of them was the 'chamber of kings', a space decorated with life-sized paintings of all the present reigning monarchs in Europe, on which the English traveler Nathaniel Wraxall reports in his letters to Robert Craggs-Nugent, Viscount Clare (Wraxall 1776: 63–64). In 1774 Wraxall undertook a tour of the Danish royal palaces during his stay in Copenhagen. He visited Rosenborg ('small and at present very little used by the royal family') and Frederiksborg, and upon his arrival, he passed through Kronborg Castle at Elsinore. He did not fail to mention that he 'has not been awarded

the honor of being presented to the king, as is customary for strangers from the other kingdoms of Europe' (Wraxall 1776: 38), even though he had no explicit business at court and was traveling in the northern part of Europe, from Copenhagen to Petersburg, for leisure. It was not uncommon for royal palaces to be accessible to a broader public, and on some occasions, palace tours were organized (Völkel 2007). Wraxall mentions that he mingled unnoticed in the crowd in the drawing room, even when the king and the dowager queen were present. He had seen few of the apartments of state, mentioning that 'the far greater part of the internal structure [of the first Christiansborg Palace] being never shewn, while the royal family resides in town'.

In March 1766, when the French ambassador was received after the death of Frederik V, the ceremony was carefully planned and approved by his successor, Christian VII. The master of ceremonies, together with servants, drove a carriage to the ambassador's *hôtel* and brought him to the palace. While the carriage had left from a side entrance, upon the return they took the most ceremonious route, leading over the so-called marble bridge, passing the riding court in front of the palace, straight to the monumental tower gate at the front of the palace. The company got out of the carriage at the 'marble staircase', one of the two large staircases flanking the tower, as the king's staircase was not yet completed. Here the ambassador was received by *overhofmarskal* Adam Gottlob Moltke, *hoffjunkers*, and servants. They entered the residence and continued up the stairs, toward the king's audience chamber. Since they could not use the staircase that was intended to serve this sort of ceremonial reception, the entire company had to go through two additional rooms (*Procurator Salen* and *Højesteretssalen*) before crossing the crowded guards' room, guards' hall, valets' chamber and two antechambers. For the occasion, many high lords and representative members of court gathered in these rooms, but the audience itself took place behind closed doors. This long progression through the interior of the residence also served to demonstrate the taste and wealth of the Danish king (Klingensmith 1993: 177–184). The entire reception took place in the king's rooms, avoiding the staterooms and great hall in the southeastern wing, where major decoration works were ongoing in preparation of the king's wedding planned for November that same year (Kragelund 1999: 228–238).

For the reception of an English envoy on 23 March 1764, the ceremony seems to have been limited. Additionally, there seems to have been some confusion about where the envoy and the king should meet, as *hofffourier* (court harbinger) Berg had forgotten to ask the king. Nevertheless, they met 'without further ceremony' in one of the king's antechambers from where they probably proceeded to the audience chamber. Not much is mentioned about the actual audience, except that the *overhofmarskal* (lord chamberlain) and members of the secret council were present.

These examples testify to a well-organized court ceremonial, following the German example. The same route was taken for most visitors, including the Russian ambassador who visited Christiansborg Palace in February 1762, indicating that in the day-to-day functioning of the residence, part of the route, as elaborated by the ideal designs, was now put into use. Ambassadors disembarked at one of the large tower staircases adjacent to the great hall and proceeded to the first floor, where they crossed two rooms before entering the intended ceremonial route through the enfilade of rooms leading up to the audience chamber. The doors between the rooms were generally closed but they were opened by either the *hoffourier*, who accompanied the visitors, or lackeys, who stood in the rooms.

Nevertheless, there are occasions where this well-organized route was not respected. In 1765 William Henry, Prince of Nassau-Saarbrücken, requested an audience with King Christian VII of Denmark. His request was, however, denied on account of the king's lingering illness. After waiting for two days for a new audience and frustrated by this dismissal, the prince of Nassau drove to the palace in his own carriage, crossing the show grounds and stables, going straight to the queen's antechamber.¹⁹ This *forgemak* was located close to the heart of the queen's apartment, indicated as S (*Dronningens Inderste Forgemack*, the queen's first antechamber) or T (*Dronningens Yderste Forgemak*, the queen's second antechamber) on the floor plan (see **Figure 5**).²⁰ This route took the prince through the main gate of the palace, up the queen's staircase to the *Kongeetage* on the first floor, and across the *Laquai Gemak* (valets' chamber), finally arriving in the queen's antechamber. Another less ceremonial route would have taken him to one of the wooden staircases that was used for daily access, from which the queen's antechamber was directly accessible. A third, less likely, route led from the main gate of the palace and across the inner courtyard to the wooden staircase in the north corner leading up to the king's apartment. After taking this staircase to the first floor, one had to cross the royal gallery and the hermitage dining room to get to the queen's antechamber. This multitude of possible routes and accesses was an innovation compared to the old Copenhagen Castle. The palace's double enfilades of rooms in three of its four wings allowed a variety of alternative accesses and informal paths.

While most ambassadors probably arranged their own lodging somewhere in the city, other visitors were accommodated within the walls of the palace. The description of the visit of William Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, in July 1769 shows that the prince and his entire suite were appointed rooms in the royal residence, with important guests located on the crown prince's floor, while servants were appointed rooms on the upper mezzanine. As a result, some officials and other staff members had to move to their own private residences within the city. The palace thus opened its doors to many guests and their entourages. The duke was received at Christiansborg Palace via a different

route again, with the party arriving by carriage from Amager in the inner courtyard of the palace, where they disembarked and proceeded to enter the palace. However, instead of turning to the king's apartment, the procession moved to the staterooms and proceeded to the great hall (*Riddersalen*), which had only recently been finished with life-sized paintings of the Danish monarchs. Apart from the wedding festivities of 1766, this was one of the first times the large staterooms in the south wing had been used, almost 30 years after the move-in ceremony of the royal family. Other parts of the residence, including the king's staircase, continue to be described as 'not finished'.

After some days at the royal residence in Copenhagen, the Duke of Gloucester and his entourage moved to Frederiksberg on 11 July. From there they took excursions to other royal residences, including Hirschholm and Jægersborg. These locations recur in the descriptions, often as part of longer visits. However, the start and end of the state visits was almost always at Christiansborg Palace. The king's residence thus fulfilled all the functions of a royal palace, while decoration and finishing works seemed to continue over the 50 years that the palace was inhabited.²¹

Conclusion

The first Christiansborg Palace was used only for 54 years and by three generations of Danish monarchs (Christian VI, Frederik V, and Christian VII). While the surviving floor plans show a magnificent residence, the actual living situation at the first Christiansborg Palace must have differed considerably from the ideal evoked by these widespread drawings. Many of the spatial sequences, in particular those used for the routes intended for the highest ceremonies, including the great hall and the king's staircase, remained unfinished (**Fig. 7**).

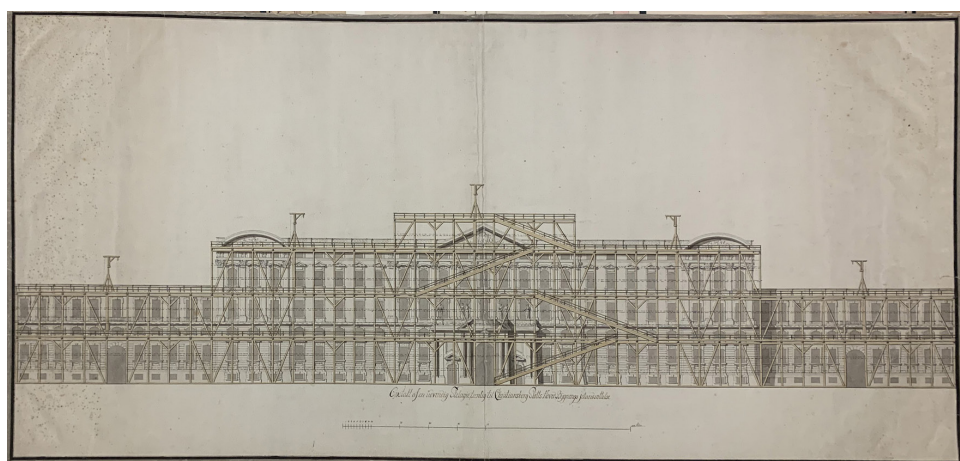


Figure 7: Drawing of scaffolding for the façade facing the riding court. RA, Rentekammeret Danske Afdeling, Bygningsadministrationen: Ældre bygningstegninger 1738.

The hierarchical structure established by the sequence of rooms was hence nullified by shortcuts and actual accesses and connections that were used daily. The rhetorical power of architecture to induce good behavior failed due to its incomplete state. Court instructions and *Hofartikler* were introduced to regulate the daily lifestyle of staff and servants, but foreign visitors were not included in this written code of conduct. Prompted by the marriage festivities of 1766, significant work was done on the great hall and adjacent rooms, after which they were occasionally used for receptions. The ambassador staircase leading toward the king's apartment was the most important missing link in the ceremonial access route. Because it was never executed, visitors were received and guided up at one of the two staircases flanking the two towers. This meant that they had to cross two additional rooms before the guards' room, which was the first official space along the ceremonial route toward the audience chamber. When visitors were refused an audience, as the example of the prince of Nassau-Saarbrücken showed, they had the option to not comply with the court ceremonial. Toward the end of the reign of Frederik V, it seems to have been possible to access even the innermost rooms of the royal apartments without too many obstacles.

Notes

- ¹ 'Old-fashioned rather than splendid'. See also Bøggild Johansen (2015) for an analysis of the architecture of Copenhagen Castle as a reference to the past.
- ² Rigsarkivet, Overhofmarskallatet 1761–1779 (henceforth RA, OM), O: Fremmede Fyrstelige Personers Besøg ved Hoffet; RA, OM, O: Diverse Sager, Hofembedsmænd, Hofartikler, O: Beskrivelser af Audiencer, Q: Ceremonieller. The authors are grateful to David Lebovitch Dahl for the help in transcribing the original source material. All translations by the authors unless otherwise stated.
- ³ The Opera House on Bredgade (1701–1702), the headquarters for the army (Generalkommissariatet, 1704) and the head groom (Staldmestergården, 1703–1706), and Denmark's first purpose-built state administration (Kancellibygningen, 1715–1720).
- ⁴ Absolutism was introduced in a Danish context in 1660 by King Frederik III who made a *coup d'état* after Denmark was almost conquered by Sweden. The absolutist regime was codified in the Lex Regia or *Kongeloven* from 1665, which is the only written constitution of an absolutist monarchy.
- ⁵ This may sound odd, since Christiansborg Palace ended up costing more than the entire value of all the farmlands on the large island of Zealand, where Copenhagen is located. Nevertheless, from an accounting perspective, the project was mainly funded by the Sound Customs collected from foreign ships passing by, by loans from the citizens, and by military subsidies from the primary alliance partner at the time, England. Within a mercantilist way of thinking, the project could even be understood as a stimulus to the local industry and craft, beneficial to the national economy at large (Bartholdy 1975: 322; Cedergreen Bech 1977: 288).
- ⁶ For an overview of the drawings and available sources for this first Christiansborg Palace, see Elling (1944) and Lund (1975a and 1975b).
- ⁷ To do so, the king had to purchase and demolish an irregular block of private houses on the islet.
- ⁸ On the inclusion of 'antiquated' architecture as a tool to construct national identity, see Enenkel and Ottenham (2019).
- ⁹ The floor plan in *Den Danske Vitruvius* does not have this lettering, but others do. See, for example, the plans in the collection of HM The Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Danish Collection, available online: <https://www.kongernessamling.dk/dronningens-haandbibliotek/object/det-foerste-christiansborg/>. The accompanying inventory can be found in the State Archives: RA, OM, F: Inventarieregnskaber.
- ¹⁰ The *Fürstlicher Baumeister* by Paulus Decker is still part of the Queen's library: 'The First Christiansborg | Collection of Kings'. Accessed 31 May 2021. <https://www.kongernessamling.dk/dronningens-haandbibliotek/object/det-foerste-christiansborg/>.
- ¹¹ The entire treatise is available online: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/sturm1718c>.
- ¹² The room was referred to as an *Eremitagegemak* because it was served by a dumbwaiter located in what was known as a 'hermitage table' – a table containing a mechanic device that brought the food up from downstairs, allowing people to eat in private ('en hermitage') without the presence of servants.
- ¹³ RA, OM, F: Inventarieregnskaber. It contains two inventories, one dated 1739 and the other dated 1741.
- ¹⁴ This is in stark contrast to his father Frederik IV: 'on days of public audience I have observed at one time above 150 coaches attending at the Court of Denmark, which are ten times more than ever I saw together at that of Sweden. The king is affable and of easy access to strangers, seen often abroad by his subjects in his gardens and stables, which are very large and well furnished with all sorts of horses' (Carr 1688).
- ¹⁵ RA, OM, O: Diverse Sager, Hofembedsmænd, Hof Artikler.
- ¹⁶ 'Det var saadan en Yderlighed af grove Vellyster, B[rockenhuus] dér søgte at gjøre in Lykke ved at gjøre sin Herre bekiendt med, at man ikke uden Skamfuldhed kan nævne dem. De gemeeneste og liderligste Fruentimmere i heele Byen vare Gratierner i disse Forsamlinger; for nogle Ducater fandtes de meget villige til at afføre sig deres Klæder og i samme Stand, som de vare komne paa Jorden at dandse omkring paa Borde og Stoele for de forsamlede Herrer. Den Begierlighed, de haabede at antænde ved denne Leylighed, slog dem for det meeste feyl, men en anden opsteg derimod hos Kongen, som det syntes umueligt for en Menneske Ven at falde paa, og som alene burde vente sig een grum tyran. Det var nemlig hans største Vellyst at pidske disse nøgne elendige indtil Blodet; io meere de vaandede og krympede sig derved, io meere kildrede det ham og fornøede ham saa at sige ind i Sielen, og sielden eller aldrig holdt han op, førend han saae Blodet strime efter' (Bobé 1909: 41–42).

‘There were examples of such extreme and gross lusts, with which B[rockenhuus] sought to make his own fortune by introducing them to the king, that one cannot name them without being shameful. The most mischievous and lascivious women in the entire city were the graces in these assemblies; for a few ducats they were willing to undress and in the same condition as when they came to earth, they danced on tables and chairs in front of the assembled gentlemen. The desire they hoped to arouse by this event mostly failed, but another desire arose for the king, which was impossible to understand for a friend of mankind, and which you would only expect to find by a gross tyrant. Thus, it was his greatest lust to flog these nudities till they bled; the more they suffered and writhed, the more he became agitated and amused in his soul, and seldom or never would he stop before the blood ran in streaks.’

¹⁷ In her book on hospitality, Felicity Heal (1990) distinguishes between private and public hospitality. The first implies opening your house to friends and family, while the second covers the reception of all sorts of people.

¹⁸ The entire city was staged for the procession following the arrival of Princess Caroline Mathilde, with monuments and triumphal arches erected on several squares (Lyngby, Mentz, and Olden-Jørgensen 2010: 137).

¹⁹ RA, OM, O: Fremmede Fyrstelige Personers Besøg ved Hoffet: ‘Mandagen dend 25 hujus ... kom høymbelte Printz til Slottet kiørende i sin egen Equipage, ... og gik saa strax til Hendes Majestæt den Regerende Dronnings Forgemak, efter at Printzen med hendes Majestæt Dronningen havde haft Audience, begav han Sig til de øvrige høj kongelige herskaber efter Deres Rang, for hvem hand og bekom Audience, men med hans Majestæt Kongen bekom hand ikke Audience.’

‘Monday the 25th of this month ... the above-mentioned prince came to the palace driving in his own coach, ... and then immediately went to the antechamber of her Majesty, the reigning queen. After the prince had audience with the queen, he went to the other members of the royal family in accordance with their rank and achieved audience with them. However, with his Majesty the King he did not achieve audience.’

²⁰ Location of the antechamber according to the 1741 inventory. RA, OM, F: Inventarieregnskaber.

²¹ For example, the Drabant Sahlen (i.e., on the floor plan) was still unfinished according to the 1741 inventory, but it played a major role during the reception of the Swedish princes in 1770. RA, OM, F: Inventarieregnskaber and Rigsarkivet, Overhofmarskallatet, O: Fremmede Fyrstelige Personers Besøg ved Hoffet.

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