



Versailles in Watercolour

Jack Tow
Valerie Bajou

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- In the tradition of *en plein air* painting, a beautiful watercolour sketchbook of Versailles, one of France's most celebrated monuments
- Each year Versailles is visited by 4.5 million tourists making it one of France's top attractions

In 1678 Louis XIV decided to renovate the small château of Louis XIII; just four years later he moved his government into the huge palace and splendid gardens. This book follows in the footsteps of the visitor. It starts, as suggested by Louis the XIV himself, "in the vestibule of the Marble courtyard", moving on to the seven great salons of the King's Great Apartment, reaching the 357 mirrors of the celebrated Hall of Mirrors. The Great Apartment of the Queen – nineteen "Enfants de France" were born here – illustrates the more intimate yet superb King's interior apartments, followed by those of Mme du Barry, the King's mistress, and Marie-Antoinette. At the lower level are those of the Dauphin and the Dauphine, of the courtiers etc. Upon leaving the Royal Chapel, there's a tour of the water parterres and the Grand Canal, whose reflections are beautifully reproduced by Jack Tow's watercolours. Finally, the tour reaches the domain offered by Louis XVI to his spouse – the Grand Trianon, in rose marble and porphyry, which allows the artist to portray the flowery exuberance of its famous gardens. The final pages are dedicated to the Petit Trianon – entirely renovated for Napoleon who spent time here with the empress, Marie-Louise – and the Hamlet, where Marie-Antoinette, sensible to Rousseau's ideas, could find a refreshing break from the court's demanding etiquette.

Valerie Bajou is a curator at the Chateaux de Versailles. Her main field of interest is 19th century painting and she is the author of several monographs. **Jack Tow** is the pen name of a Milanese art historian, specialising in 17th century art, who also loves to draw and paint monuments and landscapes. Alongside his scholarly books, he has previously published the watercolour book '*The Sforza Castle*' (2007).