

**Example of an Application of the Style- Function-Production Framework
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens
2026 Mansion Docent Training**

Rolltop Desk (33.222) in the French Drawing Room

Style (What does the object's appearance reveal about the people who made and used it?)

- Roll-top desk made ca. 1770-1774
- Opens up to reveal flat surface, hidden compartments, fold-out devices, mechanical surprises, and secret buttons
- On front are visual clues as to who owned it: "MA" monogram surmounted by a crown and topped by an orb and a cross. And pictures depicting aristocratic pastimes and pleasures: top...poetry, painting, music; bottom...clusters of instruments suspended by ribbons, and a score that is actually literate (you could play it, although we don't know what piece it is).
- Transitional style (rococo/curvy, and neoclassical/straight-lined)



Function (What purpose did it serve? Literally? Figuratively? Who used it?)

- Literal: Used as a writing and reading desk. Letter writing was one of the favorite pastimes of France in 1700s. Can use seated or standing.
- Also used as a dressing table (has hidden mirror and candles) and strongbox (has lockable boxes)
- Symbolic: meant to impress owner's guests because of the craftsmanship, details
- Likely candidate for the owner is Maria Antonia Walpurgis, princess of Saxony (now a part of Germany), an accomplished woman in her own right. Visual clues help us make this connection. Ornamental band with stylized cross with arms of equal length could be reference to the Order of the Starry Cross, which Maria Antonia was bestowed. The marquetry musical/art imagery on front makes sense: she was a respected composer of 2 operas, singer, harpsichordist, and patron of the arts. (We used to think this was owned by Marie Antoinette, but the piece is too late to be hers.) The new ownership ideas are recent, from 2012 exhibition research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC.

Production (How was it made? Who made it?)

- Made by Abraham and David Roentgen in what is now Germany---considered the greatest cabinetmakers in Europe in late 1700s because of their exquisite craftsmanship; supplied Europe's rulers
- Excellent example of marquetry (material, such as wood, inlaid piece by piece into a wood surface in an intricate design and veneered to another surface, especially of furniture, for decoration)