

bienvenue
de la Meuse
Musées
de la Meuse

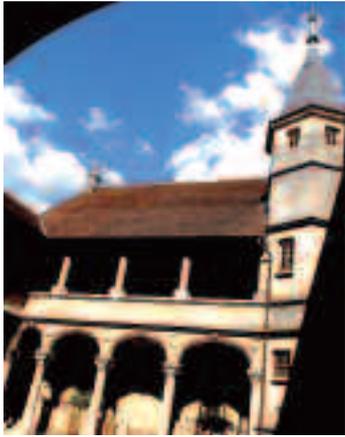


Musée de la PRINCERIE



VERDUN





Le Musée de la Princerie

The Verdun Museum of Art and History has been set up since 1932 in this *hôtel particulier*, dating back to the start of the Renaissance period, built in 1525 by the De Musson brothers. It was restored after the Great War and re-acquired by the City to house the museum.

The two brothers, rich canons of the cathedral chapter, chose the location carefully for the home of the *princier*, the next highest dignitary after the bishop, hence its name, "*la Princerie*". The symbolic choice of this site would have portrayed the power of the cathedral chapter.

The building is in keeping with the taste of the period for proportional harmony and elegant sculpted decorations. It also testifies to advances in civil architecture in the Renaissance period in terms of comfort, with its great reception room open to natural light. The courtyard and the garden illustrate the trend for leisure spaces, even within the residence. Two elements, however, recall the religious function of the builders, adding to the architectural character: the small Gothic-inspired oratory designed as a place for prayer and the two-levelled gallery evocative of the architecture of cloisters.

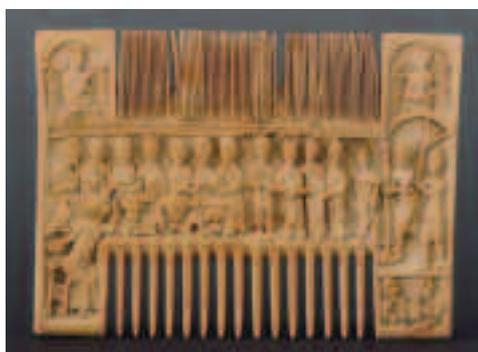
The collections

The collections are currently split into two wings and two floors. These were started in 1822 by *the Société philomathique de Verdun*, in view of creating a public natural history exhibition. The initial collection established by the Museum consisted in minerals and stuffed animals. It grew gradually with the addition of antiques, art objects, paintings, *faïence*, sculptures and weapons which were donated, inherited, purchased or lent by the State.

The objects now exhibited show Verdun and the surrounding Meuse area from Prehistory through to the start of the 20th century. The finest pieces of these carefully-preserved collections provide an insight into the regional artistic and historic brilliance during the Middle Ages.

The ground floor: room 1 and the chapel : Medieval Statuary

Room 1 and the chapel house funeral sculptures or sculptures for worship, alongside stone and wooden architectural elements, from the area's churches and abbeys. The collection explores a wide panorama of Lorraine styles from the 12th century onwards and recalls the influence of the Verdun diocese in the Middle-Ages. The statues reflect local popular beliefs, notably the healing powers attributed to saints. This is the case of the most popular example, Saint Roch, who was invoked against epidemics such as the plague, cholera, typhoid and even flu. The famous patron of the Lorraines, Saint Nicholas, is also represented, accompanied by the three children whom he saved from the hands of their executioner.



*Peigne liturgique, dit
« peigne de Henry de Winchester »,
ivoire, vers 1120*

The most remarkable piece is the liturgical ivory comb made circa 1120 in England. This rare ceremonial object is sculpted from a single piece of ivory, depicting scenes from the life of Christ. The rarity, dating, quality and condition of this piece make it an exceptional example of Roman art in the world.

The crosier next to the comb is also one of the collection's key pieces. This example of Roman Limousine silversmith work entered the museum's collections in 2007. It was buried with abbot Etienne Bourgeois in 1452 in the church of the former Saint Vanne de Verdun abbey. After almost four hundred years in this funerary context, which explains its archaeological condition, it was unearthed in the 1820s. All trace of it had been lost until the end of the XIXth century. It has now returned to the abbot's tombstone, which has never left the city and is still preserved at the Musée de la Prinerie.

The Gothic chapel houses one of the region's five Roman statues. It comes from Mont-devant-Sassey and is a valuable testimony to the Marian cult in Lorraine in the 12th century. The conservation of its polychrome work makes it a very rare piece.



*Crosse abbatiale,
émail sur cuivre champlé
et doré, Limoges,
vers 1200*

Unusual: the fantastic part-human part-dragon figure above the door is a false gargoyle. Its body has not been drilled all the way through for rainwater evacuation, as is usually the case. Was it left unfinished? Was this overlooked?

Room 2 : Prehistory

Archaeological objects are on display in room 2, from Prehistory to the Metal Age, coming from local sites and testifying to the former occupation of the Meuse. The first signs of occupation date back to the Paleolithic period (-600,000/-11,000). During this period the current Meuse département was crossed by routes taken by nomadic populations, notably along the Meuse and Ornain valleys. The tools cut from stone and used for daily life come from here: arrow heads for hunting, scrapers for removing meat from skins, punches for piercing the skins and sewing clothes, etc.

Polished axes, used notably for clearing land for farming and the ceramic crockery testify to the settlement of Man in the Neolithic period (towards -5,500/5000). The end of the Neolithic period is marked by the emergence of metal, copper then bronze. This new material gave rise to social hierarchy, with the emergence of an elite, whose rich funeral furniture was discovered in tumulus burial sites. This is illustrated by the meticulously worked fineries, jewels and bronze harness elements.

Unusual: the jaw exhibit is a fossil of the lower crocodilian jaw, discovered by chance in the Haudainville quarries near Verdun in 1962. The mandibular sections are incomplete, giving a rough idea of the size of this animal from the most distant prehistoric ages.

Room 3 : Gallo-Roman and Merovingian Periods

Room 3 illustrates the Gallo-Roman period, during which the current Meuse region was occupied by various different populations. The two most important occupants were the



*Paire de fibules, or, argent et grenat,
Dieue-sur-Meuse, V^e-VI^e siècles*

Médiomatrici in the North and the Leuques in the South. The Museum owns several elements from funerary steles, sculpted in the effigy of living people, some of which have conserved the cavity destined to receive the glass urn containing the ashes of the dead. Many small objects from daily life illustrate the importance assigned to body care and finery: little spoons holding cosmetics, tweezers, an exquisite engraved bronze mirror, jewels including a ring with a semiprecious stone intaglio which is finely engraved and mounted on silver.

Most of the objects came from archaeological digs conducted from the 19th century, on the sites of Nasium, capital of the Leuques (close to Bar le Duc), Senon and Saint-Laurent-sur-Othain. Sigillated ceramics and several glass pieces also illustrate the artisanal production in Argonne, a major crossroads for trade.

he central displays show Merovingian silversmith work, discovered in rich burial sites in Dieue-sur-Meuse. Fibula inlaid with garnet, damascened silver buckles, a golden ring, representing the social status of the buried individuals.

Unusual: the ear ring decorated with a basket with intricate open work was discovered by chance in 1876 in the foundations of a house in Verdun, near the current Legay bridge. This exceptional jewel has been perfectly preserved, testifying to the talent of the silversmiths of the Early Middle Ages.

Room 4 : the Middle ages

Room 4 displays civil and liturgical objects from the Medieval period. Series of knives and spoons illustrate domestic life, along with a display consecrated to Lorraine stove ceramics. A rare and well-preserved helmet from the end of the Middle-Ages and a fragment of Charlemagne's lime tree of justice, donated to the City of Verdun in 2004, are two interesting curiosities.

Unusual: the wood panel exhibited above the door presents an extraordinary sculpted composition depicting the Conversion of Saint Paul. It was found in 1860 being used as a shutter in the attic of a house on rue Mazel in Verdun.

Room 5 : Historical Objects

This room displays different objects associated with the city of Verdun and its historical figures, amongst which an important series of abbatial, episcopal and civil seals – the oldest, that of the City of Verdun, dates back to the 12th century. These small wax objects became widely used in the Middle-Ages by all levels of society, from emperors and kings to peasants. Affixed to the bottom of a document or sealing a letter closed, the seal engages its holder and prevents forgery. It authenticates the papers and validates deeds.



Sceau de la cité de Verdun, cire, vers 1200

Two stained glass fragments provide a rare medieval representation of the city, which can be compared with a 17th century engraving of the city.

Unusual: the large megaphone comes from the Verdun cathedral, it would have been used to alert the population from the high towers of the building in the event of danger. This type of object is now extremely rare.

The Courtyard

The tour passes through the courtyard to access the upper floor via the staircase in the tower. In the courtyard, a set of Gallo-Roman tumular stones and a rich collection of cast-iron fireplace plates are exhibited. These were used to retain heat in houses for as long as possible. They date from the 16th to 19th centuries and have heraldic, mythological or symbolic detail.

Unusual: several hidden details in the architecture invite us to consider the building from a different angle. These discrete details set the residence in the humanist and spiritual context of the Renaissance period: the Latin maxim engraved into a medallion just above the hall means "before you leave here, think about what you are going to do and when you return, think of what you did". The cul-de-lampe in the corner of the cloister represents an owl, emblem of wisdom and knowledge ever since Antiquity. The crescent moon sculpted on one of the cloister's keystones symbolizes knowledge, this motif is also inherited from ancient philosophical traditions.

First floor: room 6 lorraine furniture



Buffet vaisselier,
chêne, Lorraine, XIX^{ème} siècle

Room 6 presents a traditional Lorraine interior, with furniture such as a marital wardrobe, a kitchen dresser and kneading table. Several domestic objects complete the scene of the traditional home: the churn for making butter, the spinning wheel, the warming pan and bed warmer, both designed for holding embers to warm sheets, hands or feet.

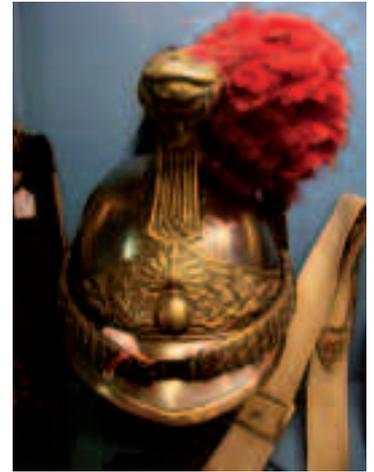
Unusual: a rare small faïence font, from the Longwy factory, depicting a penitent Saint Madeleine, holding a skull reminding the brevity and vanity of life on earth. This small object testifies to domestic popular devotion in Lorraine.

Room 7: Verdun before 1914

Room 7 presents a collection of objects and pictures of Verdun before the Great War. Two paintings illustrate the battle of 1870, two others show the former town planning of the Tanneries district and the current Quai de Londres. The last painting, by artist Alfred Renaudin, shows the upper city and its impressive cathedral through the rubble of the building of the Verdun Cercle militaire. The model for the gare de l'Est statue in Paris and objects connected to the Verdun sugared almond factory illustrate the modernization in transport and industrial development.

Some of the objects which belonged to physicist Edouard Branly, who's wife was born in Verdun and who notably participated in the invention of wireless telegraphy are exhibited. His descendants bequeathed almost 500 of his personal objects to the Museum.

Unusual: the marble paper-weight surmounted by a fig and presented in the central display cabinet belonged to Louis XVI. This was sold in 1793 along with other personal items in a public sale at the Conciergerie de Paris, a few days before his execution. An inhabitant of Verdun passing through Paris and lodging opposite the Conciergerie asked his chamber maid to buy two of these historical objects put up for auction: an inkwell (which has now disappeared) and this paper-weight. They were donated to the museum in 1878.



Casque de dragon,
laiton et textile,
Second Empire

Room 8: paintings



Jules BASTIEN-LEPAGE
(1848-1884), *Nature morte*,
huile sur toile, vers 1875

Room 8 contains paintings by two major artists of the Meuse region: Hector Leroux and Jules Bastien-Lepage. The former was born in Verdun in 1829 and produced a number of paintings harking back to Antiquity. These depictions were nourished by discoveries made in Pompeii in the previous century. *The Scène de banquet*, for example, is a faithful representation of the Roman murals that had recently been revealed on the Pompeiian site. Nevertheless, his paintings include numerous anachronisms, Antiquity being perceived

essentially by the artist as an idyllic universe of purity, sensual pleasure and refinement, where feminine grace is of significant importance.

The artist Jules Bastien-Lepage was born in Damvillers in 1848. His first works were marked by academism style. His work gradually evolved and the artist developed original aesthetics leading to the creation of "paysan" paintings. His large canvases, exhibited in the Salon, draw their subject matters from the rural world where Meuse landscapes can easily be recognised, handled with the modernity of the realists or impressionists. *La chanson du Printemps* is a good illustration of this fusion of styles at the start of the artist's career.



Unusual: the snuff rasp sculpted in ivory shows a courteous scene in the 18th century, directly inspired by the paintings of Antoine Watteau. According to tradition, these two figures are the portrait of the Lorraine ducal couple, Stanislas Leczinski, king of Poland and Duke of Lorraine with his wife Catherine Opalinska.

Râpe à tabac, ivoire, cour ducale de Nancy, début du XVIII^{ème} siècle

Room 9: faïence and porcelain

Room 9 contains a large collection of faïence and porcelain. The Museum's collection of regional ceramics is one of the largest in the département. Most of the production centres are represented, particularly those in Argonne: Waly, Islettes, Lavoye, Salvanges etc. The collection is complemented by other pieces from the Netherlands, England, China and Japan. Portraits are exhibited in the same room. The most important ones are the great ceremonial portraits from the end of the 17th century, showing victorious servicemen bearing their medals, whose staged attitudes are symbolic of French power under the reign of Louis XIV.

Unusual: the fountain and its pond adorned with Chinese decorative elements are a beautiful example of this type of faïence furniture. It comes from the famous Islettes factory in Argonne.

Room 10: arms and Militaria

Room 10 presents a rich panorama of weapons and military equipment, from the arquebus and couleuvrine of the 16th century through to the Mauser rifle used in the Second World War. Swords are also represented, from the impressive medieval espadon through to the modern sabre. Equipment from the 1870 war occupies an important place in this collection.

Unusual: the powder horn sculpted from a deer antler has astonishing decorative elements for this type of military object. It depicts a scene from the New Testament, the baptism of Christ. This object was found in 1875 on the site of the former Saint-Vanne abbey in Verdun, which was later transformed into a fortress. This small container could have contained holy oil or holy water that belonged to the monastic community, later used by servicemen.

The garden

In the garden, Merovingian sarcophaguses which were discovered around the main churches and abbeys in the Verdun are exhibited along with the Gothic gate of the chapter room of the former Saint-Vanne abbey.

Unusual: the maple in the Musée de la Prinerie garden is a sycamore maple with a 4 metre circumference and a diameter of 1.27 metres. It measures between 25 and 30 metres and is thought to be around 150 years old.

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