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Musées
de la Meuse

Musée JEHANNE D'ARC



VAUCOULEURS





Joan of Arc museum

The Joan of Arc museum was inaugurated in 1997.

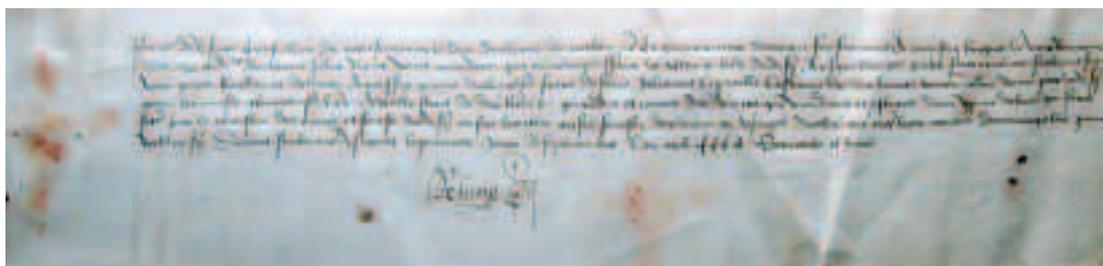
It is located in the right wing of the City Hall. It replaces the initial municipal museum which had existed since 1958 and whose collections, essentially comprising donations, explored the history of the region. During the 1990s, the Museum's contents were changed and a major acquisition campaign was conducted. The Museum is now dedicated exclusively to the subject of imagery pertaining to Joan of Arc. It contains four sections, exploring the various different icons associated with Joan of Arc throughout the ages.

First Section: Joan of Arc, from legend to historical truth

Joan of Arc is one of the most well-known figures of the 15th century, notably due to the large number of written sources on her subject. Even during her lifetime, she was the object of myth-making, combining historical truth and legend. She was somewhat overlooked until the 19th century, the rationalism of the age of Enlightenment not being particularly receptive to the 'voices' and callings of providence.

Written sources

The first historical research work on the subject of Joan of Arc was conducted in the 19th century. Between 1840 and 1849, Jules Quicherat, a young archivist, studied the documents from Joan of Arc's trial and published them. This essential research work was an initial scientific and critical approach to the written sources relating to her history.



Fac-similé du procès en condamnation ou lettre autographe originale de Pierre de Refuge, encre sur vélin, datée du 1er septembre 1463

The "relics"

A mystic and irrational dimension has always been associated to the figure of Joan of Arc. Thus, the objects with which she would have been in contact acquired particular value and are sometimes worshipped as relics. These "relics" include the sculpture of Our Lady of the Vault, held in the crypt, and the Septfonds Crucifix, exhibited in the museum. This oak statue comes from the Septfonds farm, near Vaucouleurs. According to tradition, Joan of Arc used to pray before this statue after the failure of her second meeting with Robert de Beaudricourt.

Portraits of Joan of Arc

Paradoxically, no portraits of Joan of Arc were made during her lifetime. The countless depictions of the saint are governed by a set of symbolic elements.

Joan in warlike splendour: figure inspired by the Renaissance

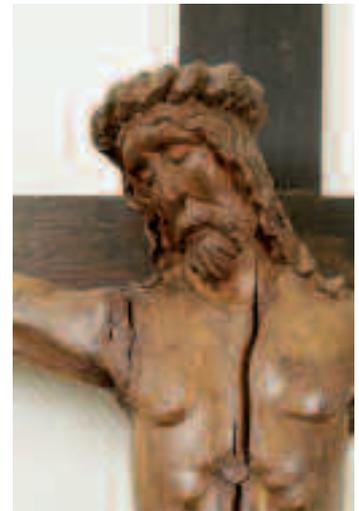
The first depictions of Joan of Arc date from the 16th century. These portraits were commissioned by the Aldermen of Orléans and show a feminine figure, wearing a long dress, partially covered by armour, brandishing a sword and bearing the plume of a general. This whimsical and anachronistic depiction was handed down to posterity.

Concern for historic authenticity

During the 19th century, the birth of romanticism, revival of Catholicism and restoration of the monarchy all contributed to inciting new interest in the figure of Joan of Arc. This renewed interest gave rise to a new iconographic type, unveiled by the sculpture of Joan of Arc produced in 1837 by Marie d'Orléans, daughter of Louis-Philippe. This marble sculpture was destined for the château of Versailles, which at the time had been transformed into a museum dedicated "to all the glories of France".

The Vaucouleurs Museum holds a cast iron version of this sculpture, made in the Tusey workshops near Vaucouleurs. This statue reveals a desire to portray Joan of Arc in a manner that is more true to historical data. She is portrayed as a pious, meditative and determined young woman, in keeping with the image portrayed by Jules Quicherat.

Nevertheless, the sculpture contains anachronistic elements: Her hair is too long, the armour is not of the period and her skirt would have been impractical for riding.



Christ en Croix de Septfonds, statue en chêne



Jeanne empanachée, gravure, 19^e siècle



Jeanne d'Arc d'après Marie d'Orléans, statue en fonte peinture or, fonderies de Tusey, 19^e siècle

Second Section: Joan of Arc in Ecclesiastical Art

In 1870, after the establishment of the IIIrd Republic, Joan of Arc was used by the Catholics as a defence against impiety, anticlericalism of the laity and free thinking.

At the instigation of Mgr. Dupaloup, bishop of Orléans, the Church established the cult of Joan of Arc which was to result in her beatification in 1909, then in her canonisation in 1920.

A huge number of medallions, holy icons, pilgrimage souvenirs and objects of worship testify to the success of the cult of the saint. The Church encouraged reproductions of statues and **stained glass windows** in religious buildings. The three favourite subjects of artists were: *the Inspired one* - the shepherdess called by "voices", *the Warrior* - the maiden-soldier in armour and *the Martyr* - Joan at the stake.

The subject of Joan of Arc was particularly appreciated by the Nancy-based *Höner, Benoît et Janin* workshop, which produced almost 400 cartoons for stained glass windows on the subject. Some of these are exhibited in the Museum. In parallel to the representation of the main events of the Joan of Arc epic, a secondary iconography developed, aiming essentially to promote the villages that had been part of Joan of Arc's journey, such as Dieulouard or Saint-Nicolas-de-Port.

The main subjects illustrated in stained glass windows were also used in **statues**. Marius Jean Antonin Mercié's statue, created in 1906, combines all three aspects associated with the figure of Joan of Arc: depicted with hands joined in prayer, she is dressed like a soldier in armour and adorned with a crown of thorns reminiscent of her martyrdom.

The statue created in 1839 by Jean-François-Théodore Gechter illustrates a less common theme: Joan of Arc is depicted here bringing down an English knight, a reference to Saint Michael or Saint Georges bringing down the dragon, in the battle between Good and Evil.



HONER, JANIN, BENOIT,
Le départ de Vaucouleurs
après J.J. Scherrer,
carton de vitrail, 1913



J.F.T. GECHTER,
Jeanne d'Arc terrassant un
cavalier anglais,
bronze, 1839

Prosper d'Épinay, having conducted meticulous historical research, chose to represent Joan at the Coronation to glorify the heroine. The sculptor drew his inspiration for the saint's face from a nun praying to Saint Peter of Rome. The statue was completed in 1900, made of marble, ivory and bronze, and was donated to the city of Reims. It was lent to the cathedral in 1909, during celebrations for the beatification of Joan of Arc, in the very place where she would have stood during the coronation of Charles VII, in July 1429.



P. d'EPINAY,
Jeanne au sacre,
bronze, 1900

Third Section: Joan of Arc in Secular Art

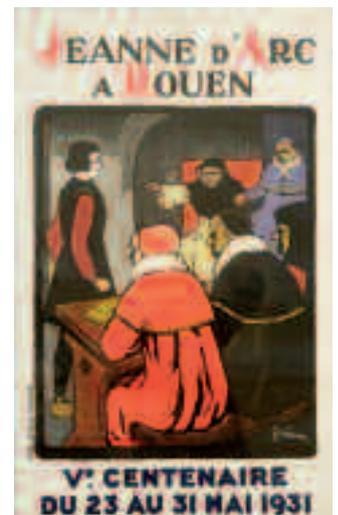
The republicans were loathe to allow the Catholics to adopt the figure of Joan of Arc. She then became a patriotic symbol, the saint of the People. They depicted Joan as a victim of freedom of thought, the martyred heroine burned by priests.

Nevertheless, the antagonism between the Catholics and republicans gradually eased. Many Catholics came over to Republicanism, favouring a climate of reconciliation. Joan of Arc then became a symbol of national unity.

The statues

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the public statuary of the city participated whole-heartedly in upholding the Republic. An increasing number of major republican decorations used the history of Joan of Arc as subject matter. Many cities chose to decorate their squares with the heroine's effigy. These decorations essentially consisted in equestrian statues showing her as a chief of war brandishing the standard or sword, an embodiment of patriotic pride and national independence.

In 1874, **Emmanuel Frémiet** created an equestrian statue of Joan of Arc for the Place des Pyramides in Paris. Heavily criticized during its creation, notably because of its large proportions, it was replaced with a second version in 1899.



JULES ALEXANDRE GRÜN,
Jeanne d'Arc à Rouen,
lithographie en couleur,
1931



E. FREMIET,
*Réduction de la première
version de la statue de la
place des Pyramides à Paris*,
bronze
et patine or, 1874

Suivez le guide



Musée de Vaucouleurs
salle 3



A. MERCIER,
La passion de Jeanne d'Arc,
Affiche du film de Carl
Dreyer, Lithographie, 1928



E. GRASSET,
*Jeanne d'Arc par Sarah
Bernhardt*,
lithographie couleurs, 1890

Theatre and cinema

The tragic fate of Joan of Arc had the makings for an excellent dramatic heroine. From 1801, she was the central protagonist of a Schiller tragedy, *Jungfrau von Orleans*. She was the inspiration behind Verdi's opera, *Joan of Arc*, in 1845.

In the theatre, she was played by Sarah Bernhardt in a play written by Jules Barbier in 1873 and put to music by the composer Gounod.

The Museum has two posters created for Sarah Bernhardt by Eugène Grasset, in 1890 and 1893. The first shows the actress with short, curly hair, surrounded by lances and arrows, bearing a standard, with her left hand held across her chest and eyes raised towards the sky.

This poster was praised by the critics, however was not to the taste of Sarah Bernhardt. Grasset produced a second portrait in which he depicted her with long hair and eyes fixed on the horizon. The collaboration between Grasset and Sarah Bernhardt did not meet with great prosperity and Alphonse Mucha soon became the actress' official poster designer.

Countless movies were made about *Joan of Arc* world-wide. One of the first was directed by Georges Méliès in 1900.

The Museum exhibits posters for some of these movies, including Carl Dreyer's *The passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928, a silent black and white movie with Renée Falconetti and Victor Fleming's *Joan of Arc* starring Ingrid Bergman.

Many commemorative posters were printed during the 20th century, notably in 1929 in memory of the departure of Joan of Arc from Vaucouleurs, or in 1931 to commemorate her martyrdom.

Fourth Section: Riding on the myth

Advertisement

Joan of Arc's image had been used both by the Church and the republicans and became a selling point with the development of advertising at the end of the 19th century. Advertising agents saw that her prestige could be used for selling their products.

Joan of Arc's image was exploited increasingly and, with developments in mechanical reproduction techniques, featured on a wide range of objects: picture postcards, ceramic, glass and metal objects, mass-produced colour statuettes, etc. She also featured on posters.

Museum has a poster created in 1896 by Georges de Feure, promoting a brand of sheets. The graphics were surprisingly modern, representing Joan of Arc standing, with simply sketched facial features.

Propaganda during the First World War

Joan of Arc became the symbol of national unity during the First World War. Surpassing the divide between the Catholics and the republicans, she personified the defence of the Homeland. This image was conveyed profusely by many an object: propaganda posters, metal statuettes, medallions and patriotic picture postcards.

Historical sites

Some of the buildings on the heights of the city of Vaucouleurs are closely linked to the history of Joan of Arc.

These historical sites include the vestiges of the **château de Vaucouleurs**, a fortified town constructed under the supervision of Robert de Baudricourt, with ramparts 3 to 4 km long and punctuated by 17 towers. Joan of Arc crossed the **Porte de France**, which was partially reconstructed in the 18th century, on February 23rd 1429 when she left Vaucouleurs.

The lime tree is also still there, now a classified Historical Monument, which originally stood in the castle courtyard. Joan of Arc is said to have taken rest at its feet.



Le sacre de Charles VII,
assiette, 19^e siècle



HASKELL COFFIN,
Jeanne d'Arc Affiche,
Lithographie,
Première Guerre Mondiale



HONER JANIN BENOIT,
l'apothéose de Jeanne d'Arc
Vitrail, fin 19^{ème} siècle



A. MERCIÉ,
*Statue Jeanne en armure
couronnée de laurier
prieant,*
Bronze, 1906

Beside the castle stood a **chapel** erected in 1234 over a crypt. A reconstruction project of monumental scale was initiated in the 1880s by the bishop Pagis, but was fast abandoned. Only one tower was finished, partially built from stones retrieved from the castle remains.

The castral chapel was finally rebuilt from 1923-1929 to the same dimensions as the original building. The East gable was surmounted with a statue of Joan of Arc made in the Pierson de Vaucouleurs workshops. The maiden is depicted with her left hand lowered, protecting the city, her other hand holding the sword given to her by Robert de Baudricourt.

The **crypt** is a central historical site in Vaucouleurs, holding the statue of Our **Lady of the Vault**. It was restored in 1996, eliminating the metal elements that had been present in the statue since the start of the XXth century; partially exposing its polychrome work and revealing a sculpted stone beneath the statue representing a figure but also establishing that the sculpture was initially a Virgin with Infant. Joan of Arc would have prayed daily before Our Lady of the Vault during her second stay in Vaucouleurs.

The chapel holds twenty-six stained glass windows created at the Nancy-based Höner, Benoît et Janin workshop, tracing back over the Joan of Arc epic. One of them shows Joan of Arc praying before Our Lady of the Vault, restored to its original state, holding the Infant Christ in her arms.

The Joan of Arc museum holds most of the cartoons for these stained glass windows.

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