

1518, DANCE FEVER

ŒUVRE NOTRE-DAME MUSEUM/
ARTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

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Press Relations

Service communication des musées

Julie Barth

julie.barth@strasbourg.eu

Tél : +33/ (0) 3 68 98 74 78

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1. Exhibition Project

In July 1518, dozens of people suddenly began dancing in the streets of Strasbourg. It seemed that nothing could stop them, men and women alike. This 'epidemic' lasted several weeks and left the people of Strasbourg devastated. Its effect on their minds was such that the phenomenon continued to be discussed by chroniclers of municipal history from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

The exhibition now proposes taking a new look at this 500 year-old affair, observing how the city administration, the clergy and the medical profession tried to set things to rights. Retracing the sequence of events, it will attempt to shed light on the context of this curious historical episode and relate it to other cases of 'dancing mania' that marked the Middle Ages or more recent periods.

Based on contemporary sources, the presentation seeks to distinguish the facts from abusive interpretations giving rise to a simplistic view of a medieval world traversed by irrational urges and shaken by crises. Enhanced by an immersive scenography, this approach, taking into account both the medieval imagination and medieval reality, also focuses on interpretations of these events given by historians and medical specialists up to our own time. In conclusion, it questions other behavioural epidemics of various kinds and the mental or social processes underlying them.

Exhibition Curator: Cécile Dupeux, Curator, Œuvre Notre-Dame Museum

Research Advisors: Georges Bischoff, Emeritus Professor, History of the Middle Ages; Elisabeth Clementz, Senior Lecturer, Institute of the History of Alsace, University of Strasbourg

This exhibition enjoys exceptional financial support from Strasbourg Eurometropolis and received the label "Année européenne du patrimoine culturel 2018" by the Ministry of Culture.

2. Introduction

"These events should be remembered for a thousand years to come, and dances, particularly obscene and indecent dances, should be firmly restrained ...". It was in these terms, several years after the events, that the Strasbourg humanist teacher Hieronymus Gebwiler spoke of the collective dance trauma that shook the city during the summer of 1518.

What was this strange phenomenon, described by some as a dance and by others as a disease or an irrational outburst? Being associated with the figure of St. Guy and most often referred to as "St. Guy's dance " (*morbus sancti Viti* in Latin, *Sankt Vits Tanz* in German), the ailment was observed for the most part in the German-speaking world and along the Rhine-Meuse axis from the 14th century onwards. In its chronic form, people seem to have been seized by extreme anxiety, among other ailments, at the approach of the feast of Saint Guy on 15 June. Hoping to free themselves of their malady, they would then make a dancing pilgrimage, usually accompanied by musicians, to a church or chapel dedicated to the saint. Men and women were affected, most of them being young. The few surviving accounts of these dancing pilgrimages come mainly from the 16th century medical community. As early as 1537, Paracelsus the famous Renaissance physician and philosopher, was the first to attempt to explain the phenomenon.

On rare occasions, the phenomenon developed an epidemic form, regardless of the Saint's Feast Day. This was the case, for example, in several cities in the Netherlands and the Lower Rhine in 1374, in a large-scale episode when onlookers joined the dancers and followed them on their wanderings. Roaming of this kind can also be seen in 1463 in Obernai, where we know that the dancers had travelled 80 km from Saint-Jean-de-Bassel, and perhaps Metz. The Strasbourg 1518 episode is undoubtedly the best documented of these incidents. Beginning in mid-July, it developed rapidly, before subsiding about two months later. It still raises many questions: what was its exact magnitude, who was affected, what really happened? The study of contemporary sources, in particular, the regulatory texts issued by the Strasbourg City Council, brought together and translated in the exhibition catalogue, help to give us an exploratory view of the event as part of an attempt to interpret the facts as closely as possible.

3. Exhibition Layout and Scenography

Thematic structure of the exhibition

Unit 1: The Strasbourg dancing epidemic and the reactions of the municipal administration

An initial approach to the phenomenon as experienced by the inhabitants of Strasbourg can be seen in the descriptions of several cases of compulsive dancing described by the sources.

The section goes on to focus on the role played by the city and its merchant guilds in dealing with a problem of public order and health, and in particular the intervention of the humanist poet Sébastien Brant, secretary of the municipality and member of the city councils.

Unit 2: Dancing epidemics in the Middle Ages, geographical distribution, representations and descriptions

An inventory of the recorded cases of medieval dancing mania shows their almost exclusive location in an area covering the Rhine-Main region and Belgium, an area in which the Germanic and Romance cultural areas overlap.

The few descriptions found in the accounts of physicians who witnessed similar phenomena in the 16th century, and the rare representations of similar episodes, in particular those of the pilgrimage of epileptics at Moelenbeek near Brussels, are the basis of an attempt to outline characteristics of the phenomenon.

Unit 3: The epidemic seen by medical practitioners

This section deals with the complex position of Strasbourg physicians, divided between the use of a traditional astrological or humoral diagnosis and a new desire for observation and scientific analysis, as revealed by the city's numerous remarkable medical publications in the early 16th century. At the same time, we can see the near-continuous presence of religion in medical analysis, the body being perceived as the mirror of the soul.

The subsequent interest taken in this historical episode is shown by early attempts to explain the phenomenon of epidemic dancing, in particular by the physician and alchemist Paracelsus, present in Strasbourg a few years after the event.

Unit 4: Dancing in the Middle Ages: good or bad?

The perception of dancing at the end of the Middle Ages, and in particular the ambiguous judgment of the Church, are discussed here. While this form of expression could indeed be considered as a means of communication with God that could lead to salvation, it was also at times perceived as an instrument of the devil, capable of causing loss of control and leading to all kinds of disturbances.

This mistrust is illustrated here by satirical engravings of disorderly popular dances, evidence of distinctions made between good and bad instruments and treatises or pamphlets against dancing. They help us to understand the fear provoked by these outbreaks of dance fever.

Unit 5: Patron Saints of the dance

The use of religious thaumaturgy, through prayer, masses and pilgrimages, is attested in the dance epidemics of this period. Where Strasbourg was concerned, these pilgrimages were made to the church of Saint-Vit in Saverne. The saints most frequently invoked to obtain a cure were St. Guy (June 15) and St. John the Baptist (June 24), who had been famous as patron saints of the dance and of convulsive maladies since late antiquity. Revering them, however, usually took the form of annually-performed therapeutic rites, aimed at healing as much as prevention. Certainly, they were reputed to cure the ailment, but at the same time they were considered as potential causes of it since their curses could bring about the dreaded trances.

Unit 6: The dancing mania seen by subsequent periods

Versions of the event found in Strasbourg chronicles become progressively more distorted over the centuries to a point where, as the exhibition suggests, the very notion of "historical source" becomes questionable. Another issue that calls for attention is that of far-fetched modern and contemporary interpretations based on a vision of the Middle Ages as an irrational age rooted in superstition.

The interest of the 19th century medical world in what appeared to be a pathological condition is exemplified in a diagnosis made by the celebrated neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and accepted by most of his successors. Developments in the 20th century show a tendency to apply modern medical or psychological formulas to the phenomenon.

Unit 7: Other epidemic phenomena in the world today

In conclusion, we can find references to convulsive dances or depictions of them going back to Antiquity, which considered the demonic possession of bodies as a sign of the presence of the gods. At the same time, a comprehensive review of the phenomenon cannot fail to include examples of ritual dances such as the Tarentella, still performed in today's world.

- **Scenography by Philippe Poirier:**
extracts from the scenographer's project note

Can we for a moment ask ourselves what our reaction would be if we were to witness a fit of dance mania today ? Even if the cultural conventions are very different - and the exhibition will show how much these are factors that shape people's behaviour - the people of Strasbourg at that time must have been as disconcerted by such outlandish behaviour as we would be.

The few testimonies that have come down to us evince barely withheld astonishment, stupefaction and sometimes even desperate fear, something that we can easily understand: "With these sick people, endlessly dancing, we are struck by a great misfortune ..." (Sébastien Brant).

One of the challenges of the exhibition's scenography will be in giving visitors the opportunity to imagine an event of this kind as vividly as possible.

To achieve this imaginative leap, a 'visual reconstruction' of the Strasbourg episode will be created room by room, showing images of the places, the dances and the cultural context. These will be accompanied by short, graphically formatted texts, clearly setting

out the interpretations and commentaries that the phenomenon has elicited, from Paracelsus to the present day.

The atmosphere of the exhibition rooms

The lighting in the exhibition rooms will be subdued. Standing panels painted in bright, warm colours will feature motifs inspired by late medieval engraving.

With the aim of creating an immersion effect and thus fuelling visitors' imagination, we are emphasizing the theatrical side of the visual elements.

These visual elements will be "formatted" in close relation with the texts referring to them. Titling and labels will serve to guide the visitor's curiosity while helping to raise awareness of the reality of the events represented.

Lighting

Lighting effects will be diffuse, to encourage concentration or, in specific cases, used to faintly outline an engraving or a written document. In places, light sources will be coloured to enhance the colours of the walls.

Other light sources:

- daylight from windows, the view onto the cathedral becoming part of the staging process
- video screens displaying documentary extracts

4. Works presented in the exhibition

Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin

Source manuscrite du 25 juillet 1518 : lettre du magistrat à l'évêque Wilhelm, cote 12 J 1495

Archives Municipales de la Ville et de l'Eurométropole, Strasbourg

- Source manuscrite du 23 juillet 1518. Délibérations de la commission nommée par le Magistrat, Série III, 200/15
- Source manuscrite du 2 août 1518. Feuillet signé Sébastien Brant, 1 MR3, f° 72 r
- Sources manuscrites : note du magistrat aux confréries, Série III, 200/15
- Source manuscrite du 23 juillet 1518 : instructions concernant les personnes envoyées à Saverne, Série III, 200/15
- Interdiction des danses, 15 juin 1547, AMS X 140

Bibliothèque de Médecine et d'Odontologie de l'Université de Strasbourg

- D^r. Roth, *Histoire de la musculation irrésistible*, Paris, 1850, cote J 112 693
- J.F.C. Hecker, *Die Tanzwuth*, Berlin 1832, cote J 119 956
- Paracelse, *Erster Theil Der Bücher vnd Schrifften des Edlen Hochgelehrten vnd Bewehrten Philosophi vnnd Medici, Philipi Theophrasti Bombast von Hohenheim Paracelsi genannt*, Bâle, 1589, cote JR 14 358, 1

Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg

- Hans von Gersdorff, *Feldbuch der Wundtarzney*, 1528, R101 298
- Lorentz Fries, *Spiegel der Artzney*, 1518, R 54,1
- Hieronymus Brunschwig, *Das Buch zu distillieren*, 1519, R 10 418
- Petrus de Crescentiis, *Von dem Nutz der Ding...*, 1518 ; R 10 386
- Schilter Johann, *Die Alteste Teutsche so wohl Allgemeine als insonderheit Elsassische und Strassburgische Chronicke von Jacob von Königshoven [...]*, 1698, cote : M 2.893.2
- Cyriacus Spangenberg, *Trostspiegel Ehenspiegel*, 1561, R 11 104
- Michel Kleinlawel, *Strassburgische Chronick*, 1625, R 102 687
- Jean-Martin Charcot, *Les démoniaques dans l'art*, 1887, Bh 10 452
- Hans Koegler, *Einzelne Holz und Metallschnitte...*, 1909, cote Bh.1592

Médiathèque André Malraux, Strasbourg

Hartmann Schedel, *Weltchronik*, 1493, K 3.246

Musée du Château des Rohan, Saverne

Relief avec la Vierge à l'Enfant, saint Guy et un saint pape, inv. D10
Bois polychrome

Archives municipales, Saverne

Livre de donations, 1508, liasse 295

Bibliothèque des Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg

- *La danse de Saint-Vit*, dans les « Images alsaciennes » n° 2, 1893, Gravure sur cuivre par Spindler

Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins, Strasbourg

- Portrait de Paracelse, entre 1620 et 1668
Gravure, papier eau-forte
inv. 77.2018.0.86
- Couple dansant – Barthel Beham, 1524,
Gravure au burin sur papier vergé
inv. 77.002.0.23
- Couple dansant – Barthel Beham, 1522,
inv. 77.002.0.38
Gravure au burin sur papier vergé
- Couple dansant – Barthel Beham, 1537,
Gravure au burin sur papier vergé
inv. 77.002.0.45
- Albrecht Dürer, *Le joueur de cornemuse* (copie)
inv. 77.007.0.16
- Danse macabre d'après les peintures murales de l'ancienne église des dominicains (1474-75),
Gravure sur bois
inv. 77.998.0.3789
- Chapelle de Saint Vit, Saverne : Album de Henri Charles Muller, *Souvenirs pittoresques des Vosges*,
fol. 39, Lithographie, inv. CE. XXXIV.43
- Gravure figurant des danseurs lors de la Fête Dieu, tirée de la *Chronique de Schedel*, 1493,
inv 77.998.0.4187

Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame, Strasbourg

- Mort dansant,
Strasbourg vers 1520
Sculpture sur bois avec reste de polychromie
inv. MOND 300
- Chapiteau historié avec couples de danseurs,
2^e moitié du XIV^e siècle
Grès rose
Inv. 22.995.0.193
- Colonnnette avec chapiteau : sarabande de singes et de moines
Strasbourg, cathédrale, XVI^e siècle (?)
inv. 22.998.0.394

5. Catalogue

1518, Strasbourg, la fièvre de la danse

Prix provisoire : 20€

152 pages, 40 images

ISBN : 9782351251614

Sommaire :

La danse de 1518 à l'épreuve des sources (Élisabeth Clementz)

Vérités historiques (Georges Bischoff)

Paracelse et la danse de Saint-Guy (Roberto Poma)

Danse et désordre (Kéline Gotman)

Transcription et traduction des sources (Élisabeth Clementz)

Extraits :

Au mois de juillet 1518, la ville de Strasbourg est confrontée à un curieux problème de santé publique. Quelque cinquante personnes se mettent à danser jusqu'à épuisement dans les rues de la ville. Pour l'homme du XXI^e siècle, les symptômes de cette maladie, appelée « danse de Saint-Guy » ou « chorée », sont étranges. En réalité, le terme de « danse de Saint-Guy » a été appliqué à de nombreuses maladies. Pour les uns, il s'agit de l'épilepsie, Backman l'explique par l'ergotisme, d'autres par l'encéphalite. Au XVII^e siècle, Thomas Sydenham y voit un problème neurologique. Pour Witkowski, un psychiatre du XIX^e siècle, la femme qui s'était mise à danser en premier était « sujette à des attaques de nerfs ». Avec quelques autres hystériques, elle aurait entraîné des enfants, des faibles d'esprit, des oisifs, des vauriens et des imposteurs. Witkowski précise qu'il existe à ce sujet de nombreux témoignages de contemporains. Or il n'en est rien.

(Élisabeth Clementz – « La danse de 1518 à l'épreuve des sources »)

Frau Trofféa n'a jamais existé. Et elle n'a pas commis d'infanticide dans l'indifférence générale pour échapper aux pulsions de cannibalisme ou de coprophagie imputées aux Strasbourgeois de l'été 1518. La femme qui a ouvert le bal des « danseurs fous de Strasbourg » et qui aurait dansé sans discontinuer pendant quatre ou six jours est restée anonyme dans le seul document authentique qui lui attribue les débuts de cette mystérieuse épidémie. Elle ne se prénomait pas davantage Ennelin, n'était pas la femme d'un graveur et ne demeurait pas rue du Jeu-des-Enfants, pour autant qu'on puisse l'affirmer d'après les sources de première main. Son patronyme est une invention pédante de Paracelse (1493-1541), à partir du substantif grec *tropaia* (τροπαία), dont le sens est « qui fait tourner » : c'est un proche parent du mot « psychotrope ». Il est impossible de dire quand il l'en a affublée, puisque sa première mention n'apparaît qu'en 1565, dans la publication posthume de son traité sur les causes et les origines des maladies, plus précisément dans le sous-chapitre sur « la maladie appelée danse de Saint-Guy ». Rien ne permet de dire s'il se rapporte, explicitement, au cas observé à Strasbourg en 1518, mais c'est possible : dans cette hypothèse, c'est un témoignage indirect, car le séjour de Paracelse à Strasbourg n'eut lieu qu'à la fin 1526.

Ce qui est vrai, cependant, c'est que ces événements inouïs, portés par la vague médiatique d'un cinq centième anniversaire, continuent à faire tourner les têtes, et, de ce fait, interpellent aussi bien le grand public que les chercheurs.

En effet, cette affaire révèle aussi bien des enjeux scientifiques passés ou présents que leur versant émotionnel : elle invite à explorer l'imaginaire de l'ensemble de ses protagonistes, victimes, spectateurs ou commentateurs, et à réfléchir sur la vérité historique, en proscrivant l'anachronisme, en convoquant raison et comparaison. L'histoire ne se fait pas à coup d'approximations, d'allusions et d'ellipses.

(Georges Bischoff - « Vérités historiques »)

« J'écris sur la danse folle [*unsinnigen tanz*] que l'homme de la rue appelle danse de Saint-Guy [*S. Veits tanz*]. J'écris sur le suicide, sur les maladies imaginaires [*falschen krankheiten*] nées de la sorcellerie, j'écris sur les possédés. Ces maladies n'ont jamais été décrites par la médecine. Il me paraît injuste qu'on les ait oubliées. » C'est ainsi que vers 1537 Paracelse, dans un de ses traités les plus polémiques, attire l'attention de ses contemporains sur un fléau passé sous silence par les médecins des universités. Il s'agit d'une série d'épidémies de danse qui sévit depuis plusieurs siècles tout particulièrement en Alsace et en Rhénanie. Cette contagion choréique est associée à la figure de saint Vit dans les pays germaniques au moins depuis le XV^e siècle. En France, la maladie de Saint-Vit (allemand *Veitstanz* ; latin *morbus sancti Viti*) se dit « danse de Saint-Guy ». L'oubli dénoncé par Paracelse n'est guère étonnant. Trois raisons peuvent être évoquées. Premièrement, la danse de Saint-Guy est une maladie contagieuse pour laquelle la médecine gréco-arabe, dont les universités européennes du Moyen Âge sont héritières, n'a pas de remède ni d'explication. Deuxièmement, la danse en soi n'est pas une maladie, contrairement au trouble de la locomotion décrit par Galien sous le nom de *scélotyrbe*, qui sera assimilé à la danse de Saint-Guy au siècle des Lumières. Troisièmement, puisque la médecine consiste en un savoir doublé d'un art tous deux fondés sur l'observation, sur l'expérience et sur la raison, la piété populaire et les saints de l'histoire chrétienne ne devraient pas y avoir droit de cité. Pourtant, Paracelse estime qu'il est « injuste » de ne pas l'étudier. Cette prise de position est bien digne du médecin le plus dissident et le plus original du XVI^e siècle.

(Roberto Poma - « Paracelse et la danse de Saint-Guy »)

Et pourtant, le mythe de la manie dansante surgit, s'amplifie, se transforme et se répand. Des danseurs de Saint-Guy aux tarentulés, il y a, semble-t-il, un désordre commun - celui de se passionner de façon excessive. Les images de chaos se dispersent et se propagent - se muant en images frappantes de corps et d'esprits tordus.

L'enthousiasme a beaucoup inquiété les penseurs, qui l'ont interprété comme un excès de fanatisme religieux. D'Isaac Taylor en Angleterre aux rééditions de Kant, qui s'alarmait de la « folie » (*Wahnsinn*) susceptible d'affecter ceux qui observaient de loin les événements de la Révolution française, l'enthousiasme semblait à tout moment capable d'emporter comme par contagion hommes et femmes, jeunes et vieux, réduits aux automatismes de leur système nerveux : quel meilleur déclencheur qu'une forte émotion ? Ainsi ont circulé maintes histoires au sujet de danseurs, de foules, tous victimes d'un irrésistible mouvement d'émotion agitant leur corps comme leur esprit. Ce diagnostic, très répandu au XIX^e siècle dans la littérature scientifique sur les épidémies et les monomanies, revenait à qualifier de « folie » toute manifestation d'une grande émotion.

(Kéline Gotman - « Danse et désordre »)

6. Educational and Cultural Events

Performance dansée

Vendredi 19 octobre de 18h à 21h (lors de l'inauguration de l'exposition)

La fièvre de la danse

Direction artistique Mark Tompkins, musique de Rodolphe Burger et Philippe Poirier, avec la Compagnie Dégadézo.

Une coproduction POLE-SUD, CDCN / Ville de Strasbourg

Place du Château

Gratuit

Visite commentée

Tous les dimanches à 11h, du 21 octobre au 24 février (sauf le 11 novembre)

Tarif : entrée du musée

Visite commentée en allemand / Führungen auf Deutsch

Samedis 3 novembre, 1^{er} décembre, 5 janvier et 2 février, à 15h

Tarif : entrée du musée

Visite « Le temps d'une rencontre »

Samedi 15 décembre à 14h30

« Genèse d'une exposition »

Avec Cécile Dupeux, commissaire de l'exposition et conservatrice du musée.

Tarif : entrée du musée

Samedi 26 janvier à 14h30

« Un regard neuropsychologique »

Avec Iris Chabrier, enseignante-chercheuse à la faculté des Sciences du sport de l'Université de Strasbourg.

Tarif : entrée du musée

Samedi 9 février à 14h30

« Archives et sources de l'épidémie de danse »

Avec Élisabeth Clémentz, maître de conférences à l'Institut d'Histoire d'Alsace.

Tarif : entrée du musée

Visite « Voir les musées autrement »

Samedi 2 février à 14h30

Visite de l'exposition interprétée en L.S.F.

Tarif : entrée du musée

Atelier 6/11ans

Samedis 16 et 23 février, à 14h30

« Atelier philo ! Faire l'Histoire avec des drôles d'histoires »

On parle encore aujourd'hui des hommes et des femmes qui ont dansé follement dans les rues de Strasbourg, voilà 500 ans. Est-ce qu'ils ont perdu la tête ? Est-ce que vivre au Moyen Âge rend fou ? Que penser de cette histoire aujourd'hui ?

Tarif : entrée du musée

Atelier jeunes/adultes

Jeudis 10 et 17 janvier à 9h, 24 et 31 janvier à 18h

« Respirez au musée ! »

Explorer le lien corps/esprit par le souffle, revenir au ressenti, profiter de l'aura des œuvres d'art pour entrer différemment dans le flux de la journée, ou en sortir !

Avec Sabine Blanc – de Carpentier, art-thérapeute.

Tarif : entrée du musée

Atelier familles « Les Petites formes »

Mercredis 24 et 31 octobre à 14h30 et 15h30

« Quand le corps dit »

Quelle forme donner aux sentiments ? Quelle est la couleur de l'humeur ? Comment illustrer les émotions ?

Tarif : entrée du musée

Projection / débat

Jeudi 25 octobre, à 18h

La Taranta

De Gianfranco Mingozzi, à partir des travaux de l'anthropologue Ernesto De Martino, 1962, Pantheon Film

Organisée par l'Association d'ethnologie de l'Université de Strasbourg.

Rendez-vous à l'Université, bâtiment Le Patio, amphithéâtre 5

Gratuit

Conférences

Jeudi 22 novembre à 18h30

« *Catastrophe ou Mystification, l'épidémie de danse de 1518* »

Avec Georges Bischoff, professeur émérite d'Histoire du Moyen Âge de l'Université de Strasbourg.

Organisé en collaboration avec la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg (BNUS)

À la BNUS

Gratuit

Mardi 15 janvier 2019 à 18h

« *Choréomanies d'hier et d'aujourd'hui : le cas de la danse de Saint-Guy* »

Avec Roberto Poma, philosophe et historien de la médecine.

Dans la grande salle de l'Institut d'anatomie de l'hôpital civil de Strasbourg

Gratuit

Performance

Mercredi 3 avril à 18h

Choréomanies

Restitution des workshops menés par des artistes-chercheurs et des étudiants, portés par Janig Bégoc et Johanna Renard, du département des arts visuels de la faculté des Arts.

Rendez-vous au MAMCS.

7. The Œuvre Notre-Dame Museum – Arts of the Middle Ages

Situated at the foot of the Cathedral, the Oeuvre Notre Dame Museum invites us to explore seven centuries of art in Strasbourg and the Upper Rhine region. The city's rich Medieval and Renaissance collections reflect its illustrious past. Its position astride communication routes between France, Bohemia, Flanders and Italy made it a major artistic centre of the Germanic Empire from the 13th to the 16th centuries,.

HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

The creation of the museum was the work of Hans Haug. The chief curator and later director of the Museums of Strasbourg from 1919 to 1963, Haug was also responsible for reorganizing them. It was due to him that, after 1929, works of medieval art previously kept in different places were brought together in the Maison de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame. These included works from other museums, sculptures taken from the cathedral and the collections of the Society for the Conservation of Historic Monuments in Alsace, largely put together following widespread destruction of Romanesque and Gothic buildings in the late 19th century.

The museum was opened to the public in 1931, with the sculpture groups taken from the cathedral and sections containing furniture, ironwork, tapestries, stained glass and wood carving. It then went through several phases of expansion, with the successive addition of paintings, silverware, archaeology, furniture and Romanesque sculpture. Several Strasbourg houses and interiors saved from demolition and a number of older architectural elements were also gradually moved to the site.

It was not until 1956 that Hans Haug was able to complete the full museum layout, designed as a series of echoes between the works and their architectural setting.

THE BUILDINGS

The museum occupies a group of buildings having the Maison de l'Oeuvre Notre Dame as its centre. Since the 13th century this building has housed the institution responsible for collecting and managing funds for the construction and maintenance of the cathedral. It was given the name *Frauenhaus* (House of Our Lady), and for several centuries it housed the Foundation's financial and administrative offices, as well as accommodation for the collector and the architect, together with the masons' and stone-cutters' Lodge .

The two buildings of the Foundation face the Cathedral. The one on the left, with a simple stepped gable, dates from 1347 and was remodelled, mainly in the 16th century. That on the right, its gable richly decorated with scrolls and vases, was built in 1579 in Renaissance style combined with reminiscences of the late Gothic period, to plans by the architect Hans Thoman Uhlberger. The two buildings are linked by galleries and reached by a superb spiral staircase, built by the same architect. The entire ground floor of the Renaissance building is occupied by the former meeting room of the Cathedral's masons and stonecutters, its walls bearing remnants of wall paintings attributed to Wendel Dietterlin.

THE COLLECTIONS

Masterpieces of Gothic statuary

The 13th-century statuary from Strasbourg Cathedral is among the most prestigious of museum collections. To preserve them from weather erosion and pollution, these

sculptures were removed from the cathedral in the early 20th century and have since been replaced by copies.

These masterpieces of Gothic sculpture - The Church, the Synagogue, The Tempter - occupy the largest room in the museum, housed in the former Hôtel du Cerf. The sculptures, mostly taken from the portals and the rood screen, come from the workshops responsible for the construction of the transept and the south portal, the rood screen and the nave and west doors of the cathedral.

The artistic high-point of the 15th century

The second floor of the museum, a series of small intimate rooms to which have been added Gothic woodwork, is entirely devoted to the arts of the 15th century. These outstanding collections bear witness to an extraordinary artistic flourishing of Strasbourg and the Upper Rhine plain in the late Middle Ages. Painted altarpieces, wood and stone sculpture, engraving, stained glass, tapestry, gold- and silverware, all made substantial advances at this time in Strasbourg and Colmar, Basel and Freiburg. In all these fields, a few very great artists influenced the development of the arts beyond the boundaries of the region. The sculptor Nikolaus Gerhaert van Leyden, the Colmar painter and engraver Martin Schongauer, the Strasbourg Master engraver "E.S.", the Basel painter Conrad Witz, the master glassblower Peter Hemmel from Andlau are names that marked this extraordinarily fertile period.

The architectural drawings of the Cathedral

In 2015, two new rooms were created at third-floor level to present the unique collection of medieval architectural drawings of the cathedral, on loan from the Fondation de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame. A light- and climate-controlled conservation room can be visited on Sunday mornings (guided tours at 11 am and 11.30 am). Four of the drawings are presented in rotation. A permanently accessible interpretation room presents the complete collection in digital form. It describes the history and technique of the drawings as well as the world of the cathedral builders.

8. Visitor Information

Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame – Arts du Moyen Âge
3, Place du Château, Strasbourg
tel. +33 (0)3 68 98 51 60
Tram stop: Langstross/Grand'Rue

Opening times

From Tuesday to Sunday. 10 am – 6 pm

The exhibition and the museum are closed on Mondays

Annual closing days: 1 and 11 November, 25 December, 1 January, Good Friday, 1 May

Reception of Groups

Advance telephone booking is required for groups:

Service Éducatif des Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg

tel. 03 68 98 51 54 (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am - 12.30 pm. School holidays, 9 am - 12 noon).

Tickets

Standard rate: 6.50 € (reduced: 3.50 €).

Admission free

- visitors under age 18
- Carte Culture card holders
- Atout Voir card holders
- Museums Pass Musées card holders
- Édu'Pass card holders
- visitors with disabilities
- students of art, history of art and architecture
- persons seeking employment
- recipients of social assistance
- badge-holding employees of Strasbourg Eurometropolis

Admission free to all visitors

1st Sunday in the month

1 day pass: 12 €, reduced 6 €

(access to all Strasbourg museums and temporary exhibitions)

3 day pass: 18 €, reduced 12 €

(access to all Strasbourg museums and temporary exhibitions)

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More at www.museumspass.com