

A medieval tapestry depicting a scene of capture or battle. A central figure, a man with a beard and a tall, pointed hat, is shown in profile, wearing a yellow tunic with a red collar and a red sash. He is holding a white horse by its bridle. To his right, another man in a blue and white striped tunic is visible, holding a long spear. The background shows a wooden structure, possibly a ship or a fortification, with various figures and details. The overall style is characteristic of medieval manuscript illumination or tapestry.

# TREASURES

FROM THE LATE

# MIDDLE AGES

EXHIBITION  
BOOKLET



Organized in collaboration with  
the Musée de Cluny, Musée National  
du Moyen Âge

Grand  
patrimoine

Loire  
Atlantique

## Treasures from the Late Middle Ages

**The exhibition *Treasures from the Late Middle Ages* presents some of the masterpieces from the collections of the Musée de Cluny – musée national du Moyen Âge, and the Musée Dobrée.**

All of these works, demonstrating an exceptional artistry and technical skill, were commissioned by wealthy noblemen or the bourgeoisie, and produced by talented artists and craftsmen.

The period stretching from the end of the Hundred Years' War (1453) to the coronation of François I (1515) witnessed a number of new developments in the Kingdom of France.

Politically, after a troubled period, the French Monarchy returned to power and the reigns of Charles VIII (1470-1498) and Louis XII (1462-1515) – the successive husbands of Anne de Bretagne (1477-1514) – were a period of prosperity.

Socially, the difficulties and hardships experienced by the population in the 14th and early 15th centuries – wars, epidemics (the Bubonic plague, for example) and famines – resulted in drastic changes, including renewed aristocracy and growing power of the merchant bourgeoisie.

In terms of the arts, the Kingdom of France was influenced by a number of different sources: Flanders to the north, and Italy to the south. Artistic production from this period was also marked by some remarkable technical innovations, such as the invention of the printing press.

**This exhibition takes visitors on a journey of discovery through the late Middle Ages with a special focus on religious spaces, like the church, and domestic spaces, like the castle.**



Saint Barbara: © RMN-Grand Palais  
(musée de Cluny - musée national du Moyen Âge)  
Jean-Gilles Berizzi



## From the chapel...

# Religious Art from the Late Middle Ages

Religion still played a very important role at the end of the Middle Ages and had a significant influence on the daily lives of men and women from that period. Following the hardships suffered by populations in the previous decades (wars, famines, and epidemics), religion and the Church offered a reassuring framework with the promise of redemption through the figures of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints. The latter served as intermediaries between God and devotees.

The power of the Church could be seen in the numerous artistic commissions used to decorate and adorn cathedrals, parish churches, abbeys and even private chapels. These commissions were at the initiative of clerics but also of rich lay people worried about their salvation, and keen to display their status and wealth by making a donation of a remarkable work of art to a church.

However, the Church was also a victim of its own success: it struggled to respond to the enthusiastic demands of the wealthiest and most demanding members of its congregation. The latter were in search of a more intimate form of devotion: a direct link to God. New types of religious objects came to translate this new and more personal form of devotion, outside of the traditional framework of the Church: small, precious objects that could easily be carried on the person.

## The liturgical space

The liturgy refers to the ensemble of religious rituals (ceremonies, prayers and hymns). The most important element of the Christian liturgy is the mass. It takes place in a well-defined space such as a church or a chapel. The layout and decor of this space are crucial, as in order to foster the adhesion of devotees, the liturgy relies on painted, sculpted and woven images. Interestingly in the Middle Ages, these images weren't necessarily of a religious nature. Indeed, in the thinking and culture of the time, there wasn't a clear dichotomy between the religious and the profane. Therefore, it wasn't unusual to find profane images included in religious works, sometimes even images that made use of humour, thereby making them more accessible to devotees. Such images were typically used to denounce vice and sin.

## The cult of the saints



The importance of the saints, who served as intermediaries between God and devotees, was a constant feature throughout the Middle Ages. Their cult was intimately connected to the cult of saintly relics, corporeal remains of a holy man or woman, or objects said to have been in contact with their person. Pilgrimages were undertaken by devotees, oftentimes over long distances, to venerate the saints. At the end of the Middle Ages, there was a large number of male and female saints: each individual, family, business and town was placed under the protection of one or several saints, clearly identifiable by their attributes. The dominance of this cult explains the countless commissions of painted or sculpted representations of the saints for the decoration of churches and private chapels. They were also commonly used to adorn town gates and craftsmen's signs. The way of representing the saints evolved in order to make them more realistic to devotees: artists attempted to render them more humanlike by clothing them in the fashions of the time, and including an increasing number of realistic details or features.

Reliquary pendants:  
© Chantal Hémon - Musée Dobrée  
Grand Patrimoine de Loire-Atlantique

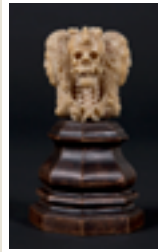
## The development of patronage and personal devotion

At the end of the Middle Ages, the wealthy classes found themselves in a paradoxical position with regard to the Church. On the one hand, they made numerous donations of artworks to the clergy, not only as an expression of their devotion, but to ensure the salvation of their soul, and to perpetuate their memory. They invested the sacred space through the growth of private chapels in certain churches. The former were reserved for their families. On the other hand, certain donors were in search of a more intimate and direct relationship to God, without the intermediary of clerics. Books of hours, jewelled reliquaries, and rosary beads are just some examples of the magnificent response to this particular need. Furthermore, the end of the Middle Ages was marked by a certain taste for a macabre realism: after decades of upheaval, the awareness of the brevity of life was particularly strong. Calamities had conferred death with a realistic and frightening dimension, which was often copied by artists in their artwork.





**Statue:  
Saint Eligius**  
Wood (lime tree)  
Southern Germany  
(Bavaria),  
circa 1510-1520  
Musée Dobrée, inv. 953.7.1



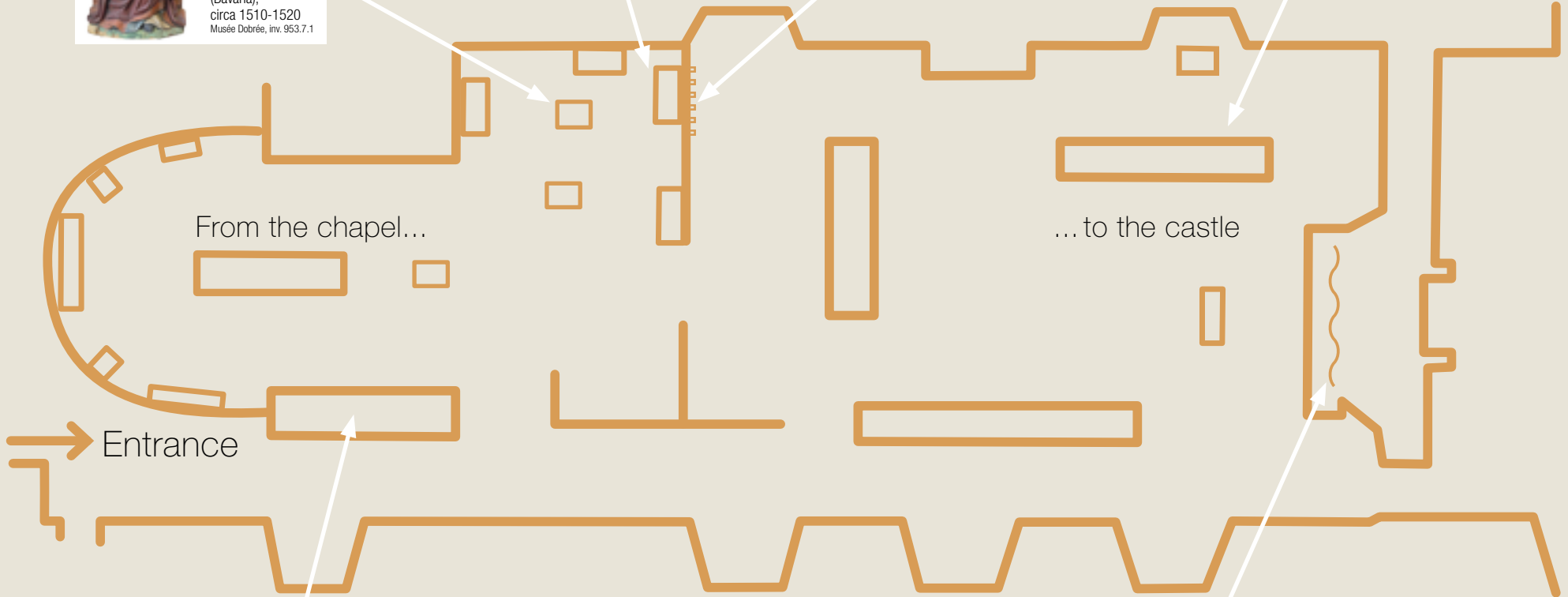
**Rosary bead:  
Memento mori**  
Ivory  
Germany,  
early 16th century  
Musée Dobrée, inv. 969.7.3



**Seven sculpted panels**  
Wood  
France (?), late 15th –  
early 16th century  
Musée Dobrée,  
inv. 903.175 à 903.181



**Comb**  
Boxwood  
France, circa 1500  
Musée de Cluny - musée national  
du Moyen Âge, Cl. 1390



**Choir stalls from  
the abbey of  
Saint-Lucien  
de Beauvais**  
Oak  
Picardy, last quarter  
of the 15th century  
Musée de Cluny - musée national  
du Moyen Âge, Cl. 22859



**Tapestry:  
The Battle and  
Embarkation**  
Wool and silk  
Southern Netherlands,  
first quarter of the 16th  
century  
Musée de Cluny - musée national  
du Moyen Âge, Cl.14335



## ...to the castle

# The Art of Living in the Late Middle Ages

The late Middle Ages was characterized by the growing place of art in society. Members of the wealthy upper classes, particularly the aristocracy and the wealthy merchant bourgeoisie, were keen to embellish their everyday lives, homes and appearance, with expensive artworks and objets d'art. The aim was of course, to show off their wealth. Individuals were identified by the way they lived, ate, dressed and entertained themselves. The objects that played a role in this veritable art of living had a dual function: to respond to a use or need for comfort but also to display the social status of their owner. They were therefore created by renowned masters and were placed in a prominent position either on the owner's clothing or in his home. We are referring here to the domain of profane art: although religious images didn't disappear, artistic commissions were no longer entirely subjected to the constraints of the Church. There was greater freedom of expression in terms of decoration and form, and artworks could more accurately express the tastes, culture and lifestyle of the person who had commissioned them.

## Interior decoration and household comforts

The wealthy home at the end of the Middle Ages could take several forms: a château or manor on a country estate, or a private mansion or town house in the city. Owners increasingly put the emphasis on comfort and privacy. There was a clear distinction between the private and public spheres.

In their daily lives, the wealthy were surrounded by beautiful objects and sumptuous furnishings. In public reception spaces, particular attention was paid to the decor, from the floors to the ceilings, with coloured flagstones, tapestries, sculpted chests, and stained-glass windows. While individuals could relax in their private quarters, it was in the public reception spaces where guests were received that their wealth, status and power were on show. Magnificent banquets were typically held in these spaces, allowing the owners to display their means. Oftentimes, the family's heraldic insignia was included in the decor.

# Games, hunting and warfare

The quality of the artworks commissioned for games and hunting bear witness to the importance of such activities in the lives of the aristocracy. Games were widespread in medieval society. Some of them however, such as backgammon or chess, were reserved for the wealthiest members of society. While peasants hunted using traps, hunting using dogs and birds of prey required the participation of skilled personnel, as well as the need to train and care for dogs and falcons. Only the aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie had the means for this. The success of hunting manuals illustrate the importance accorded to such activities at this time. Hunting should not be considered as training for war however: technically, these two practices were very different. Hunting was an enjoyable leisure activity for men who were used to the violent exercises of fighting, warfare and tournaments. Interestingly, training for the art of war was an important part of the education of young members of the aristocracy.

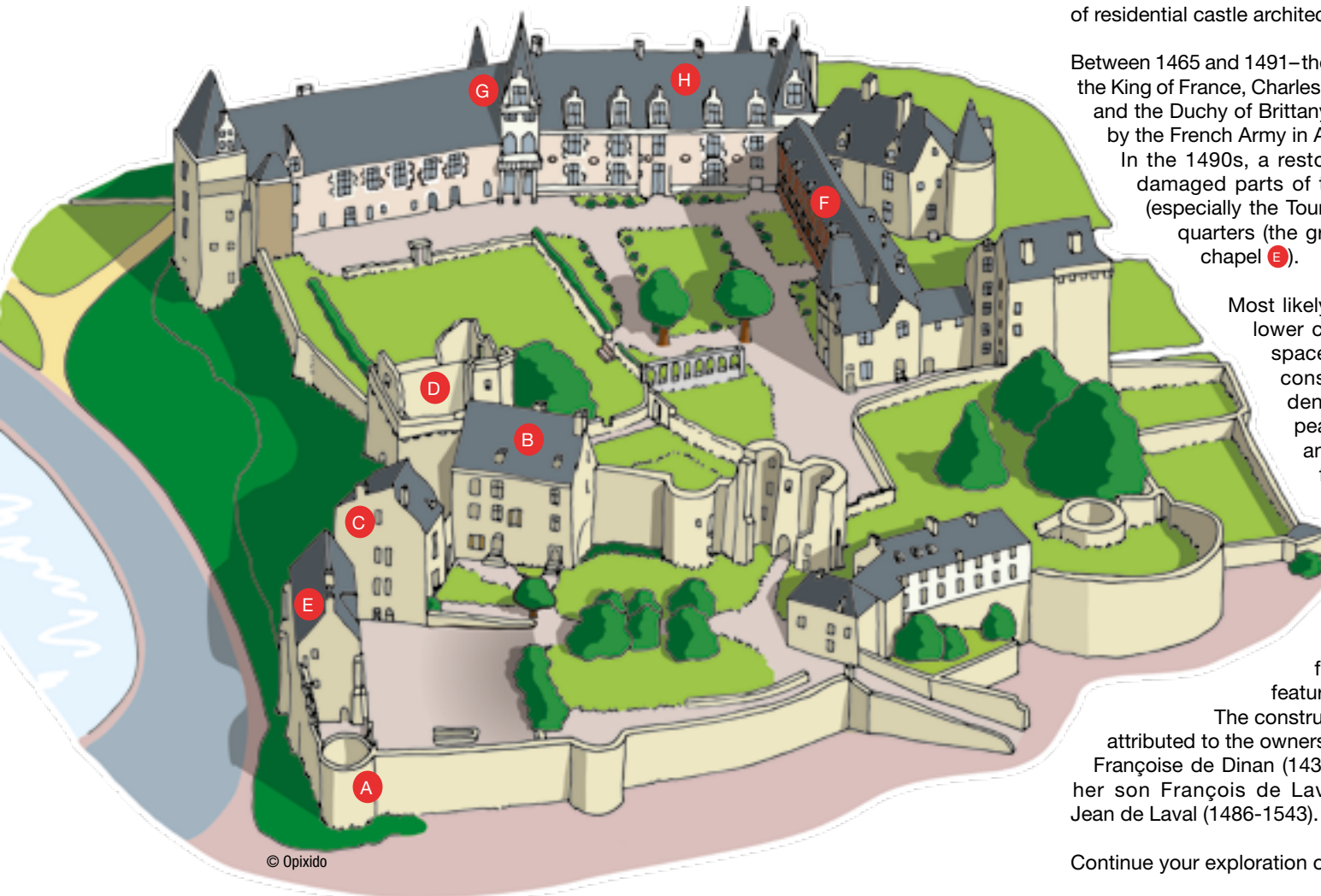
# Beauty and adornment

Cleanliness and hygiene were appreciated in the Middle Ages and bathing was considered an agreeable pastime. For the wealthy upper classes, baths were generally taken in one's bedroom, in a wooden tub. Those who could afford to do so equipped their homes with a bath. Bathing was seen as an enjoyable and relaxing activity, and was frequently accompanied by beauty rituals. In the late Middle Ages, increasing importance was placed on one's outward appearance. By the 14th century, there was a clear distinction between men and women's clothes and clothing had even evolved to suit its use or function; in the 15th century, clothing and fashion continued to evolve and were influenced by quite rapidly changing styles. The aristocracy displayed their status by means of their external appearance: they carefully selected furs and fabrics and adorned their clothing with head-dresses, accessories and jewels.



Casket: © RMN-Grand Palais  
(musée de Cluny - musée national  
du Moyen Âge) / Jean-Gilles Berizzi

# The Château de Châteaubriant in the Late Middle Ages



The Château de Châteaubriant is a prime example of the evolution of residential castle architecture at the end of the Middle Ages.

Between 1465 and 1491—the date of the marriage of Anne de Bretagne with the King of France, Charles VIII—a conflict opposed the Kingdom of France and the Duchy of Brittany: the Breton castle was seized and destroyed by the French Army in April 1488.

In the 1490s, a restoration campaign began. Work began on the damaged parts of the medieval castle: firstly, the fortifications (especially the Tour de la Torche (tower) **A**) then all of the living quarters (the great hall **B** and smaller hall **C**, keep **D**, and chapel **E**).

Most likely several years later, work continued into the lower courtyard to the east. This was a large, open space, suited to the creation of a garden and the construction of a newer, more comfortable residence. The context of the times had changed: peace now reigned between France and Brittany and the defensive function of the medieval fortified castle was no longer a priority. What was important at this time was a comfortable dwelling, a pleasant place to live, which included the latest Italian decorative features: galleries **F**, a straight monumental staircase rather than a spiral one **G**, a facade with Ionic architectural elements on the ground floor, Corinthian elements on the first floor and a combination of architectural features at the dormer level **H**...

The construction of this new residential dwelling has been attributed to the owners of the château at the end of the Middle Ages: Françoise de Dinan (1435-1499), the governess of Anne de Bretagne, her son François de Laval († 1502) and especially her grandson, Jean de Laval (1486-1543).

Continue your exploration of the château with the visitor's guide !



# Treasures from the Late Middle Ages

## I Exhibition - Château de Châteaubriant

Friday 9 June <> Sunday 17 September 2017

Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10.30am to 6pm

General public – free admission

### I Guided visits of the exhibition

from Tuesday to Sunday at 3pm and 4pm - duration 40 mins

Free for the under 14s, reduced rate: €2, full fare: €3.

### I Family calligraphy workshops

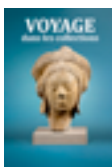
5 & 26 July and 16 August - duration 1hr

From 8 yrs+ - fixed rate: €3 per participant.



Exhibition organized in collaboration  
with the Musée de Cluny, Musée National  
du Moyen Âge.

## 2017 Exhibition Programme



### A Journey through the Collections

Musée Dobrée  
in Nantes  
21 May > 1 Oct. 2017



### The Beauty of Ancient Times

Garenne Lemot  
at Gétigné-Clisson  
30 June > 1 Oct. 2017

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May 2017