



MUSÉE DE CLUNY
le monde médiéval

PRESS RELEASE
August 2024

MAKING STONES SPEAK. NOTRE-DAME'S MEDIEVAL SCULPTURES

From 19 November 2024 to 16 March 2025, the Musée de Cluny – Musée National du Moyen Âge is hosting an exhibition on medieval carved decorations from the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Not since the early 1980s have cathedral sculptures in storage at the museum been the subject of such in-depth research. The exhibition “Making Stones Speak. Notre Dame’s Medieval Sculptures” vows to deepen our knowledge on these collections by revealing the findings of a major research and restoration programme, underway since 2022.

Since its creation, the Musée de Cluny has been the main conservation site for Notre-Dame sculptures. The ‘Notre-Dame room’ is presenting the main sculpted fragments from the cathedral, discovered in 1977 beneath a Parisian town house, including the famous faces of kings alongside other pieces that once adorned the building and have since been preserved in museums. It is almost 40 years since these sculptures were last researched and restored. The current restoration work at the cathedral and the resultant high level of scientific study have created an opportunity for the museum to re-examine its own collections. 2022 saw it launch a research and restoration programme on a selection of pieces, conducted in partnership with the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France (C2RMF) and the Laboratoire de recherche des monuments historiques (LRMH).

The exhibition shines a new light on iconic works from the Musée de Cluny collection. In addition to works usually on display in the Notre-Dame’s sculpture hall are pieces never before shown to the public. A selection of fragments allow us to imagine what has disappeared from the cathedral today, such as the bodies of the colossal statues in the Galerie des rois. An entire document dedicated to the statue of Adam, a masterpiece of Gothic sculpture, details its eventful history right up to present day. The exhibition recreates the layout of restored fragments from the Sainte-Anne portal and the lintels of the Last Judgement portal. It also showcases traces of polychromy that were recovered from these works.

The event is an opportunity to unveil to the public for the first time around 30 fragments of rood screen dating back to the 1230s, which were uncovered during preventive archaeological research by Inrap (Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives) from spring 2022 onwards. Thanks to a loan from Inrap and scientific support from the Île-de-France Drac, the unprecedented presentation of these fragments has been made possible through work to stabilise fragile elements, funded by the public institution Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris which is project managing the restoration work. It allows visitors to admire the incredibly well-preserved iconography and polychromy, which is all original. This selection is set against fragments discovered by Viollet-le-Duc in the 19th century and others on loan from the Musée du Louvre and Île-de-France Drac.

NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS



VERS LA RÉOUVERTURE

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#SculpturesNotreDame

Almost 120 works are interspersed along the visitor route, with carved decorations from both the exterior and interior of the Notre-Dame before the damage inflicted in modern times. Furthermore, the exhibition features loans from major institutions such as the Musée du Louvre and Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris as well as stonework from the cathedral and private collections which provide context to these works and explore the subject in greater depth.

The exhibition “Making Stones Speak. Notre Dame’s Medieval Sculptures” is organised by the Musée de Cluny – Musée National du Moyen Âge in unique partnership with Inrap. It benefits from the “[Notre Dame de Paris: Ever Closer to Reopening](#)” label, coordinated by the Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris public establishment, which is in charge of the cathedral’s restoration.

The curatorial team is spearheaded by Damien Berné, Head Curator at the Musée de Cluny and responsible for sculptures.

About the Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge

Reopened on 12 May 2022, the Musée de Cluny is the only national museum in France dedicated to the Middle Ages. The public can now discover the Middle Ages for a new generation, thanks to improved accessibility, renewal of the visit itinerary and museum design, and redesign of the information tools targeted at a diverse public.

At 28 rue Du Sommerard, in the heart of the Latin Quarter, the museum takes you on a journey back in time, from the 1st to the 21st century, in a unique setting. The 15th century private townhouse of the Abbots of Cluny, attached to the Gallo-Roman thermal baths, has now been joined by a contemporary extension, inaugurated in 2018 and designed by the architect Bernard Desmoulin

This heritage site houses prestigious collections illustrating the extraordinary diversity of medieval artistic production. The new museum itinerary follows a chronological thread, designed to make the development of forms, groundbreaking moments, innovations and aesthetic differences between Northern and Southern Europe easy to understand.

For autumn 2024, the Musée de Cluny is putting on an entire programme of events dedicated to the Notre-Dame to mark its reopening. Alongside “Making Stones Speak. Notre Dame’s Medieval Sculptures”, the museum is running another exhibition entitled “Leafing through Notre-Dame. Masterpieces of the Medieval Library” on the same dates. It is also taking part in the seminar “Entre matérialité et interdisciplinarité: Notre-Dame de Paris, la cathédrale des savoirs” at the Collège de France from September to December 2024.

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Practical information

Museum entrance:

28 rue Du Sommerard
75005 Paris

Opening times:

Open every every day, except Monday,
from 9.30 am to 6.15 pm
Open 1st and 3rd Thursday evening of the
month from 7 to 9 pm
Closed on 25 December, 1 January
and 1 May

Book/gift shop:

9.30 am – 6.15 pm, free entry
Tél. +33 (0) 1 53 73 78 22

Directions:

Métro Cluny-La-Sorbonne/Saint-Michel/
Odéon
Bus n° 21 – 27 – 38 – 63 – 85 – 86 – 87
RER lines B and C Saint-Michel – Notre-
Dame

Prices:

€12, concessions €10
Free for those aged under 26 (EU citizens
or on long stays in the EU) and for all
visitors on the first Sunday of the
month

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