



MUSÉE DE CLUNY
le monde médiéval

PRESS RELEASE
september 2019

MYSTERIOUS CASKETS. PRINTS AT THE TIME OF THE *LADY AND THE UNICORN*

September 18, 2019 – January 6, 2020

The musée de Cluny – National Museum of the Middle Ages, continues its series of exhibitions around its iconic tapestries, following from a first part devoted to the unicorn, and a second, to the five senses. From September 18, 2019, to January 6, 2020, the exhibition, “Mysterious Caskets. Prints at the time of the *Lady and the Unicorn*” will take visitors on the footsteps of Jean d’Ypres, the painter behind preliminary drawings for the famous tapestries, inspiring prints for numerous engravings, some of which decorate intriguing caskets

Jean d’Ypres was a major artist from the late 15th century. The prints, tapestries, and stained-glass windows that were produced from his drawings are amongst the masterpieces of the last few decades of the Middle Ages.

The prints inspired by his compositions – such as the one of Saint Sebastian that is affixed inside a casket acquired by the musée de Cluny in 2007 – reveal meticulous style and details and combine the realism of Flemish painters with Parisian art. Jean d’Ypres also drew stained-glass models for the town house chapel of the abbots of Cluny, which now houses the museum. A rare remnant of the ambitious glass series, Christ Carrying the Cross, is presented in the exhibition, not far from the *Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries.

Jean d’Ypres’ style spread until the first quarter of the 16th century, thanks in particular to engraving, a technique which could produce many copies of an image from a single die. The prints could be printed alone, in sheets, or serve as illustrations inside printed books.

Many of the engravings printed from Jean d’Ypres’ work was found pasted into caskets, known as print caskets, sometimes called “messenger boxes”. These small chests are made of beech, a wood which is both light and solid, covered with leather, and laced with strips of iron. All feature a secret locking mechanism, and some integrated a secret compartment within their lid, which would have been undetectable to non-discerning eyes, and no doubt held very small valuables.

The images were hand-colored with stencils and sometimes form thematic series, such as the partially preserved one depicting the miracle of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, or the more ambitious series illustrating the Passion of Christ. They are unfortunately extremely fragile in single sheets; the few sheets which have survived the passage of time are the ones which were pasted inside the caskets, which protected them from the ravages of time. Their religious content, together with whatever was hidden within the secret compartment, constitute a mysterious ensemble, which must have played a part in early 16th century Parisian and French devotional life.

Fewer than 140 print caskets have been identified in the world. The exhibition, “Mysterious Caskets. Prints at the time of the *Lady and the Unicorn*,” will be presenting close to a quarter of them for the first time.

Thanks to numerous loans and to the exceptional participation of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the exhibition brings together a hundred items, namely prints, coffers, printed books, stained-glass, and drawings evoking the style of Jean d’Ypres, and suggests lines of inquiry regarding the possible uses of a pairing that combines a small furnishing with a printed image.

The exhibition is curated by Michel Huynh (general curator, musée de Cluny), Séverine Lepape (curator in charge of the Edmond de Rothschild collection, Louvre Museum), and Caroline Vrand (curator in charge of 15th and 16th century prints, Bibliothèque nationale de France).

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musee-moyenage.fr
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[#MysterieuxCoffrets](https://www.instagram.com/museecluny)

About the Musée de Cluny

Established in the heart of Paris in 1843, the National Museum of the Middle Ages is housed in two buildings classified as historical monuments: the antique thermal baths of North Lutetia (1st-2nd century) and the town house of the abbots of Cluny (late 15th century). An extension designed by the architect Bernard Desmoulin opened in July 2018.

A major modernisation project will be taking place at the museum until 2021. As a result of the museum tour route project, the Cluny medieval town house and the courtyard will be inaccessible until then.

In 2018, the Musée de Cluny welcomed almost 158,687 visitors, despite being closed for four and a half months in total (compared with 24,494 visitors in 2017).

Currently at the Musée de Cluny

«Treasures of the Musée de Cluny»: temporary display of collections from July 14, 2018 to spring 2021

Soon

Discover all the cultural activities related to the «Mysterious Caskets. Prints at the time of the Lady and the Unicorn» exhibition at www.musee-moyenage.fr

«Embroidery in the Middle Ages» exhibition from October 24, 2019 - January 20, 2020

Contact

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Practical information

Museum entrance

28 rue Du Sommerard
75005 Paris

Hours:

Open every day, except for Tuesday: from 9.15am to 5.45pm.
Last entry at 5.15pm
Closed: 25th December, 1st January and 1st May

Book store / Gift shop:

9.15am - 6pm, free entry
Tel.: +33 (0)1 53 73 78 22

Access:

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

Tickets:

€9, reduced rate €7
Free of charge for persons under 26 years of age (EU citizens or long-term residents in the EU) and for everyone on the first Sunday of every month.

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Exposition organisée avec le concours exceptionnel de la Bibliothèque nationale de France

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