

The *frigidarium* of the Gallo-Roman thermae (Baths) of Lutetia offers an exceptional setting for the exhibition of the ancient collections of the musée de Cluny. Next to decorative elements originating from the building, some pieces bearing witness to the Parisian archaeology are presented, as well as other artifacts from the Roman world. The presentation is completed by display cases dedicated to Celtic and Gallo-Roman ornaments in room 16 and to late Antiquity and Byzantine World ivories in room 19.

- * Terms defined in the list below
- A Refers to the room plan
- 1 Refers to the pictures on the sheet

The elements decorating the thermae

At the entrance of the *frigidarium* **A** is a mosaic in fragments **1** which is thought to have been excavated next to the thermae in 1856 at the time of the construction of boulevard Saint-Michel and which may have been an element of the baths' decoration. Eros is seen riding on a dolphin springing from the waters, which could refer to an *Idyll* written by Theocritus* where the cyclops Polyphemus* asked Eros to carry a profession of love to the Nereid Galatea*. This motif would have been fitting for a building favouring aquatic-themed ornaments, as shown by the decorative choices visible on the remaining corbels.

Two of them, above the pool **B**, have kept their carved motifs **C** **D**. They represent two ships led by rowers (particularly visible on the western corbel) **C** flowing on the sea, which is evidenced by the dolphins and their recognisable shape on the eastern corbel **D**. The swimming pool was not the only way to dip one's feet in the water in a bathing room. Bathtubs were also offered and added to the luxury of the decoration with their beautiful shapes and rich materials, as some of them were made with porphyry*. One example of this type of installation is shown here, a white marble water container, which may have been either a tub or a small pool **E**. It is part of the group of Roman sculptures purchased by Napoleon to Prince Camillo Borghese to be transferred to the Musée Napoléon in the Palais du Louvre. This piece was likely to have originally had lion feet as is the case on another tub from the Borghese collection. It is adorned with double curve patterned strigils* and four lion heads hold the rings attached to the tub **2**.

The ancient sculptures on display in the frigidarium

On the wall at the back of the bathtub, a bas-relief **F** representing a hare hunting scene is shown. At the far right a young child seems to unleash three dogs to chase after two large hares running towards a net behind which are a dog ready to jump and two other children, one of them holding the net. This cynegetic frieze bears the legacy of the early Antiquity and shows the exclusive quality of the commission: an allegory of fighting, hunting was a symbol of power. The monument on which the frieze was featured is not known, but it is however certain that it was in Lutetia since the stones were discovered in a fortification from the late Antiquity in the Ile de la Cité, on the site of the Church of Saint-Landry. The archaeological context is the same for the Pillar of Saint-Landry, a votive pillar, which is presented on the wall opposite to the frieze's **G**.

These fragments were also discovered in June 1829 when the Church of Saint-Landry, which was situated in the sector of the present quai aux fleurs and the rue de la Colombe, was demolished. Among the relief adorned blocks, one represents three Roman divinities. Mars **3**, god of war, is wearing an armour with the Greek *Gorgoneion* motif (Medusa's Head). Vulcan **4**, god of fire and smithery, is wearing a hat and a short tunic and carries a mallet, all indications that he is shown working in his forge. The goddess **5** is wearing a torch, meaning that she is either Vesta or Ceres. The work is too fragmented to make many more guesses, however the sculptures demonstrate the great quality of Gallo-Roman art in the 2nd century AD, nurtured by the classic influence typical of Imperial art since the reign of Augustus.



1 Eros riding on a Dolphin, île-de-France, late 1st-early 2nd century, mosaic in marble, glass mosaic and terracotta



2 Bathtub, Rome, 2nd century AD, marble

Pillar of Saint-Landry



3 Mars



4 Vulcan



5 Vesta or Ceres

14-37

Reign of Tiberius to whom the Pillar of the Nauti was dedicated

Late 1st-early 2nd century

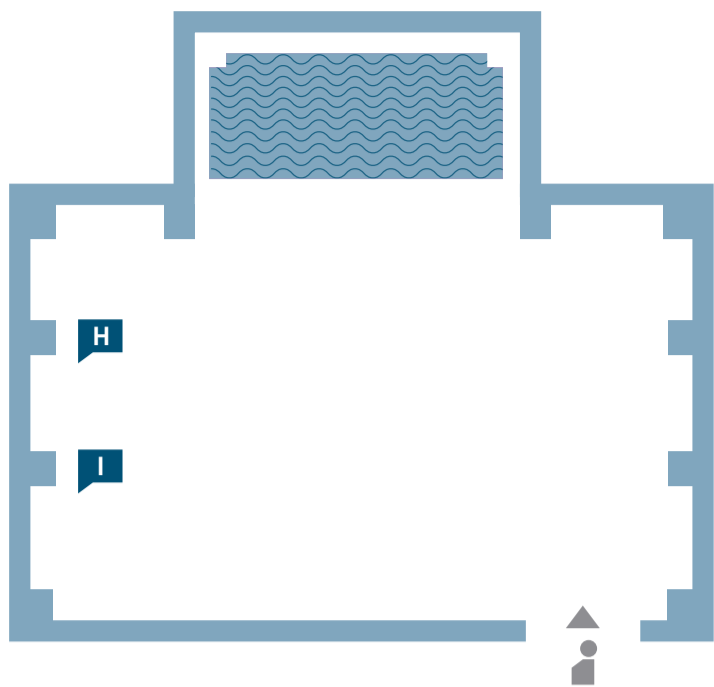
Construction of the Northern Baths of Lutetia ?

104-109

Baths of Trajan on the Esquiline Hill in Rome

Early 3rd century

Baths of Caracalla in Rome which bathtubs can be seen on the Piazza Farnese



Pillar of the Nauti



6 Dedication



7 Esus



8 Tarnos Trigaranus



9 Vulcan

Next to the Pillar of Saint-Landry is another votive monument discovered in the Ile de la Cité, the Pillar of the Nauti **H**. The six blocks remaining from it were found on the 16 March 1711 under the heart of the chancel of Notre-Dame Cathedral. The inscription on the block called the «dedication stone», **6** indicates that it was offered to Jupiter by the Parisian Nauti during the reign of Tiberius. With such a monument, the boatmen of the Seine showed how powerful a corporation they were in Lutetia. The inscriptions make this work exceptional since it is possible to date it as well as to know the reason for its commissioning. The other singular aspect lies in its iconographic choices. The Pillar of the Nauti shows Celtic gods such as Esus **7**, Tarnos Trigaranus **8**, Cernunnos and Smertios together with Roman gods like Jupiter, Vulcan, **9** Castor and Pollux. The inscriptions, enabling to identify the divinities, are a unique case for the Celtic world. One of the gems of the collections of the musée de Cluny, the Pillar of the Nauti sets in stone the fact that in the first century AD, the inhabitants of Lutetia were already familiar enough with some Roman gods while keeping alive their own local beliefs. This syncretism*, immediately perceptible on the Pillar of the Nauti makes it a landmark, not only for Parisian archaeology, but for the whole European Antiquity.

There is a debate nowadays regarding the sculpture in the round **I** next to the Pillar of the Nauti, as to who it represents. This statue **10** was long considered to be of Emperor Julian thanks to the comparison with his effigy on coins. Known for reviving Pagan beliefs (hence his being known as the Apostate*) and therefore not sporting a hairless face when he became Augustus in 360, he was regarded as a scholar, which is compatible with him being represented as a philosopher wearing a toga and a *pallium** and carrying a *volumen**. However, recent studies lean towards another interpretation, rather identifying a priest of Isis from the 2nd century as the subject of the work. Initially thought to be a Roman Emperor who lived in Lutetia during his campaigns in Gaul, the statue would thus turn out to be of an unnamed man.



10 Statue said to be of Julian the Apostate

List of terms

Apostate : a person who renounced their original religion.

Cynegetic : related to hunting.

Galatea : the daughter of Nereus and Doris, she is a nereid (sea nymph) living on the shores of Sicily. Her beauty and her skin 'white as milk' (*gala* is the Greek word for milk) made the cyclops Polyphemus fall madly in love with her.

Pallium : a coat.

Polyphemus : famous cyclops whose romance with Galatea was narrated by Theocritus (*Idylls*) One of his unfortunate adventures is also mentioned in the *Odyssey*.

Porphyry : a red crystalline rock originating from the mine of Porphyros (Egypt).

Strigil : a curved bronze object with which athletes would scrape their skin after sweating to rid the body of accumulated sand and dirt.

Syncretism : the combination of diverse influences of two civilisations, especially in the religious field. This term appropriately describes the attitudes of Romans who would include in their pantheon the local divinities of the conquered people.

Theocritus : Greek poet born in Syracuse (Sicily), circa 315 BC - 250 BC. He is regarded as the founder of a bucolic genre, of which a few fragments are known. Among these fragments are texts with short rhymes (dactylic hexameters) called *Idylls* (meaning « brief form » in Greek).

Volumen : scroll containing writing, often a roll of papyrus.

Photos credits :

1 et **2** RMN-GP / Jean-Gilles Berizzi, **3** à **5** RMN-GP / Michel Urtado,

6 à **9** RMN-GP / Jean-Gilles Berizzi / Gérard Blot, **10** RMN-GP / Franck Raux

Isabelle Bardiès-Fronty, Head Curator

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Edict of Milan proclaiming religious freedom in the Empire

360-363

Julian the Apostate becomes Emperor after a campaign in Gaul

1711

Discovery of the Pillar of the Nauti

1829

Discovery of the Pillar of Saint-Landry