

The collections of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire : history and current layout

Laid out over an area of 2,300 m², the museum's chronological and thematic displays include collections of archaeology (prehistory, protohistory and ancient history), medieval and Renaissance artefacts in the Saint-Didier chapel, graphic arts in a room devoted to rotating exhibits of drawings and engravings (including works by Jean Duvet and Claude Gillot), 16th- and 17th-century French and European schools, and 18th-century European schools, faience and cutlery, as well as modern painting from the 19th and first half of the 20th century. The works of the mid-17th-century Languedoc painter Jean Tassel are featured prominently.

The history of Langres stretches back two thousand years, which explains why there were already private collections of antiquities in the city in the 16th century. Local antiquarians collected Gallo-Roman sculptures from Langres and the surrounding area until the 18th century. In the second half of that century, the cabinet of curiosities of the collector Guyot de Saint-Michel (1736–1799) included natural curiosities, paintings (some ten of them attributed to the Tassels), and around 5,000 books. It also featured a number of small ancient artefacts, coins and etchings.

In 1836, Pierre Guyot-de-Giey (1771–1844), Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (1804–1892) and other local scholars, hoping to preserve local Ancient Roman inscriptions, founded the Société archéologique de Langres, which became the Société Historique et Archéologique de Langres (SHAL) in 1842. Together with the architect Luquet, they suggested depositing the city's ancient lapidary inscriptions in a disused church formerly dedicated to Saint Didier, third bishop of Langres. Langres' first museum opened its doors in 1841.

In the 19th century, a number of paintings were donated to or acquired by the museum, including works by Jean Simon Berthélemy, Jacques Courtois, Charles Le Brun, Nicolas de Largillierre and local 16th- and 17th-century artists. In 1857, the museum purchased part of the painter Jules-Claude Ziegler's (1804–1856) studio collection. The French state also enriched the museum's collections with loans of paintings by Paul Flandrin, Évariste Luminais and Jules-Claude Ziegler. Especially well-represented today are 17th-century painters from the Langres area, France and Northern Europe, as well as 19th-century

French Romantic and Realist painting. From the mid-19th century onwards, the museum's collections became more diversified following donations of Egyptological and extra-European ethnographic artefacts, as well as furniture and sculptures by artists such as Antoine Besançon, Joseph Lescornel, Pierre and Louis Petitot. Collections of animals (especially birds), minerals and fossils were also added to the museum during that period. Between 1899 and 1914, the decorative arts – especially Langres cutlery – entered the SHAL following a number of donations and purchases.

In the 20th century, the museum's collections continued to expand, with the addition of finds from local excavations and donations prompted by the SHAL's reputation. A few especially generous collectors marked the history of the museum, notably the brothers Charles (1848–1920) and Joseph (1850–1941) Royer, who significantly enriched its collections of archaeology and fine arts (with the addition of works by Eugène Delacroix, for example). Their bequest also included pieces from the Aprey faience factory – the museum owns the greatest French public collection of works from this former major manufacture that used to be located south of Langres. Late 19th- and early 20th-century painters and sculptors associated with the École de dessin de Langres (Paul Joseph Alizard, Léon Bellemont, Charles Duvent, Jules Hervé Mathé, Jules-René Hervé...) also entered the museum during that period. In 1978, the Mouton donation added Upper Palaeolithic furniture discovered at Farincourt (Haute-Marne) to the museum's prehistorical collections. In 1980, the marble statue of an emperor discovered in Langres in 1660 and transferred to Versailles in 1684, was returned to Langres, on loan from the Musée du Louvre. Daguerreotypes, silver prints and glass plates also bear witness to the early beginnings of photography in Haute-Marne. In 2011, the municipality loaned José de Ribera's *Christ among the Doctors* to the museum, and today this painting is the jewel in the crown of the museum's collections. At the end of your visit, you will see a 1935 canvas of Langres by Raoul Dufy, on loan from the Musée national d'art moderne since 2012.

The last ten years have seen the restoration of several major works (notably by Adrian de Gryef, Gaspard II Verbruggen, Arnold van Boonen, Gabriel Revel, Albert Maignan, Jules Rougeron). The museum's collections also increased with the acquisition of new pieces (including by Jacques Prévost, Lancelot Théodore Turpin de Crissé and Jules Claude Ziegler) and new donations (works by Pietersz van de Venne, for example). Acquisitions and donations of faience, cutlery, and silver and pewter ware also expanded the collections further. This has led the museum to update its exhibits, particularly in the history of art. Medieval and Renaissance displays were also updated in 2018, in order to give local Renaissance works pride of place.