



Press kit 2024

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www.bayeuxmuseum.com



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MAHB

The Baron Gérard Museum of Art and History



The old museum, which no longer met safety standards, was closed in 2001 by order of the Prefect. After 10 years of study and 4 years of work, the **Baron Gérard Museum was renamed the MAHB**, (Baron Gérard Museum of Art and History). The inauguration took place on 23rd March 2013, under the patronage of the French Ministry of Culture.

The rich collections held at the MAHB make it **a museum of reference in Normandy: 600 works of art** including 250 paintings and engravings (by Philippe de Champaigne, François Boucher, Gustave Caillebotte, Eugène Boudin, and Kees Van Dongen...), **1000 items of Bayeux porcelain and lace**, and **800 archaeological** and ethnographical artefacts...

Situated in the historical centre of Bayeux, adjacent to the cathedral, the MAHB offers more than 2500m² of exhibition space, in the most prestigious parts of the Bishop's Palace (11th – 16th Century). The museum, which bears the **label « Musée de France »**, **has seen its original surface area doubled**. The scenography was entirely re-thought, offering an **innovative design** where the original features of the palace interact with modern materials. The Episcopal palace is a protected Historical Monument, at the heart of Bayeux's heritage development programme and is one of the most remarkable urban residences in Normandy.



The rebirth of the museum



Historical background

Founded in 1793, the Art and History Museum of Bayeux evolved with the successive donations of various collectors. But it is the Baron Henri-Alexandre Gérard (1818-1903) who is considered its true founder. Deputy of Bayeux and art lover, the Baron H-A Gérard was also and foremost the only heir of another illustrious Baron Gérard...

The Baron François Gérard (1770-1837) was a painter and pupil of David. He was celebrated as a portrait artist but also excelled at history painting. He was appointed first painter to Empress Josephine in 1806 and first painter to King Louis XVIII in 1817.

An architectural odyssey

The restoration of the cathedral ensemble began in 2008 with an initial phase of work devoted to the Episcopal chapel, dating from the Renaissance. Reserved for the sole use of the bishops of Bayeux up until the Revolution, its construction was commissioned by a bishop of Italian origin, Louis De Canossa (1516-1531). In the chapel, the ceiling was restored, revealing **an exceptional interior decor** dating from the 17th Century, depicting a concert of angels.

When work began on the body of the building, architects made an **unexpected discovery**. Hidden beneath the old bakery, the **Gothic chapel** of the palace (whose existence was unknown at the time), revealed the remains of arched windows. These architectural features were immediately included in the design. Upon entering the museum, visitors can measure the exceptional historical character of the museum's setting.

Collections are enhanced by the scenography

The Episcopal palace shows different eras of construction and interior decoration, from the Medieval period to the 21st Century. The variety of architectural styles allows visitors to approach the museum from two different angles: the building itself and the exhibits. The works from the Middle Ages naturally found their place under the 11th Century cross vaults, whilst examples of Bayeux lace are displayed in the Bishop's private apartments, decorated with 18th Century woodwork.

Light reveals each object in its integrity. The collections of Bayeux porcelain are displayed in contemporary glass showcases and are sometimes presented in no particular order, evoking the porcelain manufacture. In some rooms, picture rails, display cabinets and furniture have been designed to captivate the visitor when discovering the collections for the first time.

A journey through 5000 years of History



Portraits à la campagne

Oil on canvas, 1876

Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894)

The painting was donated to the museum in 1947 by a couple from Bayeux, and descendants of Zoé Caillebotte, a cousin of the artist. The impressionist work "Portraits à la Campagne" is collective portrait painted at the Caillebotte's family residence in Yverres (Seine-et-Oise). The work of art has been lent by the MAHB on several occasions for major exhibitions in Chicago, London, Taiwan, New Orleans, Quebec city and Paris.



The MAHB is renowned for its art collections, covering every aspect of creation, from the geological formation of the Earth, to the present era. The major schools of thought, whether philosophical, political or religious, associated with the principal art movements, are all represented in the museum.

A chronological visit in 14 stages

In order to guide visitors and facilitate their understanding of the exhibits, the visit to the museum has been organised in 14 chronological stages, over an exhibition area of 1500m² divided on two floor levels. As they arrive, visitors walk into the vestiges of the medieval chapel, which houses the entrance hall and the boutique. The ground floor comprises the five first stages, from Prehistory to the Renaissance. On the first floor, 9 exhibition rooms include collections from the 17th to the 20th Centuries.

Major works of artistic creation

Amongst the collections, visitors will notice the exceptional ensemble of **walls paintings from a Gallo-Roman Domus** of the late 1st Century. The fragments were found in 1995 during excavations conducted in a street of Bayeux. The museum also owns the **oldest bell with inscription and preserved in France**; it was founded in 1202. The old monumental staircase leads to **the Bishop's former courtroom, and later tribunal**, which presents a magnificent ceiling with oak panelling dating from the 17th Century. The impressionist movement is also represented in the museum with a painting by **Gustave Caillebotte** « Portraits à la Campagne » (see insert). Amongst other remarkable works, the MAHB owns an extraordinary collection of **150 engravings** by the greatest lithographers of the first half of the 20th Century, including Bonnard, Bourdelle, Dufy, Maillol, Matisse, Rouault, Utrillo and Vlaminck.

Bayeux lace and porcelain



Designs and motifs

Three dynasties of porcelain makers succeeded one another in Bayeux: the Morlent, the Gosse and the Langlois. Whilst one took its inspiration in the East with the blue red and gold motif, another introduced floral designs such as the cornflower, the daisy and the apple blossom...

In Bayeux, lace-makers created pieces in black silk, "Chantilly" or in unbleached silk with a moiré effect called "Blondes de Caen". Shawls, stoles, and trimmings for umbrellas and fans were exported throughout the world and worn by the most celebrated ladies in Europe.



The MAHB dedicates several exhibition rooms to Bayeux lace and porcelain, local skills which have produced internationally renowned creations.

Bayeux lace



The salon - decorated with mid 18th Century woodwork, and the only vestige of the Bishop's apartment - is the showcase for the museum's lace collections. Bobbin lace was introduced in Bayeux on the Bishop's initiative during the 17th Century. The craft reached its peak in the 19th Century, when **Bayeux was elevated to the forefront of fashion design**. The most luxurious pieces of lace are displayed in a salon resembling a Haute-Couture showroom, whilst technical aspects are presented in the atmosphere of a lacer-maker's workshop.

Bayeux porcelain



A space entirely dedicated to Bayeux Porcelain (1812-1951) occupies the first floor of the new building and serves as a "bridge" between the 19th and 20th Centuries. The collection provides a summary of the evolution in taste in the decorative arts over a century and a half. The contemporary architecture of the museum emphasises the modernity of fireproof porcelain produced for the chemical industry: 3000 pieces manufactured just after the war are on display here.

Visits to the museum



Useful Information

Opening times

The museum is open all year round 7 days a week*

From 01/05 to 30/09

9:30 am to 6:30 pm

From 01/10 to 30/04

10 am to 12:30 pm 2 pm to 6 pm

Last visit 45 min before closing

*Closed yearly for Christmas Day, New Year's Day and in January

2024 prices

Adults 7,50€ (groups 5,50€)

Children 5€ - Free entry under 10

Combined ticket 2 museums

Adults 14€ (reduced 10,50€)

Combined ticket 3 museums

Adults 16€ (reduced 13,50€)

Group reservations

Contact : Aline Levasseur

Tel. +33 (0)2.31.51.25.58

reservation@bayeuxmuseum.com

Boutique / Bookshop

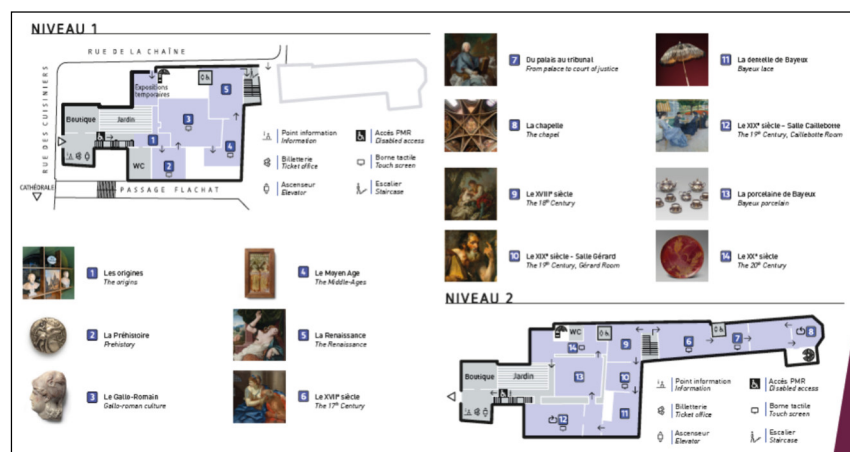
Specialised books, activity books for children, mugs, T-shirts, caps and scarves. Exclusive collection of gifts and souvenirs "I was in Bayeux"

Re-housed in the old Episcopal palace of Bayeux, the MAHB, (Baron Gérard Museum of Art and History) offers a **chronological voyage throughout the history of artistic creation, from prehistoric times to the 20th Century**. The visit is organised in 14 stages.

The 14 stages of the visit

- 1/ The origins: The Gothic chapel and the creation of the museum
- 2/ Prehistory: Archaeological vestiges in le Bessin
- 3/ Gallo Roman culture: The wealth of Augustodurum, the antique city Bayeux
- 4/ The Middle-Ages: Medieval collections and the Romanesque vaults
- 5/ The Renaissance: The influence of the Italian and Northern schools of art
- 6/ The 17th Century: Grand Siècle collections at the palace
- 7/ From palace to court of justice: the courtroom
- 8/ The chapel: A gem in the Bishop's residence
- 9/ The 18th Century: From the Fêtes Galantes to the Revolution
- 10/ The 19th Century: the Gérard room, the French Empire and the Restoration
- 11/ Bayeux lace: the Bishops' salon as a showcase
- 12/ The 19th Century: the Caillebotte room, from the Romantic Movement to Neo-impressionism
- 13/ Bayeux porcelain: a bridge to the 20th Century
- 14/ The 20th Century: a contemporary outlook

A floor plan of the museum is available for free at the ticket office.



News and calendar of events

Staying in Bayeux

Access

Bayeux is situated 260 km from Paris and 30 km from Caen.

By car: A13 and A84

By train: line Paris-Cherbourg, the train station is situated 500 m from the museum.

By air: Caen-Carpiquet Airport -20 km

By ferry : The terminal of Caen-Ouistreham is 30km away

Tourist Office of Bayeux

Pont Saint-Jean - 14400 Bayeux

Tél. 02.31.51.28.28

www.bessin-normandie.com

Calvados Tourisme

8 rue Renoir – 14054 Caen Cedex 4

Tél. 02.31.27.90.30

www.calvados-tourisme.com

A new painting by François Gérard enters recently the MAHB collections

To date, this work, one of the artist's most private, has only been shown to the public three times in temporary exhibitions (1913, 1927 and 1936). Preciously kept in the family since its creation, its legacy attests to the confidence and loyalty of the descendants of Henri-Alexandre Gérard, who are strongly attached to the territory of Bayeux and Bessin. This double portrait is a very intimate composition, representing the two young brothers of the painter François Gérard in 1792.



2024 – Impressionism's 150th birthday

To celebrate the 150th birthday of the impressionism art movement, Musée d'Orsay will be lending out no fewer than seventy-eight works to thirty-four partner institutions across thirteen regions. The MAHB was selected for the exceptional loan of the painting "Port-en-Bessin, avant-port, marée haute" from Georges Seurat (1888). The exhibition of this masterpiece will start on 30 March to 23 June 2024.

The museum: key figures

The museum: key dates

1842: the art and history collections of the city of Bayeux were officially presented to the public, in a gallery of the public library, alongside the Bayeux Tapestry.

1899: the baron Henri-Alexandre Gérard (whose name was given to the museum in 1959) donated 37 paintings from his private collection, providing a museum of art and history was created, independently from that of the Bayeux Tapestry. The collections were displayed in a new museum in 1901, in the old Episcopal palace, which has also housed the town hall since the Revolution.

2001: the museum was closed by order of the Prefect, for safety reasons. The collections were moved to the Deanery, which opened to the public in June 2002.

In 2013, the art and history collections held by the Baron Gérard museum were displayed in their new showcase; the museum renamed the MAHB.

Photo credits and reproductions in this press release : Ville de Bayeux

Surface areas of the museum

- 2 100 m2 of refurbished interior spaces
- + 400 m2 newly built glasshouse
- 1 500 m2 dedicated to the exhibition of collections



Collections presented to the public

- 600 works of art (paintings, sculptures, engravings, drawings and photographs including 26 works of art submitted by the State from collections of the Louvre and the Orsay Museum.
- 1 000 pieces of Bayeux porcelain and lace
- 800 archaeological and ethnographical pieces
- 97 works of art restored since 2005
- 20 000 works of art have been digitized

Bayeux Museum

Since 2013, the museums of Bayeux have been identified under one trade name: **Bayeux Museum**. The introduction of combined tickets allows visitors to discover 2 or 3 museums at a preferential rate (*see useful information*):

-**Bayeux Tapestry**

- **Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy**

-**MAHB, Baron Gérard Museum of Art and History**

