



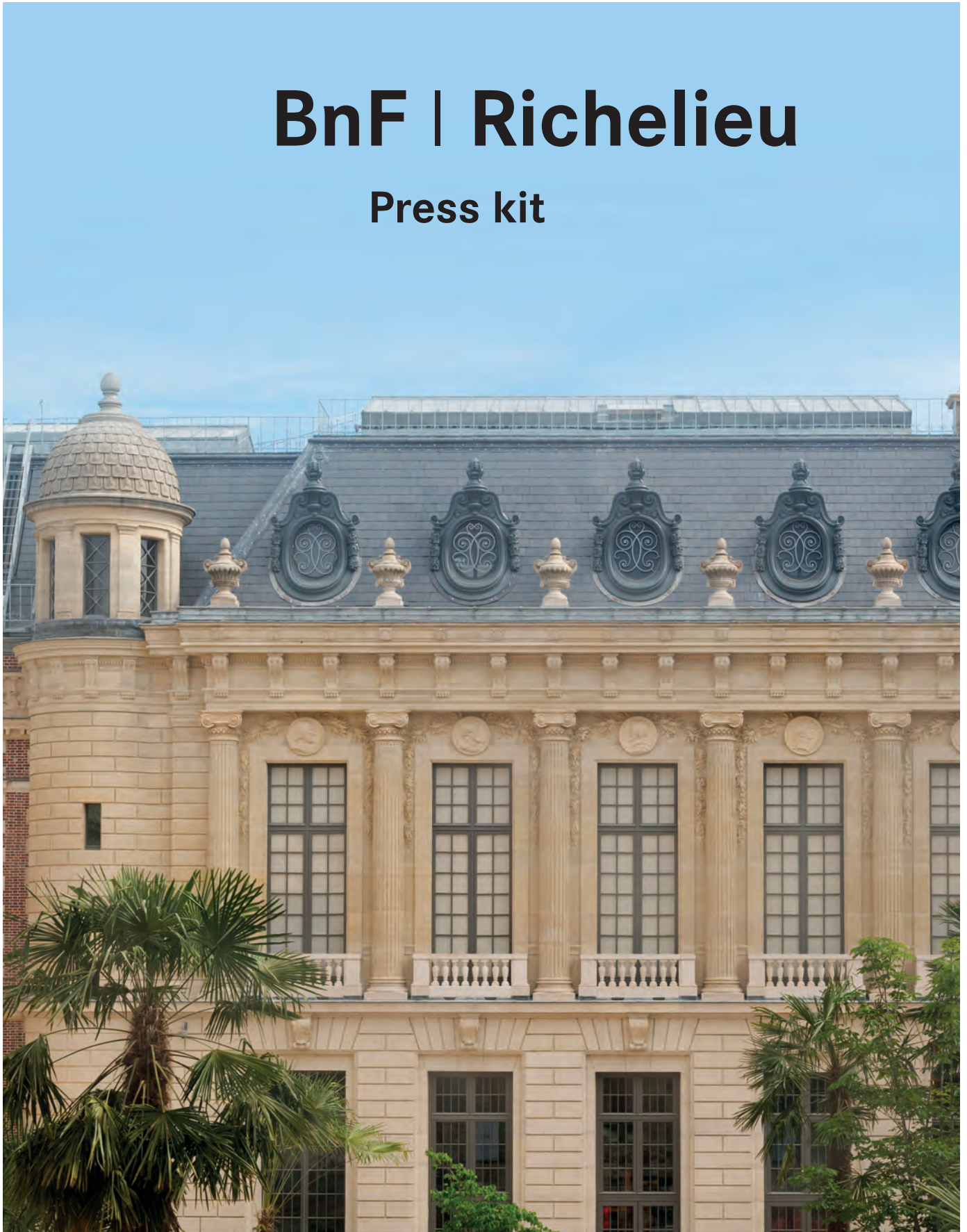
MINISTÈRE
DE LA CULTURE

*Liberté
Égalité
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{ BnF | Bibliothèque
nationale de France

BnF | Richelieu

Press kit



Press contacts

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Summary

5	The Oval room: a large public reading room open to all
8	Museum map
10	The Museum itinerary
14	The Mazarin Gallery
16	Digital mediation possibilities for all audiences
17	Some collections' treasures
21	A new space for temporary exhibitions
22	A centre of excellence for research
28	A new garden in the heart of Paris

Practical informations

Address

5 rue Vivienne
75002 Paris

Access

Bus : lines 20, 29, 39, 48, 74, 85

Métro : Lines 3 (Bourse), 1 et 7 (Palais-Royal-Musée du Louvre), 7 et 14 (Pyramides)

Hours

Museum / exhibitions / Ovale room

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m to 6 p.m (with late-night opening until 8 p.m on Tuesdays)

Closed on Monday

All information about special openings and closings is available at bnf.fr

Ticketing on site or at bnf.ticketeasy.com

Prices

Museum entrance : € 10 / Reduced price : € 8

Temporary exhibitions : € 10 / Reduced price: € 8

Combined ticket (BnF museum + an exhibition or 2 temporary exhibitions on all BnF sites) : € 13 / reduced price : € 10

The BnF Reading/Culture Pass (full price: € 24 / reduced price: € 15) **and the Research Pass** (full price: € 55 / reduced price: € 35) **give unlimited access to the entire cultural offer of the BnF**

All the information (including reduced rate and free admission conditions) on www.bnf.fr



The Oval Room, a large reading room open to all

Emblematic room of the BnF | Richelieu, the majestic Oval Room becomes the symbol of the opening of the site and promotes a different and original approach to reading and culture. It is open free of charge to all audiences of all ages. Both a reading room and a place for visits and mediation, the "oval paradise" has returned to its original purpose as a room for all audiences, 86 years after its inauguration.

More than 20,000 volumes are presented for free consultation. This documentary offer serves as an introduction to the major fields covered by departments present on the Richelieu Site (manuscripts, prints, photographs, coins, medals and antiques, maps and plans, music, performing arts, digital arts, etc.). The general public press in the history of art and heritage is also offered. Finally, a large collection of comics (9,000 volumes) is available. Innovative and fun digital devices, a specially dedicated website allow one to take full advantage of the resources made available in this extraordinary room.

The restoration of the Oval Room has benefited from the support of more than 2,700 donors.

A historic room

The construction of the Oval Room was undertaken in 1897 by Jean-Louis Pascal, and completed in 1932 by Alfred Recoura. It was inaugurated in December 1936 by the President of the Republic Albert Lebrun. Between 1999 and 2016, it housed both the Bibliographical Reference Room of the Richelieu site for the BnF, and the reading room of the INHA library. It was closed for renovations in September 2016 and reopened in 2022 to finally become a self-access room.

A beautifully restored architectural gem

Listed as a historical monument, the room impresses with its dimensions: an oval of 43.70 meters by 32.80 meters, 18 meters high. The ceiling is composed of a central canopy surrounded by an elegant interlacing of golden acanthus leaves, the upper part of the oval is pierced with sixteen glazed oculi (bull's eyes) surrounded by mosaics. Thanks to the glass slabs placed on the ground, which could not be kept in the project, due to the security of the spaces, the light given off by the glass roof could penetrate as far as the store located in the basement, called "Pascal Crypt".

Above each of the oculi is inscribed the name of a city famous for its symbolic significance in the history of civilizations and libraries. These circular openings surmount the arcades, supported by sixteen pairs of fluted columns, with Ionic capitals, in cast iron.

All around the room are lockers with small compartments, and above, along the walls, run three floors.

of shelving with balconies and slatted iron floors.

The room has benefited from an exemplary restoration, notably relating to the gigantic glass roof, the glazed oculi and the mosaics. The Recoura tables have been reinstalled in a new layout designed and built by the architects.

"In the Oval room, it was not a question of breaking with the existing architecture but of drawing inspiration from the form to weave a link between contemporary uses and preserved furniture. The new furniture is in oak and aluminum-coloured wood. They resume the oval shape, move apart to open passages, hollow out to accommodate carrels, multimedia places, seats for sound collections..."

Multimedia terminals and facsimiles presentation supports fit into the crown of existing shelving. The artificial light has been redesigned accordingly with the suspended mirror chandeliers following the curved shape of the new furniture or the oculi which extend the zenithal light at night according to different lighting scenarios."

Virginie Brégal, Bruno Gaudin, architects

An original creation for the Oval Room

With the completion of the renovation work on the Richelieu site, the Oval Room has returned to its original purpose as a reading room open to all. A library fully at the service of its readers offers rich and varied collections for consultation as well as furniture adapted to hours of reading and study. In order to meet this need, the BnF has joined forces with the Mobilier national for the original creation of a chair. This exceptional collaboration made it possible to entrust the design of this seat to designer Patrick Jouin. The Mobilier national's Research and Creation Workshop designed the prototype. The 160 reading stations in the Oval room are equipped with this chair produced by the Basque manufacturer ALKI and accessible to the general public.



Comics in the Oval Room

The Oval Room provides the public with a substantial collection, both a showcase for novelties in the genre and a mediator of a high profile book production - by setting up an "ideal library" of comics. It thus becomes an essential place for the consultation of comic strips in Paris, with the provision of 9,000 albums.

The selection covers comics from the origins, in the 1830s, with the works of Rodolphe Töpffer, to the most recent publications such as the latest *Asterix* album.

All geographical areas are represented, even if comics from the Franco-Belgian area - with both essentials and new releases - and European comics represent the majority. There are Asian comics, including manga, American comics (comics and comics from South America), also comics from Africa, Oceania, the Middle East, etc. Reference works on comics are also made available (biographies of renowned authors and illustrators, history of comics and the different currents of the genre, practical works relating to creative techniques).

Other funds available

The Oval Room now offers visitors of all ages a variety of documentation which is based around three major axes: orientation, discovery and conviviality.

The great novelty consists in proposing, alongside a reference collection (dictionaries, encyclopedias, works on the history of France and genealogy as well as a corpus of more than 2,000 works of French literature), an offer of documents resolutely aimed at the general public. Visitors of all ages are invited to discover the so-called "specialized" collections of the BnF departments



present on the Richelieu site. With nearly 6,000 printed books selected by librarians to explain what these collections are about, the public has the opportunity to understand the richness and diversity of the treasures kept on this site, whether ancient Greek vases, the first terrestrial globes or even stage costumes. Through these themes accessible on different media – printed and digital books, magazines, sound, video and multimedia portals – the Oval Room can offer visitors both an enriching and recreational reading experience and convivial moments of discovery around the documents on offer.



The digital mediation offer in the Oval Room

Open space, the Oval Room is a welcoming and multipurpose place, where offers of reading, mediation and visits coexist. It is designed as a space for discovering the Library, its history, its architecture and its missions as well as its collections, which are of considerable size and diversity.

The digital mediation offer, clear and innovative, is aimed at all audiences. 9 large screen devices are installed, along a peripheral ring that runs around the room. They invite you to explore the Library: what is it for? What can one find there? Who works there? Where do the approximately 22 million documents it keeps come from, what kind are they, how are they restored and preserved?

You can also have fun with the items and documents kept by the Library: virtual try on stage costumes thanks to augmented reality or even play a video game with others to explore the richness of the collections.

A place of consultation and work, the majestic setting of the Oval Room also becomes a space for mediation, education, a place for reading open to pleasure, a place for strolling.

The digital mediation of the Oval Room has benefited from the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.



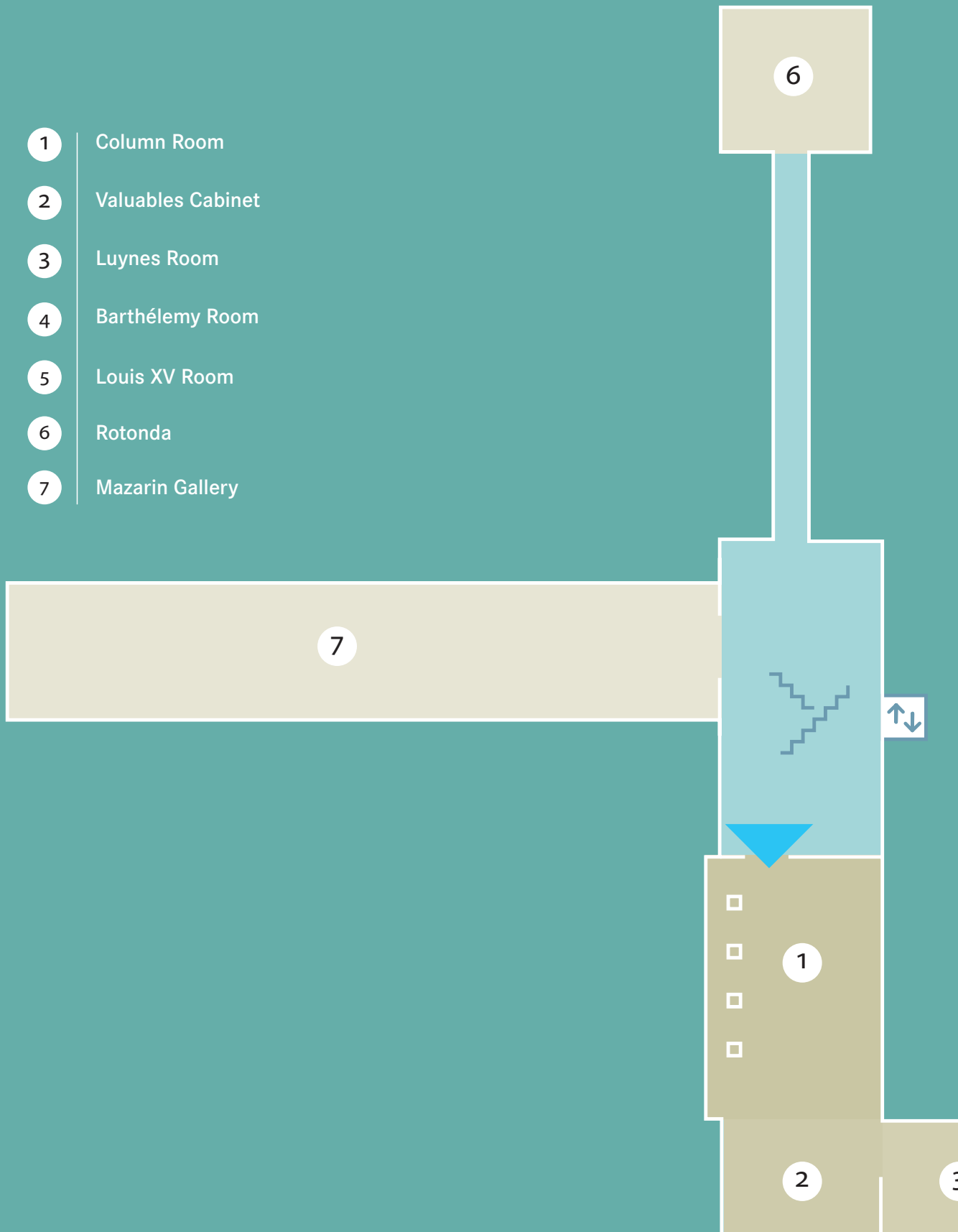
A website dedicated to the Oval Room and its collections

To accompany the discovery of the Oval Room, the BnF is launching a dedicated website and an interactive module. Thanks to the thematic selections and favorites offered by the librarians, Internet users can browse through the documentary offer present in the room prior to, during and after their visit. Inspired by the codes of comics, the key axis of the Oval Room, the design of the site and the interactive module were produced by the author and illustrator Cecile Becq, in collaboration with the Tamanoir studio. As one navigates, one will find the decorative and architectural elements of the room, within a dreamlike and poetic universe. Designed as an introduction to the collections, the site also draws links with all the spaces and activities of the Richelieu site: practical information, discovery of the museum, visits and workshops, cultural programming.

salleovale.bnf.fr

Museum Map

- 1 Column Room
- 2 Valuables Cabinet
- 3 Luynes Room
- 4 Barthélemy Room
- 5 Louis XV Room
- 6 Rotonda
- 7 Mazarin Gallery



... a few figures

280

m²
is the surface area of the Mazarin Gallery, which has housed the museum's collections from the Middle Ages to the present day, following a chronological path

1200

m²
of surface area
for this new museum
in the heart of Paris

18

digital mediation terminals

900

treasures from Antiquity to the present day, selected from the 40 million documents held at the BnF

3

rotations each year,
to better discover the
variety and scope of the
Library's collections

3

4

5

The Museum itinerary

The itinerary of the BnF museum is spread over 1,200 m² in seven completely restored rooms. The museography is by Guicciardini & Magni architetti.

The Column Room Leon Levy Foundation Room



© Guillaume Murat / BnF

The chronological tour begins in the Column Room. The rich collections of antiques gathered in the King's cabinet, then acquired to enrich the collection that became national during the Revolution, or donated to the Library by enlightened collectors, are exhibited there.

Located in the wing closing the Vivienne Garden to the north, the Column Room was built by Jean-Louis Pascal and Alfred Recoura in 1906.

The Valuables Cabinet, Sisley-d'Ornano Room



© Guillaume Murat / BnF

Extending from the Column Room, the Valuables Cabinet is located in the corner room in the Pascal wing. Its ceiling is decorated with four large gilded medallions that evoke the heart of the collections of the Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques.

The Valuables Cabinet reflects the luxury of the Cabinet du roi, which was attached to the Royal Library in 1666.

Mainly metallic collections are presented in this space: coins, medals, jewels and enamelled gold mounts, engraved stones, gold and silver ceremonial tableware of spectacular dimensions. The virtuosity of the techniques used – casting, embossing, chasing, gilding – and the iconographic variety of the decorations are another characteristic of luxury. Their value has led most objects of this quality to be destroyed over the course of history, which makes the examples kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France even more precious.

One of the jewels of the BnF's collections, the Berthouville Treasure, is presented in the Valuables Cabinet.

Discovered in 1830 by a farmer in Normandy, this set includes a richly decorated dinner service and two statuettes of Mercury, for a total weight of over 25 kg of pure silver.

The Valuables Cabinet has been restored thanks to the support of the Sisley-d'Ornano Foundation.

The Luynes Room



© Guillaume Murat / BnF

Built by Jean-Louis Pascal between 1902 and 1906, the Luynes Room hosts the entire collection, donated by the Duc de Luynes in 1862, which is mainly made up of antiques as well as exceptional works like the Boabdil sword.

A military man, then a politician, Honoré d'Albert, Duc de Luynes (1802-1867) was above all a patron of the arts and a scientist who sought to understand and reproduce ancient techniques. His love of antiques led him to collect several thousand objects (Greek ceramics, sculptures, weapons), jewellery and coins of the highest quality. Throughout his life, this aristocrat, a connoisseur of ancient civilisations, whose fortune financed archaeological excavations and academic studies, collected a peerless selection of objects corresponding to his well-defined tastes. This set is presented as an accumulation, favoured by museums in the 19th century.

The Luynes room has been restored thanks to the support of the Andreas Mentzelopoulos Foundation.

The Barthélemy Room



© Guillaume Murat / BnF

Formerly the reading room of the Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques, the Barthélemy Room is named after Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, who was the keeper of the Cabinet du roi and who was able to save the collections entrusted to him at the risk of his life during the Revolution.

This mahogany-decorated room was built at the beginning of the 20th century to conserve and study the 600,000 coins and medals of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet originated in the Middle Ages in the coffers of the kings of France, a private collection of precious objects and a financial reserve dispersed at the death of the sovereign or to finance wars. Under Louis XIV, in 1666, the Cabinet du roi was attached to the Royal Library.

Collected mainly since the Renaissance, coins are one of the few widely accessible documents on antiquity, preceding the birth of archaeology. In particular, they give us the portraits of the great men of antiquity described by the classical authors, Greek kings and Roman emperors. At first, they were only accessible through fortuitous discoveries of treasures or costly collections by antique dealers: Louis XIV was passionate about ancient coins and dispatched antiques experts to the Orient in search of them. Their number increased with the development of archaeology at the end of the 18th century. The study of coins – numismatics – is supported by the great royal or national collections that are constantly updated.

Conserving the decoration and furniture created by Pascal, listed in the supplementary inventory of historical monuments, this area in the new museum dedicated to the collections of coins and medals remains faithful to its vocation.

The Louis XV Room



© Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF / Oppic

Built in the middle of the 18th century to house the royal collection of coins and engraved stones, the Louis XV Room has been open to scholarly visitors and the curious since its creation. It can thus be considered the oldest museum in Paris. Its 18th century decoration and furniture are unique in the world and make this area an exceptional period room of the *Siècle des Lumières*.

The mural decoration consists of a set of 18th-century paintings representing the muses and their protectors, executed by the greatest artists of the time, who had their studios within the Royal Library. François Boucher painted the four door tops in 1742, of which three trumeaux were made by Carle Van Loo in 1745. Charles Natoire executed the other three trumeaux the same year. Two large majestic portraits complete the set: a portrait of Louis XV painted in the Ateliers de Versailles and a copy of the 19th century portrait of Louis XIV by Hyacinthe Rigaud. The gilded wooden frames of the paintings also date from the 18th century.

Finally, as the current room is slightly larger than the original one, Jean-Louis Pascal commissioned four paintings representing Cherubs in the corners of the room at the beginning of the 20th century. He scrupulously reproduced the original decoration of the 18th century in the woodwork and stucco trophies, still visible in the part of the original room that remains in the Hôtel de Nevers.

In order to be able to accommodate the growing collections, when the room was reinstalled in its current location, Jean-Louis Pascal had two central medallions added at the beginning of the 20th century, copied from the model of the 18th century medallions. The furniture is composed of six small medallions and two large medallions applied to the walls, each with a bracket supporting a table of pink marble and a two-leaf cupboard. In the centre is a table of exceptional dimensions. The medallions and table were made in 1742 by the Verberckt carpentry workshop. Fifteen 18th-century caned chairs and armchairs by Louis Cresson complete the set.

The Rotunda



© Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF / Oppic

The Rotunda, designed by Henri Labrouste at the end of the 19th century, is a space covering 100 m² which offers, thanks to a large glass door, a view of the Auguste Rondel Gallery, a magnificent store also designed by Labrouste, where the main part of the Auguste Rondel collection is kept.

The Rotunda is part of the museum tour, offering more targeted presentations that reveal part of the library's holdings.

The Louis XV Room has been restored thanks to the support of donors and patrons:

Dai Nippon Printing (DNP)
T. Kimball Brooker Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)
Fondation Evergète
French Heritage Society - Iron Mountain



The Mazarin Gallery



© Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF / Oppic

The eponymous Gallery, one of the jewels of the Richelieu site, will be the beating heart of the new museum. It is one of the few surviving examples of Baroque galleries in France. Perfectly superimposed on the Mansart Gallery, located on the lower floor, the Mazarin Gallery has preserved most of the 17th century layout. It is a listed historical monument.

The Gallery was designed by François Mansart between 1644 and 1646 at the request of Cardinal Mazarin, to host his rich collections of paintings and sculptures. The cardinal, on his return from Italy, entrusted the restoration to two Italian painters, Giovanni Francesco Romanelli and Gian Francesco Grimaldi.

The extension of the new museum into this Gallery and its vestibule mark the continuity of this heritage that has been on the same site for over 350 years.

A painted ceiling by Romanelli

The Mazarin Gallery is 45.55 meters long, 8.20 meters wide and 9.20 meters high.

Its painted ceiling, covering an area of 280 m², is one of the highlights of the site. Decorated with golden stucco compartments by Ottaviano Ottoviani, it was painted in 1646-1647 in the purest Baroque style by Giovanni Francesco Romanelli and his studio, notably Paolo Gismondi. Mazarin asked the painter to draw inspiration from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and from mythological and heroic subjects, such as Jupiter striking down giants, a gigantomachy placed in the centre of the ceiling, Apollo and Daphne, the Judgement of Paris, or even the Abduction of Helen and the Fire of Troy. Twenty-two small scenes complete these large compartments. The window embrasures surmounted by a golden shell in bas-relief are painted as a fresco by the Italian artist Grimaldi Bolognese.

Windows and their trompe l'oeil facing each other

Each of the bays that illuminate the Gallery is surmounted by a gilded shell and opens into a frescoed embrasure by Grimaldi Bolognese (1606-1680). It represents landscapes with trees in the foreground and a trompe-l'oeil balustrade.

An exceptional setting for exceptional works

The restored Mazarin Gallery has been returned to its original function as an exhibition space. It is now the setting for the new museum, a veritable "Gallery of treasures" drawn from the encyclopaedic collections of the BnF: rare pieces, famous works or works from prestigious origins.

Pieces of the treasury of Saint-Denis: art objects, cameos, jewels and ivories, Throne of Dagobert and Charlemagne's Chessboard are exhibited in the vestibule of the Gallery.

In the Gallery itself, collections from the Middle Ages to the present day are presented. A significant proportion of the collections will be shown there in rotation. Among the highlights, visitors can admire the Great Cameo of France, from the Treasury of the Sainte-Chapelle, the Atlas Miller, the Bach's *Goldberg Variations* manuscript, the famous portrait of Arthur Rimbaud by Carjat, or the manuscript of the *Years of Annie Ernaux*, Nobel Prize for Literature 2022.

The restoration of one of the jewels of the Richelieu site

A major feature of this essential part of the new museum, the ceiling and its exceptional painted decorations have been completely restored by the teams of Alix Laveau and the Mariotti workshop. This large-scale project, which involved 22 restorers, allowed the frescoes to regain the freshness, transparency and lightness of their original colours. The murals and marouflaged canvases have also been restored, making this showcase of the Library's collections one of its most emblematic heritage locations.

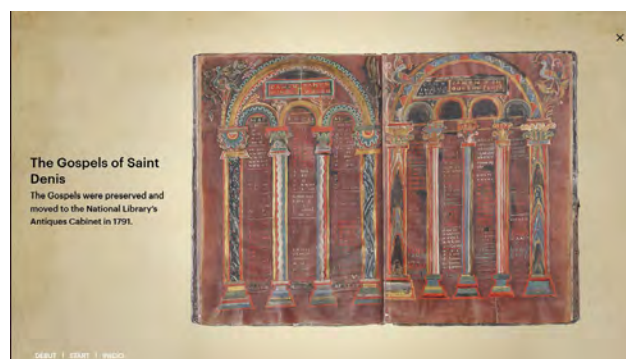
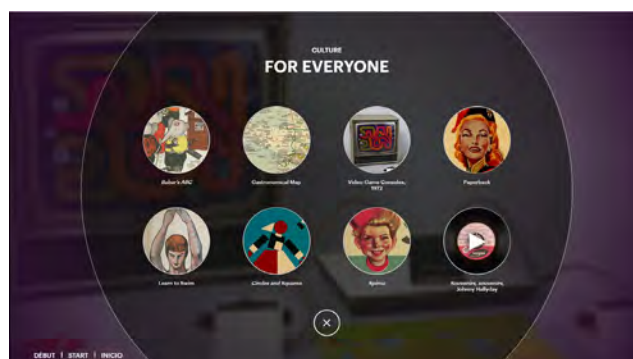
The Mazarin Gallery has been restored thanks to the support of donors and patrons:

Caisse d'Épargne Île-de-France
Banque Hottinguer
French Heritage Society - Florence Gould Foundation
Fondation TotalEnergies - Fondation du patrimoine
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Patrick A. Gerschel Foundation
David and Susan Rockefeller



Digital mediation possibilities for all audiences

Manipulate a 3D globe, discover the history of a jewel commissioned by a queen, enter the workshop of a medieval copyist or an ancient potter... 18 digital mediation terminals line the museum's tour pathway and invite visitors to discover the works on display in a different way.



Intended for all audiences, these terminals put the collections in their historical context, provide keys to discover them, invite visitors to play games and investigate, bring in an expert or tell stories about the works. These attractive forms are nevertheless based on rigorous scientific discourse.

These terminals with trilingual content (French, English, Spanish) are accessible to persons with disabilities, including videos in sign language. 6 touchscreens present 3D resin reproductions of objects (Ptolemy's cup, Louis XIV's medal, Mesopotamian cylinder-seal, binding of the Sainte-Chapelle Gospels, etc.).

In addition, two devices designed with the Japanese sponsor DNP (Dai Nippon Printing) allow visitors to discover the spectacular restoration, financed in part by sponsorship, of two of the most emblematic spaces of areas in the new museum in terms of heritage: the Mazarin Gallery (focus on the painted ceilings) and the Louis XV Room.

The museum's digital mediation was supported by Dai Nippon Printing (DNP) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Some collections' treasures

This selection presents some emblematic pieces from the BnF collections among the 900 exhibited in the museum.



Neck amphora, Heracles battles the three-bodied giant Geryon circa 530 BC.

Found in an Etruscan tomb and dated around 540-530 BC, this coloured amphora is a major work of the Painter of the Inscriptions – all the characters are named – whose workshop in southern Italy was very successful in the West.

One of the lesser known works of Heracles sees him confronting the three-bodied Geryon who ruled over the island of Erythia, at the western limits of the world. With three bodies, but only one pair of wings and one pair of legs, Geryon defends his herd of oxen, the object of the dispute. The goddess Athena protects the hero who wears a lion's skin on his head and has already slaughtered the herdsman and his dog.

Attributed to the Inscription Painter Rhegion (Italy). Found in Vulci (Italy) in 1828-1829. Terra cotta, Black-figure painting, Gift from Luynes in 1862

© BnF, Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques



The Great Cameo of France, circa 23 AD.

The Great Cameo of France, a major piece of the Treasury of the Sainte-Chapelle created in the 13th century by King Saint Louis around the relics of the Passion of Christ, is the largest cameo that Antiquity has left us. It is also the most famous examples of Roman glyptic art (the art of engraving on fine stone).

Despite its tumultuous history, this cameo has always been highly valued and thus preserved. Pledged in 1343 by Philip VI to Pope Clement VI, returned by Charles V in 1379 to the Sainte-Chapelle, it was deposited on the orders of Louis XVI in the Cabinet des Médailles on 1 May 1791. Stolen in 1804, it was found in Amsterdam, removed from its mount, melted, and returned to the Cabinet des Médailles in February 1805.

Rome, circa 23 AD.

Five-layered sardonyx cameo; H 31 cm, L 26.5 cm

© BnF, Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques



Overview of the treasury, Italy and Gaul, between 1st and early 3rd century AD. Silver, golden silver
© BnF, Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques

Berthouville Treasure, 1st-3rd century

Discovered in 1830 by a farmer in Normandy who was ploughing his field, it comes from a Gallo-Roman sanctuary dedicated to Mercury. It contains masterpieces of Roman and Gallo-Roman silverware dating from the 1st to the 3rd century offered to the god, amounting to a total weight of more than 25 kg of pure silver: two statuettes of Mercury, a richly decorated drinking set, cups, vials, goblets, spoons and other elements...

The Berthouville Treasure has been on display in the Library's Cabinet des Médailles since June 1830, and is one of its gems.

Throne of Dagobert, 8th-9th century

Since the Middle Ages, this pulpit, which is one of the most emblematic pieces of the Treasure of Saint-Denis, is known as the "Throne of Dagobert", estimated to be dated as early as the 12th century by Suger, abbot of the royal necropolis. It is attributed to Saint Eligius (c. 588-659), a renowned goldsmith, coiner, and treasurer of King Dagobert (629-639). Its renown is due both to this attribution and to the rarity of such a piece of furniture, known only from illuminated manuscripts and coins. According to Suger, it served as a portable throne for the kings of France to receive the homage of the lords of the kingdom. Used until the 17th century, then exhibited in the treasury in the 18th century, it was deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1791. It was used for the last time by Napoleon I during the



Throne from the treasury of Saint-Denis, known as the "Throne of Dagobert"
Late 8th-9th century. Molten and engraved copper alloy, iron, gilding remains

H 104 cm, L 82 cm,

© BnF, Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques

Psalter of Saint-Louis, circa 1274

A masterpiece of 13th century Parisian illumination, the Psalter said to be of Saint Louis owes its fame to the incredible luxury of its decoration, opening on a series of 78 full-page paintings where scenes from the Old Testament follow one another.

These astonish by the vigor of their colors, obtained from the most precious materials, such as lapis lazuli for the blue. For the use of the Sainte-Chapelle, founded by Saint Louis, the volume was kept under Charles V (1364-1380) at the castle of Vincennes.

The most recent research no longer attributes it to Saint Louis but to his son Philip III on the occasion of his marriage with Marie de Brabant in 1274.



Psalter of Saint-Louis, circa 1274

© BnF, Department of Manuscripts



Caricature of Baron Taylor by Félix Nadar, between 1852 and 1857

Caricaturist before becoming a photographer, Nadar designed his Pantheon in 1851, a collection of portraits-charges of the glories of his time, of which the BnF keeps 600 preparatory drawings. Art critic, collector, defender of romantic theatre, Baron Taylor publishes *Picturesque and Romantic Voyages in Old France* in 25 volumes, an illustrated anthology of monuments and landscapes which encouraged the awakening of his generation to French heritage.

Félix Nadar (1820 - 1910), *Caricature of Baron Taylor*, Paris, between 1852 and 1857

Charcoal drawing heightened with gouache, on brown paper

© BnF, Department of Prints and photography

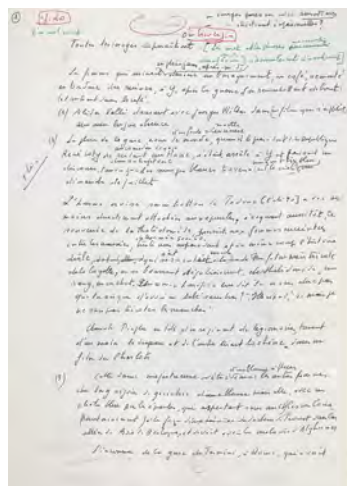
Portrait of Arthur Rimbaud by Etienne Carjat, 1871

This proof is rare and precious: only two other originals of the portrait are known.

It is bequeathed by Rimbaud's sister to the writer Paul Claudel. Carjat produced two portraits of the poet in 1871. Both belonged to the circle of "Vilains Bonshommes", which in the early 1870s brought together poets such as Verlaine and Mallarmé, painters such as Fantin-Latour, caricaturists such as André Gill.



Étienne Carjat (1828-1906), Arthur Rimbaud, business card
portrait that belonged to Paul Claudel, Paris, 1871
Original proof
© BnF, Department of Prints and photography



Manuscript of *Years* by Annie Ernaux, 2008

Since her first novel, *Les Armoires vides* (1974), Annie Ernaux has established herself as a great voice in French literature.

She explores the data of lived experience by comparing and relating personal experience and collective experience.

The Years thus constitutes a form of collective autobiography retracing the social and cultural history of the French people from the 1940s to the 2000s.

Crowned with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2022, Annie Ernaux donated her manuscripts to the National Library of France in 2011.

Annie Ernaux (1940), *The Years*, 2008
Manuscript
© BnF, Department of Manuscripts

The Bibliothèque nationale de France regularly collaborates with the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France (C2RMF – National Centre for Research and Restoration in French Museums) for the study and restoration of major pieces in its collections. Four objects currently exhibited in the museum's Luynes Room have thus benefited from the assistance of the C2RMF. A restorer from the C2RMF took charge of two fragmentary cups as part of a large campaign processing fragments of Attic vases. In addition, the amphorae of Amasis and the Painter of Achilles, two masterpieces of Greek ceramics with a complex material history, have been studied in depth and restored thanks to the combined expertise of liberal restorers, the scientific teams of the BnF and C2RMF.

A new space for temporary exhibitions

The Mansart Gallery - Pigott Gallery

Built by the architect François Mansart from 1644 to 1646, the Mansart Gallery originally housed Cardinal Mazarin's collection of antique sculptures. Like the Mazarin Gallery immediately above, it originally had a rich stucco and painting decoration, created in 1649 by Salucci and Leckerbetien for the vault, and Le Tellier and Gismondi for the walls.

Allocated to the library in 1833, it became the reading room for the Prints Cabinet in 1854 following its restoration by Henri Labrouste. It was restored and refurbished by Michel Roux-Spitz in 1938, to become a temporary exhibition space, hosting many of the Library's exhibitions until its closure in 2014.

Listed as a historical monument, it has been completely restored.

The Gallery offers two temporary exhibitions per year, which complete the cultural programme of the museum and of the François-Mitterrand site.

The Mansart Gallery has been restored thanks to the support of Mark Pigott KBE – Paccar Foundation.



© Jean-Christophe Ballot / BnF / Oppic

2023 program

Degas in black and white

Drawings, prints, photographs

31 May - 3 September 2023

This exhibition offers a novel approach to the work of Edgar Degas through his ongoing interest in black and white, which he expressed via prints, photographs, drawings and paintings. Driven by an insatiable technical curiosity, the artist built up a body of black and white work that was unparalleled in his time, earning him a unique place among impressionist artists. Bringing together 160 pieces from the BnF's rich collection and prestigious loans, the exhibition follows the evolution of a passion that made him assert: *«If I could have had my own way, I would have confined myself to black and white.»*

Exhibition curator

Henri Loyrette, honorary president and director of the Louvre Museum, general curator

BnF, Prints and photography Department

Sylvie Aubenas, Head of department

Valérie Sueur-Hermel, Curator of 19th-century Prints

Flora Triebel, Curator of 19th-century Photographs



A centre of excellence for research

The scientific and cultural project of the Richelieu site is in line with the missions of the BnF: preserving and developing the national heritage; bringing its collections within reach of the widest possible audience; conducting research programmes, welcome researchers and cooperating with other research and documentation centres and libraries.

While strengthening its interaction between the various BnF sites, mainly the François-Mitterrand site, the complete renovation of Richelieu has created a new offer: the collections of the BnF, the library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) and that of the École nationale des chartes (ENC) were brought together, in synergy, in this unique location, as of 2017, to allow for the development of a major international research centre, focused on written and graphic heritage, art history, archaeology, and sciences ancillary to history.

The research rooms of the Richelieu site are accessible to people over 18 years of age who can prove that they are doing research of an academic, professional or personal nature. Accredited readers for the research rooms of the BnF, INHA and ENC can easily access all resources thanks to a unique access card.

The specialised departments of the BnF

The Bibliothèque nationale de France looks after collections that have been brought together for five centuries through legal deposits and an intense acquisition policy. All disciplines, intellectual, artistic or scientific, are represented in an encyclopaedic spirit.

The Richelieu site houses the collections of six specialised departments:

Manuscripts, Music, Prints and Photography, Performing Arts, Maps and Plans, Coins, Medals and Antiques – more than 22 million documents.

With a surface area covering 28,453 m², 83 renovated, spacious and standardised storage areas keep the collections in optimal conditions. Four reading rooms reserved for researchers have been created, restored or completely renovated. They offer the best conditions of physical comfort as well as efficient research tools and working facilities.



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Department of Performing Arts

The Department of Performing Arts was founded in 1976 from the theatrical collections assembled by the Bibliothèque nationale since the early 1920s. It is a repository for all forms of performing arts, from theatre to circus, dance, mime, puppetry, music hall, and street performances, as well as cinema before 1945. It houses nearly 4 million documents, from manuscripts of texts to decorative elements, costumes and objects, photographs, audiovisuales, posters, programmes or press clippings, as well as books and magazines. The department has many archives and collections of personalities and structures (theatres, festivals, companies, etc.). It houses numerous archives and collections of personalities and structures (theatres, festivals, companies, etc.), major funds such as those of Louis Jouvet, Jacques Copeau, Abel Gance, Eugene Ionesco, Marcel Pagnol, Roger Planchon, Edith Piaf, or those of artists and organisations still performing such as Carolyn Carlson, Olivier Py, the Festival of Avignon, the Théâtre du Soleil.

The department's collections are accessible to researchers thanks to 34 places, where 5,000 standard reference books can be freely consulted.

Among the stores that house the Performing Arts collections is the Auguste Rondel Gallery, named after the passionate patron who created the department's collections. It is a magnificent space, designed by Henri Labrouste, which visitors can access through a glass door.

Department of Maps and Plans

With its collections spanning two centuries, the Department of Maps and Plans, created in 1828, is the international-level French centre of excellence for the representation of the earth and the sky and its history. Since 1942, it has also housed the collections of the Société de géographie (Geographical Society).

Its collections include approximately 800,000 atlases, maps, plans and globes, monographs and periodicals, handwritten, printed, engraved and digital documents from French and foreign production from the Middle Ages to the present day, including an exceptional collection of portulan charts, handwritten nautical charts on parchment.

From September 2022, 12 spaces will be devoted to the department's researchers in the reading room shared with Prints and Photography.

In the same spirit of revealing the behind-the-scenes workings of the Library and the way the collections are conserved, the interior of one of these storerooms, located in the Roux-Spitz hall, allows visitors to discover – behind a large 4-meter high glass window – the grids onto which large-format maps are hung, such as the one where, in 1634, Jodocus Hondius depicted the world bordered by representations of the animals of Creation.



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Department of Prints and Photography

The Prints Cabinet was created in 1667 and became the Department of Prints and Photography in 1976.

It houses more than 15 million works and documents: Italian primitives, drawings and paintings by Dürer, prints by Rembrandt, lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec, notebooks by Degas, Bonnard and for the photographic collections, works by Nadar, Le Gray, Disdéri, Seeberger, Cartier-Bresson, Doisneau, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Louis Faurer, Mario Giacomelli, etc. and albums from the Guernsey studio, the Rol press agency collection or the archives of the *L'Aurore* newspaper .

20 places in the reading room, plus 7 places in a reserve room for the most precious works, are there for researchers to consult drawings and prints by masters, photography incunabula... as well as 2,700 freely accessible standard reference books.

Thanks to the extensive restoration of the site, visitors can now go behind the scenes of the Library, including the reserve store designed by the architect Roux-Spitz in the 1930s, which houses some of the department's most valuable collections. Some emblematic objects of the collections (desk, camera, optical viewer, etc.) will be presented in a glass case.



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Department of Manuscripts

The Department of Manuscripts holds one of the world's largest collections of medieval, modern and contemporary manuscripts: more than 370,000, including the oldest known book, the Papyrus Prisse, written in hieratic on papyrus nearly 2000 years B.C. and more than 10,000 medieval illuminated books, of which about 1,500 pre-date the year 1000.

The collections are encyclopaedic: chansons de geste (songs of heroic deeds), Eastern and Western religions, modern and contemporary history, literary manuscripts... The collection of modern and contemporary literature includes autograph manuscripts of major authors such as Pascal, Casanova, Hugo, Lamartine, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Zola, Proust, Colette, Artaud, Sartre, Sarraute, etc., as well as recent entries of manuscripts by Julien Gracq and Édouard Glissant, among many others.

The department shares with the Department of Music the reading room located on the first floor of the Robert de Cotte wing, decorated by Jean-Louis Pascal from 1880 to 1886 and entirely restored in 2016.

The 40 places are reserved for researchers to consult the manuscripts, including the most precious ones kept in the Library, as well as some 7,000 freely accessible standard reference books.

The reading room of the Departments of Manuscripts and Music has been restored with the support of Mark Pigott KBE.



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Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques

600,000 coins and medals, 42,000 antiques and objets d'art, including 10,000 cameos and intaglios, and 100,000 printed books are kept in the Department of Coins, Medals and Antiques, the heir to the Medal Cabinet of the kings of France, whose collections began to be built up in the Middle Ages.

These collections are rich in unique and precious pieces including the Great Cameo of France, Greek vases, antique and medieval ivories, medals of the Renaissance, Throne of Dagobert, Charlemagne's chessboard, etc.

FROM September 2022, most of these treasures will be displayed in the new BnF museum, in beautifully restored heritage spaces, and therefore on view to the general public.

A new 9-seat reading room, located behind the Oval Room, allows researchers to consult printed materials, manuscripts and 4,500 freely accessible standard reference books. Coins and objects can still be consulted by appointment.



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Department of Music

Created in 1942, the Department of Music is one of the largest music libraries in the world, with 2 million items. It houses the musical collections formed since the beginning of the 18th century (autograph manuscripts of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Rousseau and Rameau) and the heritage collection of the Conservatory library (autograph manuscripts of Mozart, including *Don Giovanni*, Johann-Sebastian Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Chopin, Berlioz, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Ravel, etc.) It has constantly been enriched by considerable collections such as manuscript scores by Gounod, Debussy, Satie, Fauré, Messiaen as well as the archives of Pierre Boulez. Among the recent acquisitions and donations, contemporary music is well represented: jazz, film music or songs (André Francis archives and Hubert Rostaing's manuscripts, Léo Ferré's manuscripts, Jacques Brel's notebooks, Georges Brassens' manuscripts, Jean Constantin's manuscripts, Bérurier Noir's collection). The reading room that the department shares with the Department of Manuscripts offers 34 places for researchers to consult these prestigious documents as well as 7,500 standard reference documents. Within the Palais Garnier, the department also includes the Opera's Library-Museum.

A freely accessible rehearsal studio

The Department of Music makes available a new 40-m² rehearsal studio near the Oval Room, which is perfectly soundproofed and naturally lit. Equipped with a baby grand piano, it can accommodate solo instrumentalists or small groups. Users can photograph all the collections of the institution, transfer them to their own tablet or to the tablets made available by the BnF and then play them in the studio. They also have access to all the scores (and other documents) digitised in Gallica. The studio is accessible free of charge to all reader card holders.

Three institutions have joined forces to create a site of excellence for culture, history, art history and heritage.

The completion of the first phase of work on the Richelieu site has made it possible since 2017 to bring together in a single location the collections of the BnF, the library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA - National Institute of the History of Art) and that of the École nationale des chartes (ENC). Since then, the Richelieu site has made available to readers some of the world's most important collections for the study of history and history of art.

The Richelieu site is bordered on all sides by numerous research institutions. On the rue Richelieu side, there is the École nationale des chartes (ENC), while on the rue Vivienne side, the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA - National Institute for the History of Art) administers the Colbert Gallery, a space that houses, in addition to its Department of Studies and Research, the Institut national du patrimoine, all the master's and doctoral programs of Parisian universities, research centres, learned societies and professional associations related to the disciplines in question.

Thanks to the renewal of Richelieu, the development of common programmes and the pooling of resources are intensified and contribute to the influence of the activities of these institutions on a national and international level. Richelieu is a peerless meeting place for all readers, researchers and stakeholders in the field of the arts, at the heart of a patrimonial, documentary and scientific environment that is unique in the world.

The library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA – National Institute for the History of Art)

Created in 2001 to federate art history research, the INHA was able to deploy its library in the Labrouste room and the adjoining stores in 2016. Comprising the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, founded in 1905 by the great couturier and collector, Jacques Doucet, the Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux, and the Archives de la critique d'art (Rennes), this library offers one of the largest collections of art history works in the world, as well as heritage collections essential for research, i.e., more than 1.755 million documents, 160,000 of which are available in open access.

The library of the École nationale des chartes (ENC)

The library of the École nationale des chartes, responsible for training library curators and heritage curators specialising in archives, museums, historical monuments and archaeology, also moved to the Richelieu site in 2017. Recognised as a centre of excellence in its specialities related to the School's teachings, it has considerable documentary and bibliographic resources, focused on historical and philological sciences. It offers free access to almost all of the 150,000 volumes it holds.

Collective research

The BnF, the ENC, and the INHA pursue a scientific policy of excellence and bring the Richelieu quadrilateral to life with their complementary and collaborative research activities. The three partners are involved in several collective projects, such as the "Richelieu. Histoire du quartier" (Richelieu: History of the neighbourhood) programme. This project aims to trace the urban, architectural, economic and cultural history of the district between the Louvre, the Opera, the Place des Victoires and the Grand Boulevards. The projects "Couleurs: artefacts, matière et cognition" (Colours: artefacts, matter and cognition) and "Fabrique matérielle du visuel" (Material manufacture of visual content) associate researchers from the three institutions to bring together, within the digital platform of the INHA (AGORHA), data resulting from analyses carried out in recent years on colour in illuminated manuscripts and painted panels from the 13th to the 18th century. Many programmes also benefit from close collaboration between specialists gathered on the site, such as "Chorégraphies. Écriture et dessin, signe et image dans les processus de création et de transmission chorégraphiques (XV^e-XXI^e siècles)" (Choreographies. Writing and drawing, sign and image in the processes of creation and transmission of choreography (15th to 21st century) or "Digital Muret".

Conferences open to the public

The ENC, the INHA and the BnF regularly work together to promote the expertise and collections of Richelieu to the general public. These joint actions are organised during major annual events (European Heritage Days) or as part of the *Trésors de Richelieu* (Richelieu Treasures) cycle. Curators, art historians, specialists and restorers regularly share their knowledge and passion around original manuscripts and documents, exceptionally brought out for the occasion from the stores of the BnF, the INHA and the ENC.



A new garden in the heart of Paris

In the heart of historic Paris, amidst dense buildings, dominated by minerals and lacking in planted areas, a new garden is being created on the Richelieu site and will unfold over the seasons.



This garden was designed within the framework of the 1% artistic contribution by Gilles Clément, artist and gardener, Antoine Quenardel, landscape designer and Mirabelle Croizier, heritage architect (Tout se Transforme workshop), with the assistance of the Agence ON, lighting designers and Thierry Montagne, economist. This space was created by the MUGO company and Jean-François Salles, sculpture restorer.

This garden is part of the architectural continuity designed and implemented by the Bruno Gaudin Architects agency. Its ambition is to open the Library to the outside world, revealing the relationship between the "inside" and the "outside" of the age-old institution.

A paper garden

The new garden on the rue Vivienne side, entitled "Hortus Papyrifera", traces an obvious link with the BnF, a place where paper objects are kept.

Broussonetia papyrifera (Paper mulberry), *Fargesia papyrifera* (Cespitose bamboo), *Tetrapanax papyrifera* (Rice-paper plant), *Edgeworthia papyrifera* (Oriental paperbush), *Betula papyrifera* (Paper birch), *Cyperus papyrus* (Papyrus), etc., a selection of papyriferos plants which – as their Latin species names indicate – are known to be used in the elaboration of writing and printing supports, rub shoulders with plants (Chinese Palm, Japanese Banana, etc.), themselves used as writing and printing media, and small trees with paper bark (Tibetan Cherry) in order to constitute a very symbolic plant palette.

Within its walls and without knowing it, the Bibliothèque nationale de France is already a garden: the creation of a garden in the Cour Vivienne offer an exceptional opportunity to introduce and showcase the many plants that abound in the stores containing the collections and the reading rooms of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in the form of books, drawings and prints, maps and plans... plants transformed into paper.

Regained historical coherence

The BnF | Richelieu is full of history, meaning and content. The regeneration of the site finally offers the opportunity to tell the story of the future while drawing on this history. The project as it was conceived re-establishes a garden in the same place where Cardinal Mazarin had the garden of his palace laid out in the 17th century, recreated by Labrouste in its present form in the mid-19th century. The design respects the historical composition that has now disappeared, relying on the underground traces of the old design that can be identified by the existence of open ground marks.

Most of the regular composition of the space – cut out and surrounded by aisles distributed around the pond and the central fountain which drew four formal lawn sections – is evoked and taken up by the layout.

Moreover, this layout corresponds as closely as possible to the uses and pedestrian flows required by the redevelopment of the BnF site.

The project also allows for the creation of secondary aisles that lead to "green reading rooms". Amidst lush vegetation, these spaces offer a more intimate scale and atmosphere.

Fixed benches made of solid Euville stone have been installed to encourage relaxation, reading and meditation.

The paths in the garden are treated in such a way as to dialogue with the façades of the Hôtel Tubeuf and the Mansart Gallery, using clay brick facings in various shades (red, brown and black). The new garden also allows features various elements of existing yet restored statues

: seven Medici vases in marble and two fire pots in marble and stone. The fountain, dry since the 1980s, has been transformed into a pond and decorated with aquatic plants (*cyperus papyrus*, *iris pseudacorus*, etc.) to create a specific environment and a new ecological habitat.

1% artistic contribution

The creation of a new garden within the BnF|Richelieu, under the 1% artistic program contribution, had to embody the cultural evolution of the moment, but also to respect the nature of the work undertaken over the last 12 years and the scientific and cultural program associated with it.

The work needs to be accessible to all audiences and be significant to the general public. It is intended to be included permanently on the site, acting as one of the major poles of attraction since it invites visitors to take a break, read, slow down...

An artistic committee composed, by decision of the Ministry of Culture, of Hervé Barbaret, secretary general of the Ministry of Culture; Bruno Gaudin, the project's architect; Laurence Engel, Chair of the BnF; Nicole da Costa, director general of cultural affairs of Île-de-France (Greater Paris area); Marianne Lanavère, director of the Centre national d'art et du paysage (National Centre for Art and Landscape); Caroline Bourgeois, artistic advisor to the François Pinault Foundation and Anna Erhel, painter, met on 16 July 2018. At the end of this committee, the project led by Gilles Clément, Mirabelle Croizier and Antoine Quenardel was selected for its artistic and technical qualities with regard to the constraints of the Richelieu site.

