



GRAND CURTIUS

MUST-SEES



EN

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THE GRAND CURTIUS, AN URBAN COMPLEX

CURTIUS PALACE (1604)

The Curtius architectural complex comprises a palace that once served as a warehouse and guest house, a residence, and the home of the Curtius family, as well as various communal buildings for workers, stables, a gallery and a garden. This sprawling architectural complex highlighted the socio-economic standing of the owner of the premises.

The architecture is typical of the Renaissance period in the region. It is characterised by alternating brick and stone, which gives the façade a sense of dynamism, a high slate roof with hanging cornices, bas-reliefs, which are known as mascacons, made from tuffeau stone from Meuse (portraits – coats of arms – mythical creatures – religious and satirical scenes) and mullioned windows. The complex was purchased by the City of Liège in the early 20th century. The palace became the Museum of Glass and the home of the Museum of Decorative Arts. An iconic building in the City of Liège, the Curtius Palace lent its name to this museum complex in the heart of the historic city centre. Today, it houses a portion of the Arms Museum.

JEAN DE CORTE AKA CURTIUS

A leading industrialist in his time, the magnate Jean de Corte (1551–1628) earned his fortune by manufacturing weapons and gunpowder, which he supplied to the Spanish armies stationed in the Netherlands. He owned land, seigneuries and shares in the coal-mining industry. In 1617, he founded an iron-and-steel-manufacturing complex in Northern Spain, for which he imported machines and workers (workers from Liège had become experts in this field).



Jean Wirix, Portrait of Jean de Corte, chiselled engraving, Anvers, 1607 – Grand Curtius collection © City of Liège



View of Curtius Palace from the courtyard of the residence © City of Liège

THE BRAHY MANSION AND THE WILDE HOUSE (SECOND HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY)

Originally, these two mansions were a single building, which was constructed during the second half of the 17th century. It was known as the Hôtel de Haxhe and was constructed by Conrad de Haxhe, who was burgomaster of Liège in 1673. The brick and limestone architecture with lintels showcases an evolution in architectural styles, particularly in the shift from mullioned windows to large bay windows. Around 1770, the mansion was divided into two parts, which would be developed independently of one other by various owners: the street-facing (Brah) part and the main (Wilde) part in the south. In the 20th century, the building was taken over by the City and used as a warehouse. At the museum's inception, plans were made to demolish these two buildings, but, in the end, they were restored and integrated into the general design as the museum reception and cafeteria areas.



The Brahy mansion
© https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%B4tel_de_Haxe

THE HAYME DE BOMAL MANSION (SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY)

Reflecting the Neoclassical architecture of the second half of the 18th century, the Hayme de Bomal mansion is a prime example of French architecture. It follows the tradition of 18th-century Parisian hotels, including the royal apartments on the first floor. Its construction is attributed to Barthélemy Digneffe, the architect, who built it for Jean-Baptiste de Hayme de Bomal, an important Liégeois burgomaster. The mansion was the seat of the department of Ourthe. Napoleon Bonaparte stayed there on two occasions (with his two different wives). It subsequently became the seat of the Dutch administration, before it was taken over by Pierre-Joseph Lemille. He sold it to the City in 1884, so that it could be turned into the Arms Museum.



The Hayme de Bomal mansion © www.opt.be

THE CONTEMPORARY LAYOUT (2003 –2009)

These historic buildings are connected by modern architectural developments, creating coherent movement and almost imperceptible differences between the diverse constructions from the various periods.



View of the elevation of the museum buildings, before and after Daniel Dethier's additions © www.dethier.be

Building G, which serves as the museum's façade, is located on Rue Feronstrée and was designed by Liégeois architect Daniel Dethier to replace the former Sauvage house, which dates to the second half of the 18th century (and is included in the Hayme de Bomal mansion), and a former school in a Neoclassical building.

LES ESPACES EXTÉRIEURS

The museum's exterior courtyards were also designed by a landscape architect: Erik Dhont. In the main courtyard, he created abstract volumes using bricks of different shapes and sizes. Their position in the landscape suggests potential itineraries for visitors. The bricks used for the fountains were recovered from houses that were demolished when constructing the contemporary buildings.



Main courtyard of the Grand Curtius © www.erikdhont.com



THE GRAND CURTIUS A COLLECTION OF COLLECTIONS

The Grand Curtius brings the collections of former Liège museums together under one roof: the Museum of Archaeology and Decorative Arts, the Museum of Religious and Mosan Art, the Museum of Glass and the Arms Museum.

The itinerary follows a chronological path that spans from prehistory to the beginning of the 20th century. This itinerary re-traces the incredible odyssey of Liège and the local regions over time. At the same time, themed sections make it possible to discover certain fields in greater depth. Two supplementary itineraries are devoted to glass and weaponry, two industries in which Liège has demonstrated exceptional expertise.

ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Starting in the 1860s, the Liège Archaeological Institute (IAL) dedicated a significant portion of its budget to acquiring antiques (through purchases, excavations, etc.). Since 1874, these have been stored in a wing of the Prince-Bishops' palace. In 1901, the City of Liège decided to store this collection in the Curtius Mansion. The new museum, which was initially known as the Liège Museum of Museum, was opened in 1909. At that time, archaeology was developing in Liège. Celebrated researchers, such as Marcel De Puydt, founded what was known as the "Liège school of prehistory". Two donations (the Georges Cumont donation in 1914 and the Marcel De Puydt donation in 1920) would make the Liège collection one of the largest and richest in the country. It included approximately 15,000 items. The De Puydt donation, which was the result of the donor's almost 50 years of personal research at Spy and, later, Hesbaye, earned the collection its international reputation. The Gallo-Roman collection is the result of various excavation

campaigns carried out by the IAL between the second half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Emanating from burial sites or settlements, this collection preserves archaeological material that was discovered during excavations of the Gallo-Roman villa in Place Saint-Lambert, the Haccourt villa, and, more recently, various sites in Jupille.

I.A.L.

The Liège Archaeological Institute (IAL) is an association founded in 1850. It aims to research, collect and preserve artworks and archaeological monuments found in the province of Liège. It comprised scholars, archaeologists, historians, architects and more from Liège.



Overview of the Archaeology department © City of Liège

THE LIÈGE SCHOOL OF PREHISTORY

During the 19th century, there was a growing interest in natural sciences. Research in the fields of geology and mineralogy led to the discovery of both human and animal fossils. Proof of their ancient origin called into question the creationist belief that people have existed in their current form since the beginning of time. Liège-born Philippe Charles Schmerling (1791–1836), who was a professor at the University of Liège, scientifically proved the existence of fossilised men. As a result, the University of Liège was one of the first institutions to study prehistoric man. After Schmerling, other archaeologists earned fame for their research, thus forming a “Liège school of archaeology”.

MARCEL DE PUYDT

Marcel De Puydt (1855–1940) was a doctor of law and political sciences. Though he was the director of the legal department of the City of Liège from 1880 until 1920, he was primarily known as an exemplary prehistorian. Having surrounded himself by palaeontologists and geologists, he discovered traces of a kind of man unlike the man of modern times in a cave in Spy in 1886: the Neanderthal. As the founder of the Prehistory section of the Liège Archaeological, he strived to enrich it through frequent donations.

RELIGIOUS AND MOSAN ART DEPARTMENT

This department is, in part, the heir to the Diocesan Museum of Liège, which was founded in 1880 by the Society of Art and History for the Diocese of Liège (SAHDL). In 1976, this became the Museum of Religious and Mosan Art (MARAM), after its work was taken over by the City of Liège. Since 2009, it has been one of the departments within the Grand Curtius museum complex. Throughout its various iterations, its aim has remained the same: to preserve and promote religious heritage. Thanks to its place at the heart of a powerful ecclesiastical principality for over ten centuries, Liège has witnessed the incredible evolution of religious and, more specifically, Mosan art first hand. The collection has been enriched by donations and endowments from various sources. It also preserves the archives of the Osterrath glassmakers and the Dehin goldsmiths. The department, which is associated with the collections from the former Curtius Museum and some works from the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, proposes an itinerary that traces the artistic evolution of religious art, showcasing the ideological changes that occurred between the Early Middle Ages and the present day.

DECORATIVE ARTS DEPARTMENT

Originally exhibited alongside the archaeological collection in Curtius Palace, the decorative arts collection was established through various donations. This collection is rich and varied. It includes masterpieces of Mosan art, fragments of altarpieces and furniture, works by celebrated Liège artists, such as Jean Del Cour, Jean Varin and Guillaume Evrard, one-of-a-kind pieces from the Renaissance period, and Italian, Chinese, German, English and even Dutch earthenware and porcelain pieces.

GLASS DEPARTMENT

Starting at the end of the 19th century, Alfred Baar, the President of the Trade Courts of Liège, began collection various pieces of glass art. This is an exceptional collection of glass works, dating from Antiquity through the 19th century. Upon his death in 1907, his son, Armand, continued expanding his father's collection. Like a true curator, he indexed the items, sketched them, numbered them and grouped them, which allowed him to document the history of glass-making. In 1946, Armand Baar's widow stored the collection in the Curtius museum. The City of Liège purchased the collection six years later and subsequently founded the Museum of Glass in 1959. A large number of subsequent acquisitions enrich the glass-making collection, with pieces from around the world from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods, as well as designs from the 1950s and 1960s, are highlights. Through well-established links with the glass warehouses of Val Saint-Lambert, a wide variety of pieces make it possible to trace their manufacturing history, as well as contemporary works. Today, the collection is one of the most prestigious in the world.

THE ARMS MUSEUM

In 1885, the Liège Arms Museum was opened in the former Hayme de Bomal mansion. The museum's collection comes from Liège-born Pierre-Joseph Lemille, an arms manufacturer and, more importantly, an avid collector. The museum's mission was to collect as many portable firearm designs from around the world as possible. Through purchases and donations, the Arms Museum in Liège has become one of the most important of its kind anywhere in the world. The museum moved to Curtius Palace in 2018. The new setting showcases nearly 600 civilian weapons and outlines the history of armoury from the 16th century to the 21st century.



THE GRAND CURTIUS SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

CORDIFORM BIFACE

A biface is a “multifunctional” tool that has been flaked on both faces, with a droplet shape (cordiform = heart-shaped). Too heavy for a handle, the round shape of the lower portion ensures that the stone has the correct ergonomics for easy gripping. The pointed portion at the top was used for piercing, while the splintered portions on the edge were used to cut, slice and scrape pelts. People made them from flint, which was resistant and could be easily cut by impact and splintering. People survived by hunting, fishing and gathering. They were nomadic and pursued their good supply, moving around in groups.

THE PALAEOLITHIC AGE

The Palaeolithic Age (from the Greek “paleo”, meaning “old”, and “lithos”, meaning “stone”) was the oldest and longest period of prehistory. It started approximately 2.9 million years ago. The earliest traces of human settlement in Western Europe date back approximately one million years (Homo Erectus). In our region, the earliest traces of human settlement were discovered at Sprimont, at the Belle Roche quarry, and dated back 500,000 years. During this period, people engaged subsistence living, based on hunting, fishing and gathering. This resulted in a nomadic lifestyle.



Cordiform biface – Lower Palaeolithic Age (300,000 years ago),
Visé, Archaeology department, Grand Curtius © City of Liège

CERAMIC JAR EMBELLISHED WITH RIBBED DETAILS

Ceramics develop in line with agricultural needs. They allowed food to be stored. In Belgium, pottery was made using the coil technique (by layering strips of clay) and cooked on a millstone in a hole in the ground. A fire was set over this hole. The decorative motif that was applied to the walls of the container varied depending on its geographic origin. In Belgium, this comprised a series of lines and dots arranged in a ribbed pattern, which were obtained using a gradine.

These motifs are characteristic of the Linear Pottery culture. The Linear Pottery culture seems to originate in the Balkans. As a result of migration, these populations would come to settle along the furrow of the Sambre and Meuse rivers, primarily in the Meuse Valley and the Geer region in Hesbaye. As a result, the decorative motifs found on ceramics serve as a type of calling card, making it possible to identify the different cultures. These early farmers developed tools for working farming land, such as polished axes that they used for clearing land. Once polished, these stones became more resistant, with a sharper and more regular cutting edge. Other inventions were used to transform raw materials (such as millstones, which were the precursor to the mill). Therefore, it is possible to identify the earliest crops as cereals, which were converted into flour.

THE NEOLITHIC AGE

The Neolithic Age (from the Greek "neo", meaning "new", and "lithos" meaning "stone"), is the most recent portion of prehistory. During this period, stone is cut and also polished. This period of civilisation is characterised by major social and technical changes, which are linked to groups shifting towards a production-based economy. This is based on agriculture and breeding and most often leads to people leading a sedentary lifestyle. As a result, people are no longer dependant on nature, but rather have a real influence over their environment due to their ability to produce resources.



Pyriform vase, Early Neolithic Age, [4,900–500 years ago], found at Place Saint-Lambert in Liège, Grand Curtius © City of Liège

THE PLACE SAINT-LAMBERT GRADINE: A SMALL COMB WITH A STORY TO TELL...

In 1907, while digging a trench to install gas lines at Place Saint-Lambert in Liège, archaeological remains that provide a significant amount of information about the roots of the Ardent City were unearthed. Notably, two pits containing artefacts from the Linear Pottery culture were discovered, dating back to the Early Neolithic Age. These artefacts included a small bone comb, which was well preserved by the soil's organic qualities. The tool comprised four small, short teeth and a smooth, sharp side that was used to shape the pottery. The toothed portion was used to decorate. This discovered proved that Place Saint-Lambert was the first human settlement near the Légia, which joined the nearby Meuse and formed a fertile alluvial cone that was protected against flooding.



VASE WITH BUSTS FROM JUPILLE

This terracotta vase with busts, which was made between the end of the 1st century and the end of the 3rd century, remains a mystery to archaeologists even to this day. Though we know that this category of vase, which was primarily produced in the Bavay region (Northern France), was used for domestic worship, the busts have not yet been identified with any degree of certainty. The artefact has been reconstructed from some original fragments, which were discovered in 1872, during an excavation at Place Gît-le-coq in Jupille. As a result, the moulded busts had their faces restored.

These include three bearded effigies and three effigies with no beards. Their hair is styled neatly and they frame a three-headed face with four eyes – this has been reinterpreted in its entirety on the basis of other vases with busts and their designs. The latter figure has a pair of wings, which is a characteristic of Mercury, the God. Representations of this kind, depicting the God of Travel and Commerce, are linked to the Celtic tradition and were very popular in Gaul. These seven figures have long been associated with the planetary deities – Saturn, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus – which correspond to the days of the week. However, this hypothesis is no longer accepted by researchers, due to the absence of distinct iconographic elements that would allow this interpretation to be confirmed.

ROMANISATION

The term “Gallic” was used by the Romans to describe the Celtic populations that settled in Gaul (as defined by Julius Caesar). This zone included what we now know as France, Belgium, the southern portion of the Netherlands, Switzerland and Northern Italy. The various people of Celtic origin that inhabited this region did not form an organised state. It was Caesar who artificially created this geographic territory to highlight his conquests.

In 58 BCE, the Roman general Julius Caesar began his campaign to conquer Gaul. In approximately 51 BCE, he asserted his sovereignty over these newly conquered lands. The Gallic people, who became Gallo-Romans, gradually adopted Roman traditions and customs, which they linked to their local traditions. This was the beginning of Romanisation. Imperial Gaul was divided into three provinces: Gallia Belgica, Gallia Lugdunensis and Gallia Aquitania. The campaign to conquer Gaul required the rapid movement of troops. Therefore, the Roman army established a vast road network, which was constructed by, and for, the soldiers. Later, these roads would help trade to develop throughout the Roman Empire. Relays and camps would be established along this road network. Over time, some of these stops would become vici (small settlements) or civitas (larger urban settlements, or towns). For two centuries, the Roman Empire experienced a period of peace, which allowed the Gallo-Roman civilisation to develop (Pax Romana).

THE VICUS OF JUPILLE

Today, archaeologists have a clear overview of Jupille during Roman times, thanks to archives and various excavations that have been carried out there. Between the 1st and 3rd century, Jupille was a settlement belonging to the city of Tongeren in Germania Inferior. This settlement was the first stop between Tongeren and Trier. The strategic positioning of this settlement was therefore beneficial to its development. Today, we know that Jupille was home to two craft industries: on the one hand, metallurgy, which is attested to by the discovery of forges, and, on the other hand, pottery, which can be seen in the discovery of kilns and the remains of ceramic pieces. The importance of the city is also evidenced by the presence of a temple dedicated to Apollo. This is located along the main road of the settlement.



Vases with busts, Gallo-Roman period,
Terracotta, Jupille © City of Liège

HEMISPHERICAL BOWL WITH MOTTO

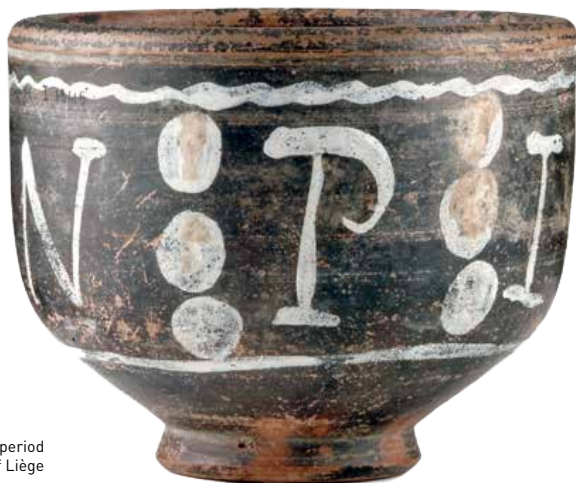
This bowl with a motto, which was dated to the first half of the 4th century, was discovered in Lauw, near Tongeren. Modelled using a reddish putty, it has a black glaze that originally gave it a metallic look. After cooking for the first time, the maker applied decoration with a coloured slip, which was a fluid, clay paste. These often included dots, scroll work and wavy lines that accompany a legend. The INPLE motto – the letters of which are separated by three layered dots – is a call to drink: INPLE ME means “fill me”. During the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, Trier was a major production centre for this kind of luxury tableware. This was disseminated widely throughout Gallia Belgica, in the south of Roman Britain (England) and in Germania Superior and Germania Inferior. The most popular inscriptions that were painted on these vases refer to drinking or the joy of drinking: MITTE MERVM (serve wine that has not been diluted), MISCE (mix me), BIBE (drink), FRVI (savour) or DA AMICO (share with a friend).

STAMPED CERAMICS

This very shiny red ceramic gets its colour from an engobe* and oxidising atmosphere in the oven when it is cooking. Its regular shape attests to the use of a pottery wheel. The pottery wheel was invented in approximately 3,500 BCE in the Near East. It made its first appearance in Europe a few thousand years later. This tool made production faster, improved output and, most importantly, produced more regular and standard pieces. The motifs in relief were obtained by using a mould. Using a mould to make this decoration made it possible to obtain a batch of tableware with the same decorations. The appearance of the pottery wheel and mould led to semi-industrial production of these luxury ceramic goods. The term “stamped” refers to the initials that were often placed on the bottom of this tableware. This helped to identify the potter’s workshop where the container was produced. This kind of ceramic would find incredible success throughout the Roman Empire. Created in the Italian peninsula from the middle of the 1st century BCE, it was soon imported to Gaul via the Roman trade routes. These ceramics were produced in very large quantities; archaeologists have collected many of them during various excavations. This abundance of materials allowed for cross-referencing and archaeologists now have a chronological classification for these stamped ceramics. Finding stamped ceramics on an excavation site is therefore a strong chronological marker and a useful tool for dating.

TERRA RUBRA AND TERRA NIGRA

The success of stamped ceramics and their production is so great that “imitations” began to appear. More local productions appeared, such as terra rubra and terra nigra, which were produced in Belgium between 20–10 BCE. These local attempts mixed stamped ceramic models with shapes from the Celtic tradition. They are cruder, less fine and feature fewer decorations. Terra rubra, which was cooked in an oxidising atmosphere, was covered with an orange-red engobe. Terra nigra, on the other hand, was cooked in a reducing atmosphere, which made it possible to get colours ranging from silvery grey to black.



Terracotta bowl with motto, Gallo-Roman period
© City of Liège

TREASURY FROM VERVOZ

At the time this treasury was buried in 255–256, there was significant political instability in our region. This was linked to a period of financial recession, which caused money to be devalued. As result, many savers stockpiled currencies. This bronze container held 1,680 silver coins (1,085 deniers and 595 antoninianus). The oldest coin dates to 186, under Emperor Commodus, and the most recent dates to 254 and bears an effigy of Emperor Gallienus. This means there is a gap of 68 years between the oldest coin and the most recent! Over 60 years, these coins certainly did not retain their exact value, but they were kept for the value of the metal, in this case, silver.

THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS

During the 3rd century, Germanic populations, who were being dispelled by the Huns, started to migrate to Western Europe, thus entering the territory of the Roman Empire. The Franks pillaged the territory belonging to Gallia Belgica. These are called barbarian invasions because, in the eyes of the Romans and the Gallo-Romans, anyone who did not speak Latin was viewed as a barbarian. Exhausted after its conquests, and under attack from all sides by barbarian populations from the East and the North, the Roman Empire began to falter. The Franks were originally from Germany. They crossed the Rhine in search of fertile land, engaging in relentless battles and spreading increasingly throughout Belgium and a large part of Gaul itself. They established several independent states, which were governed by the princes of a single dynasty: the Merovingian dynasty. They would birth the first dynasty of French kings. This marked the end of Gallo-Roman Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages.



Treasury from Vervoz, Gallo-Roman period
© City of Liège

PALUDE DIPTYCH

This diptych was donated to the Cathedral of Our Lady and St. Lambert by Henri de Palude upon his appointment as cantor. The piece is not dated. It was unquestionably produced between 1488 and 1515, between the time when the donor became cantor in the cathedral and his death in 1515. The right-hand portion shows Palude symbolically witnessing the murder of Saint Lambert. He can be recognised by the coat of arms at his feet. His appearance is an anachronism, since this event occurred approximately eight hundred years earlier. This staging, along with the success of diptychs in the region, reflect a spiritual trend that emerged at the end of the 14th century: *Devotio Moderna* (Modern Devotion). This pious trend would change religious life throughout Northern Europe. It encouraged a sense of closeness between man and the divine, by emphasising the inter-

nal personal life. Sacred imagery should call people to individual prayer. The intimate nature of the diptych was perfectly in line with this practice.

In 705, Saint Lambert, a bishop for the diocese of Tongeren and Maastricht, was assassinated for political reasons, but also because he had publicly denounced Pépin de Herstal, Charlemagne's father, for having an adulterous affair. The murder occurred while he was praying in his home in Liège. At the time, this was a small, relatively quiet village. Saint Lambert was buried in Maastricht, but believers still honour him in Liège. This is gradually becoming an important pilgrimage site. In 718, his successor, Saint Hubert, decided to build a place of worship to welcome pilgrims and host the remains of Saint Lambert, which were moved from Maastricht to Liège. This led to significant economic and



Palude diptych, oil on panels, Liège, post-1488, Grand Curtius © City of Liège

political development in the city. At the end of the 9th century, Liège replaced Maastricht as the seat of the diocese.

This diptych depicts the martyrdom of Saint Lambert in an oratory that the painter has imagined. Saint Lambert is dressed in his episcopal garments. He has been injured by a hunting spear, which belongs to a soldier hidden on the roof. Lambert's two acolytes – his nephews – suffer the same fate: they are killed by Pépin's other soldiers. The left-hand portion depicts the Nativity, with the tranquillity and sweetness of this scene contrasting that of the adjacent panel.

THE CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY AND ST. LAMBERT

When Saint Hubert returned the body of Saint Lambert to Liège, he constructed a place of worship on the spot where he was martyred. Notger, the first prince-bishop and a great builder, launched the construction of a cathedral in 985. After burning down in 1185, it was reconstructed in the Gothic style, on the foundations of the previous building. The site was completed in 1433 with the construction of the spire. This is a visual landmark of the city. A French traveller states that the roof was covered with gold; however, in reality, this was gilded lead. This anecdote highlights the wealth of the principality of Liège. It remained this way until the Liège Revolution. During the Liège Revolution (1789–1794), the people of Liège took the building apart stone by stone. While people in France were revolting against the monarchy and their unchecked power, in Liège, the revolt was aimed at the centralised power of the prince-bishop. As a protest, the symbol of his religious power was demolished. The last remnants of the cathedral were levelled in 1827. The limestone from the cathedral would be used to supply ovens used to manufacture zinc, as well as filling in the inlets of the Meuse to create Boulevard de la Sauvenière.

NOTGER'S GOSPEL BOOK

Written in approximately 930, the manuscript contained in this binding came from Stavelot Abbey or Reims. The top cover of the binding features a composite decoration, which attests to the exceptional expertise of Mosan craftsmen.

At its centre, carved ivory from the end of the 10th century bears a peripheral inscription in Latin: «And I, Notger, overwhelmed by the weight of sin, here I am bending the knee, before You who can move the universe». The upper portion depicts Christ, in majesty, with his feet resting on a sphere. In the lower portion, a figure – likely the donor – is kneeling with a book in his hands. This could be Notger, the first prince-bishop of Liège and the founder of the Church of St John the Evangelist, from which the gospel book came.

The central ivory is surrounded by cham-plevé from 1160. They depict allegorical figures of virtue (Courage, Justice and Temperance) and the four rivers of Paradise (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and the Euphrates). Finally, plaques made from chiselled gold were added in the 15th century. They feature foliage-inspired decorations, which are typical of Gothic gold-smithing decorations from the 1400s. This binding bears witness to the importance of this manuscript through no less than 400 years of decorative enhancements!

LIÈGE, AN ECCLESIASTICAL PRINCIPALITY

Between 972 and 1008, the diocese of Liège was overseen by Bishop Notger. The German emperor, Otto II, gave him the title of prince-bishop and sent him to this tumultuous region, which was coveted by the King of France. Liège became an ecclesiastical principality in which Notger had complete control, in terms of both civil and religious matters. Rich and powerful, Notger launched significant works projects: he built a city wall, within which he built seven collegiate churches and two abbeys, as well as the imposing Cathedral of Our Lady and St. Lambert. This was built beside his new episcopal palace, which served as a symbol of his religious and political power.



so-called Notger gospel book, manuscript: Reims (?), approximately 930; ivory: 11th century; enamel: approximately 1160; engraved plaques: 15th century, Grand Curtius
© City of Liège

THE VIRGIN OF ÉVEGNÉE

Starting from the 11th century, Liège was known as “the Athens of the North”. Indeed, it was one of the largest cities in the German Empire. The successive prince-bishops transformed the seat of the principality into a region of churches, one that was covered with collegiate churches, large abbeys and priories. Liège was home to more than twenty parishes in the 12th century. These institutions educated people and encouraged significant artistic activities. Mosan iconography from the Middle Ages is primarily dominated by typology, depicting religious themes through a play on the consistencies between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

This Madonna and Child is a Seat of Wisdom (*Sedes Sapientiae* in Latin). The seated virgin becomes one with her seat. She is materialising the seat of wisdom that is made incarnate by her son. She holds an apple in one of her hands. The Virgin is the “New Eve”, who atones for original sin by giving birth to the son of God. The Child more closely resembles a miniature adult. He is giving a Latin-style blessing with one hand (the last two fingers are bent); his other hand holds a book. There is no display of affection between mother and son. Instead, she seems quite serious. The select traces of polychromy are original. The craftsmanship is archaic and almost schematic in nature. The reliefs are simplified to the most basic expression, particularly in the depiction of the anatomy and clothing. The work, which was damaged by fire, is now partially amputated. This is one of the oldest Mosan Seats of Wisdom.



Seat of Wisdom, also known as the Virgin of Évegnée, multi-coloured wood, Mosan region, approximately 1060, Grand Curtius © City of Liège

MOSAN ART

Under Bishop Notger's rule, the Meuse became a means for economic, intellectual and artistic exchanges. Trends and traditions of Germanic or Latin origin were thus able to spread and be exchanged along this heavily trafficked route. As a result, Liège was at the crossroads of civilisations, at the intersection of routes from all across Europe. Artists in our region have found a way to retain the best elements of all the trends that arrived in Liège, in order to create a consistent artistic style of its their own. Thanks to this unique geographic context, the Meuse Valley experienced the rise of so-called Mosan art (from Mosa, meaning the Meuse) between the end of the 10th century and the middle of the 14th century. Many churches and abbeys taught art and encouraged artistic activities. Metal-working flourished and reached its peak. Mosan goldsmiths mastered complicated techniques: enamelling, brass work, filigree, brown varnish, etc. Artists transposed theologians' teachings onto materials. They are behind the jewels of the Western world.

CLUMSY CRAFTSMEN?

Between the 10th century and the 12th century, craftsmen cared little about faithful depictions of human anatomy. It was instead depicted in a schematic fashion, with the dimensions occasionally being unequal. This phenomenon was not caused by clumsiness on behalf of sculptors at the time. Artists placed more importance on the symbolism of the images they produced than their realism. The thematic concepts depicted dictated the formal aspects of the images. The tallest characters are the most important – this is known as the “moral perspective”; their expressed is neutral, regardless of the situation in which they are depicted (for example, Christ on the cross does not appear to be suffering in his martyrdom). The aesthetic elements of sculptures are used to showcase the high morals of the heroes, who serve as models for believers who were often illiterate.

RELIQUARY OF THE HOLY CROSS

The 12th century saw the worship of relics become popular. This triptych contains a relic of the True Cross that was given to the Holy Cross Collegiate Church in 1006 by Emperor Henry II. It is made from sheets of gilded copper, which were applied to a wooden core. The relic is enclosed in a small gold cross and accompanied by an inscription: *lignu vite* (tree of life). The small cross was not added to the triptych – a popular form of reliquary in the 12th century– until 1160. This is attributed to Godefroid de Huy. Two representations of Truth and Judgement carry the reliquary chest in one hand and a lance in the other. The lance is one of the Instruments of the Passion. A rock crystal forming an *oculus* contains relics of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Vincent. The allegory of mercy is depicted in the *champlevé*. The attitude is similar to that of Christ on the dome atop the triptych (The resurrected Christ discovers his wounds). In an arch in the lower portion, five haloed figures are accompanied by an inscription, which reads, “The resurrection of the saints”. The twelve apostles are depicted half-length in the panels. They are shown in pairs across three levels, forming the assembly of judges. The Byzantine stylistic influence can be seen in the use of gilding and is notable in the overall shape and composition. These processes were commonly found in the Mosan region.



RELICS AND THE WORSHIP OF RELICS

Relics (from the Latin “*reliquae*”, which means “remains”) are material remains that a venerated person leaves behind upon their death. There are two types of relics: Direct relics = bodily remains, that is, bodies or body fragments, such as bones, hair, teeth. Indirect relics = any variety of non-bodily remains, such as clothing, items that belonged to the saint or items with which the saint had contact. The most valuable relics were those that were linked to the life of Christ: pieces of the Holy Cross, thorns from the Holy Crown, the teeth of Saint John the Baptist, milk from the Virgin Mary. Historically, the worship of relics date backs to the martyrs of early Christianity. Believers prayed at their tombs. In the Middle Ages, relics – both real and fake – were heavily trafficked. Between 1100 and 1200, during the time of the Crusades, various relics were brought back from the Far East. At a time when “seeing is believing”, relics were an important asset. During the Middle Ages, a market for relics was soon established. “False relics” became more common. Abbeys, convents and churches struggled with this underhanded practice, as well as various thefts.

Triptych of the Holy Cross, Mosan region, 11th century, silver, copper, enamel, approximately 1160–1170 © City of Liège

LAMBERT LOMBARD, VIRTUOUS WOMEN

Lambert Lombard (Liège, 1505–1566) was a renowned painter, architect and designer in Liège during the Renaissance. In 1532, he was appointed as the official painter for Erard de La Marck, the prince-bishop. They both shared humanist values that emerged from the Italian Renaissance. The prince-bishop, who was a wealthy patron and supported the arts and literature, offered Lombard a grant to study and train in Rome. While there, he studied ancient sculpture, numismatics and Renaissance works. He returned to Liège with this training in ancient and Italian art, which was rare at this time. This trip marked a complete shift in Lombard's artistic output, as he distanced himself from the Medieval tradition that still prevailed in Liège during the 16th century. He found inspiration in Roman art, particularly as it pertains to decoration, anatomy and composition lines, while his use of bright colours resembles the work of the Tuscan Mannerists. More than anything, Lombard's art was dominated by a continued search for idyllic beauty.

THE RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance – which began in Florence – refers to a period of “renewal” that spanned the 15th and 16th centuries, depending on the region. In Italy, the “Early Renaissance” or “Quattrocento” refers to the 15th century. The “High Renaissance” (also known as the “Cinquecento”) spread across Europe in the 16th century. Seen as a shift away from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance was inspired by Greco-Roman antiquity, which was seen as a socio-cultural model to which to aspire.



Lambert Lombard, Cycle of virtuous women, approximately 1530–1535, Liège, Fine Arts of Liège © City of Liège

The cycle of virtuous women – which, today, is broken up and likely incomplete – includes eight painted canvases. It is preserved in Liège and the Church of Saint Amand in Stokrooie (Limbourg). The complete piece doubtlessly comes from the Cistercian Herkenrode Abbey in Curange. This was one of the most prestigious monastic establishments for women in the former diocese of Liège. Each of the canvases represents a significant episode in the life of eight virtuous (or heroic) women. These showcases of a woman's courage would be an object of meditation for the nuns. Sources include the Old Testament and legends from pagan antiquity. This choice of theme highlights the intellect of this religious community and the intellect of the artist, who visited Rome and was considered to be one of the greatest antique dealers of his time. The choice of heroines from ancient history, as well as those from the Old Testament, recalls a trend that was in vogue during the Renaissance, which bestowed pagan heroes with an equivalent moral value as Biblical characters. From an artistic perspective, the Renaissance sought a faithful depiction of the world, which represented a shift away from Medieval symbolism. This desire can be seen in the search for balance and symmetry, in the depiction of the volumes, anatomy and proportions of the body, and in the use of linear perspective to create the illusion of depth in spaces, which led to an ideal balance of realism and spirituality. Lambert Lombard was immersed in these artistic "innovations", which he discovered during his stay in Rome. While he adopted many of these aesthetic innovations, he did retain certain techniques from the Medieval traditions of the Northern Alps.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE FOUR CANVASES IN THE GRAND CURTIUS

Coriolanus welcomes his mother and wife:

Coriolanus is a figure from the Roman Republic, according to Plutarch. Due to his hatred of Rome and all of its tribunes, he encouraged the colonies to revolt against the State and march on Rome. However, he relented to the pleas of his mother and his wife and abandoned his plan.

David and Abigail: Abigail intercedes with David, the future king, to save the life of her husband, Nabal, after he refused to assist him.

Rebecca and Eliezer at the well:

Abraham tasks his elderly servant, Eliezer, with going to Mesopotamia and choosing a wife for his son, Isaac. Upon arriving near a well with his ten camels, he meets Rebecca among the girls who have come to fetch water. She is "very pretty" and gives him water to drink, for both him and his camels. Seeing this as a sign from Yahweh, Eliezer offers Rebecca a gold ring and two bracelets, thus choosing her to be Isaac's future wife.

Jaël and Sisara : Jael killed the Canaanite general Sisera, who was an enemy of the Hebrew people, by stabbing his temple as he slumbered, after first poisoning him. As a result, she brought peace to the kingdom of Israel.

MONSTRANCE, ALSO KNOWN AS THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

The Feast of Corpus Christi was first celebrated in the former Collegiate Church of Saint-Martin in Liège in 1246. This worship became very important after the Council of Trent, as the Catholic Church wanted to encourage the veneration of the Holy Sacrament (the body and blood of Christ) and the Eucharist (consecrated bread and wine). For Liège silver smiths, monstrances had been shaped like turrets since the 13th century. Starting in 1670, during the Catholic Reform, the prevailing sun-shaped monstrances came to prominent. Sun rays spread out from the lunette (the central part in which the consecrated host is kept) and highlight this symbolic element. Thanks to its hallmark, it has been attributed to the finest silver smith of that time, Charles de Hontoir, this monstrance features an abundance of decorations, comprising clouds with cherubs, jagged sun rays, angels carrying the Instruments of the Passion, effigies of Saint John (the Baptist and the evangelist), and, finally, dove of the Holy Spirit. This is all crowned with a depiction of the Holy Father giving a blessing.

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

The origin of this Feast of the Blessed Sacrament dates back to the 13th century. Saint Juliana of Liège is responsible for the creation of this feast. Starting in 1209, she began to experience mystical visions: an incomplete moon would appear to her. She interpreted these visions as a sign that the Church needed an additional feast. Convinced, she worked to establish The Feast of Corpus Christi. She asked the Blessed Eve of Liège, a recluse in Saint-Martin, for assistance. This new feast aimed to revitalise the faith of believers; however, the Liège bourgeois were opposed to it, since this would mean an additional day of fasting. After a long period of struggle by Saint Juliana, the feast was introduced to the diocese of Liège in 1246. Upon Saint Juliana's death, Eva took up the mantle and managed to introduce the feast to the Church as a whole in 1264.



Monstrance, also known as The Feast of Corpus Christi, the goldsmith Charles de Hontoir, silver and brass, Liège, 1722 © City of Liège

ORANUS CUP

The centre of this flat silver cup, which has been chiselled and embossed, features a wide-brimmed bishop's hat motif and a tasselled cord. This motif is a nod to the coat of arms of its first owner: the prince-bishop Robert de Berghes. De Berghes offered the cup to the Deputy Burgomaster, François d'Heure, as a thank you for his hard work after he resigned from his episcopal role. His nickname, "Oranus", was used to name this incredible silver piece. Though this cup, which was inspired by the "tazza" style popular among Italian silver smiths, bears the hallmark of a silver smith name "HG" or "GH", this person has not yet been identified. The "L" time-stamp suggests that this cup was probably produced sometime around 1564. Twelve antique imperial deniers made from silver are embedded in the cup, dating from the reign of Domitian (81–96) to the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161). Effigies of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian can be seen among these pieces. These twelve pieces seem to have been carefully selected from the collections accrued by scholars and humanists during this period. The cup was presented to Oranus at a time when coin collections were becoming more popular in the Northern Alps and gave rise to numismatics (the study of coins). Hubert Goltzius, a painter, engraver and medalist from the Dutch Republic, also recounts visits that he paid to collections alongside the major Liège humanists and collectors, such as Lambert Lombard and Liévin Torrentius, in his book.

HUMANISM

Established in the second half of the 19th century, humanism refers to an intellectual and artistic trend that sprung up in Italy in the 14th century. It recognises Man as an individual in his own right, with unlimited intellectual potential, a central role in creative endeavours and, above all, an existence that is independent from divine goodness. Understanding reality, the world and how it works gives people the ability to change it. The guiding philosophy of humanism is the desire to bring back the ancient world and to achieve the same level of greatness.



Oranus cup, silver, hallmark of the silver smith GH or HG, Liège, 1564 © City of Liège

ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK BY HUBERT SARTON

This astronomical clock was designed by a famous Liège clock-maker in 1795: Hubert Sarton. It comprises six enamelled dials with copper cylinders on a base. It shows the time and astronomical information. In the centre: the month, date, hour and minutes; in the bottom left: the day of the week; in the bottom centre: the phases of the moon; in the bottom right: the manufacturing year, between 1795 and 1844; at the top: solar time at 53 different locations around the world.

These complex clocks were generally produced for demonstrations or exhibitions. Clock makers produced them to showcase their technical prowess and the wealth of their patrons. These pieces typically had an underlying philosophical message, which was consistent with the world view at the time it was produced.

During the 18th century, the increased interest in knowledge and understanding the world, particularly science and astronomy, revived interest in these astronomical clocks. These prestigious pieces attest to the desire of 18th century men to master time. As a result, renowned clock makers at this time spent their lives trying to achieve absolute precision and to obtain mechanical repeatability.

HUBERT SARTON (1748- 1828)

Hubert Dieudonné Sarton was passionate about mechanics and clock-making from a very young age. At 20 years old, he left for Paris to hone his talents. He returned to Liège in 1772, having studied the art of making clocks. He was appointed "court clock maker" by Charles Alexandre de Lorraine, and then "primary court mechanic" by prince-bishop François Charles Velbrück, a major patron who strived for artistic and scientific progress. It was under his patronage that Sarton produced his finest work, particularly for the Société Libre d'Emulation* that the prince-bishop founded in 1779.



Hubert Sarton, Astronomical clock with six dials, 1795, Grand Curtius,
© City of Liège

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The 18th century was characterised by an important intellectual and cultural movement in Europe:

“The Age of Enlightenment”. This century seeks enlightenment through the “light” of knowledge. The movement dispels the darkness of ignorance by disseminating knowledge. Encyclopédie, which was edited by Diderot and D’Alembert, is the best representation of this desire to collect all knowledge and disseminate it to an enlightened public. As a result, this was the century of philosophers and enlightened individuals who sought to challenge traditional value systems, such as religion, absolute monarchies, education, science and the dissemination of knowledge.

They aimed to apply Reason, a philosophical concept that was developed by Descartes, to all areas of thought. Therefore, they used Reason to criticise religious beliefs, political institutions and financial organisations. Through these criticisms, they aimed to eliminate things that were harmful to individual liberty. They believed that laws should facilitate the happiness of every individual.

FURNITURE SET BY SERRURIER-BOVY, FROM THE CASTLE OF CHAPELLE-EN SERVAL

If Liège was one of the major hubs of Art Nouveau, this is in part due to Gustave Serrurier-Bovy. An architect, but, above all, a furniture designer, he created – in addition to a rather abundant production – some remarkable furniture sets that were used to fully decorate important buildings. In particular, he decorated the castle in Chapelle-en-Serval. Chapelle-en-Serval is a French municipality in the Department of Oise, near Compiègne. The castle there was built between 1620 and 1630 for a local lord, as a replacement for the former castle. In 1902, Alphonse Verstraete, a financier and the castle owner, commissioned Gustave Serrurier-Bovy to create a furniture set for his castle, since he was a big fan of his work. In 1903, Alphonse Verstraete would also provide more than 50% of the funding for the company Serrurier & Cie, which brought together Serrurier-Bovy and René Dulong, a Parisian architect. Unfortunately, the furniture set from Chapelle-en-Serval has since been separated, like other sets by this artist (Villa d'Aube

in Cointe, Cheyrelle castle in Dienne, Auvergne, Villa Ortiz Basualdo in Mar del Plata, Argentine). The piano and billiards table are now stored at the Grand Curtius. The shape of the piano differs from that of classic grand pianos. The furnishings for this Pleyel piano were designed in an architectural style. This makes the structure of the furniture highly intuitive. This focus on intuitive furniture and simple composition principles are typical of Serrurier-Bovy and his work. The style of the piano is distinguished by the dominant curved line, which aligns with Art Nouveau trends. The traditional legs were replaced side sections, two of which comprise sculpted bronze panels. These were created by Oscar Berchmans and feature depictions of magnolia flowers. The upper panel was painted by his brother, Emile Berchmans. These paintings depict scenes from mythology that have musical component: a faun playing the flute in a forest, sirens with their hair blowing in the wind and Orpheus playing the lyre.



Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (furniture), Emile Berchmans (painter), Maison Pleyel (piano), piano and sheet music set, 1902, Liège-Paris © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

ART NOUVEAU

Art Nouveau is an artistic trend that came to prominence in the late 19th century. This trend, which was very modern, had an impact on architecture, decorative arts, graphic arts, jewellery and music. Metal had been used in architecture since ancient times, but it was hidden and its use was limited to the technical functions of the building. Intense iron and steel activity in the 19th century helped to enhance the value of this material. Though it was initially used by architects for buildings that embodied modernity, such as factories, train stations and large shops, metal would soon become an essential component of the structure and aesthetics of the Art Nouveau movement. This movement, which questioned the wisdom of academies and “neo” styles, is characterised by the use of curved lines – so called “whiplash lines” – and finds inspiration in flora and fauna. Like its English neighbour – the Arts and Crafts movement, which called for the revitalisation of artisanal production – Art Nouveau emphasises the skill of craftsmen and the use of modern materials. Artists from the Art Nouveau movement aimed to design coherent works in which architecture and decorative arts are viewed as a whole – as an art of its own. The Art Nouveau movement had a significant on artistic production around the world, but the movement petered out very quickly. Starting from 1920, it was replaced by Art Deco.

GUSTAVE SERRURIER-BOVY

Serrurier was born in Liège in 1858. His family were originally from the Pays de Herve. In 1866, his father, who was a carpenter at that time, took over a building business owned by Gustave’s future father-in-law. Starting in 1871, young Gustave attended architecture classes at the Liège Academy of Fine Arts. Meanwhile, he continued to receive a traditional education at an atheneum. He started an apprenticeship with his father at sixteen years of age. In 1884, he married Maria Bovy. His wife founded the House of Serrurier-Bovy, a shop that offered exotic furnishings and decorations. Gustave established his architecture workshop at the same address. He had difficulty getting his career as an architect off the ground, so he turned to the furniture and interior design business. As a result, he gave up on architecture – though it pained him to do so – and made furniture. His pieces found great success in progressive intellectual circles. In 1894, he presented a “craft room”. This set served as a gateway for decorative arts. In addition to luxury furnishings made from exotic materials, he produced affordable and functional furnishings. He was a staunch proponent of making fine arts and decorative arts accessible to the working class. His “Serrurier-Bovy” and “Serrurier & Cie” workshops offered a variety of product ranges, which were accessible to everyone. His furniture was functional and could be produced cheaply, while retaining its elegance. His “Artisan” or “Silex” product range included furniture that was assembled by the user, thus reducing production costs. In some ways, Serrurier-Bovy was the precursor to IKEA and furniture kits.

EUGÈNE YSAYE STUDIO

Although he was a key figure in the music scene in the early 20th century, Eugène Ysaye also contributed to the artistic and philosophical renewal of the era. A leading figure in the musical wing of the "Les XX" group, and subsequently the "La Libre Esthétique" group, he came into contact with artists like Constantin Meunier, creator of the Batelier statue, among these circles. This statue was made from bronze and stored in this studio. As a result, he became friends with a variety of artists, musicians, cabinet makers, sculptors, painters and engravers. His study, which was been recreated at the Grand Curtius, attests to these friendships. His studio office was designed in 1894 at his home on Avenue Brugman in Brussels. The studio furniture reveals the musician's penchant for Art Nouveau, an aesthetic trend that spanned art as a whole and which emerged at the turn of the century. Pannelling, a desk, chandeliers, and some photo cards were created by Gustave Serurier-Bovy, the cabinet maker, who was a rising star in this new style, which involved designing architecture and furnishings as a "unit". His decorative repertory finds inspirations in the curves and counter-curves of flora and fauna. This floral inspiration can also be seen in smallest parts of the studio: the decoration of the stamp box, around the lock on the door, in the decoration of the cast-iron wood-burning stove and the vases, which are signed by the famed glass-maker Emile Gallé. The work of other leading contemporary artists can also be seen in the studio, such as a pair of sculpted lions by Antoine-Louis Barye, as well as a bust of Voltaire and portraits of Tolstoy and Ysaye's two children, among others. The library contains a varied collection of writers, from Balzac and Rabelais to Dante and Buffon. As a result, this recreation can be taken as a reflection of an exceptional musician and the changing era in which he lived.

LES XX

Created in 1884, this artists' circle originally comprised twenty founders from the art scene in Brussels: these included Théo van Rysselberghe, Fernand Khnopff, and James Ensor, among others, as well as influential journalists, writers and art critics. Les XX formed after certain painters were not allowed to participate in the Essor Salon in 1884. "They can exhibit at home!" said one of the jury members. That is exactly what happened. Les XX organised their own exhibition, advocating, above all, for the equality of all artists. There was no more selection jury and each participating artist was allowed to exhibit six paintings. From a stylistic point of view, this group opposed Academic Art and focused on what could be seen. They were interested in nature and the reality of society, which they never idealised. The group broke up approximately ten years later, but the mantle was taken up by "Libre Esthétique" in 1894.



Archive photo of the studio (cf catalogue GC p. 129) © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

EUGÈNE YSAÏE

Ysaïe was born in Liège in 1858. Young Eugène studied the piano with his father, the director of an operetta theatre, from a very young age. He continued his education at the Royal Conservatory of Liège, which he enrolled in at the age of seven. He was expelled four years later after being rude to one of his professors. While walking by Ysaïe's house, the violinist Henri Vieuxtemps heard the young boy playing and was blown away by his virtuoso talent. He was able to get him back into the conservatory. He was given a scholarship to study in Paris in 1877, and then went to Brussels to improve his skills. In 1879, he was appointed first-chair violin at the Berlin Philharmonic. A leading interpreter of the works of Beethoven and Bach, he quickly found success in major European tours and in the United States. He became a teacher at the Brussels Conservatory from 1886 to 1898. A great composer, he wrote many pieces for the violin, which revitalised the art of the violin both technically and expressively. He started a career as an orchestra conductor in 1894 and, between 1912 and 1922, directed the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in the United States. He was appointed as the "Court choir-master" in Belgium by King Albert I and then became a musical advisor to Queen Elisabeth. They jointly established a competition that was initially called the "Ysaïe competition", though, in 1951, it was renamed the "Queen Elisabeth competition". He died in Brussels in 1931.

LIÈGE VIOLIN SCHOOL

Following Belgium's independence in 1830, painting, literature, dramatic art and music once again began to flourish. It was the violinist Charles Bériot, who was originally from Louvain, who inspired the founding of the Liège Violin School. While certain musicians, such as Joseph Ghys and Alexandre-Joseph Montagné – who were originally from Ghent and Brussels respectively – found great success, Liège in particular produced an exceptional number of violinists. These included Henri Vieuxtemps, Lambert Massart, César Thomson, Martin-Pierre Marsick and Eugène Ysaïe, who formed the Liège School. There is no rationale or structural element that seems to explain this musical phenomenon. However, the preponderance of Liège musicians waned over time. Two world conflicts would end this unique period in Liège music history. The "Queen Elisabeth" competition is the only tangible evidence that remains today of this incredible passage in Belgium's musical tradition.

VENETIAN-STYLE SPANISH EWER

Between the 16th century and the 18th century, Catalonia was more extensive than it is today. It covered territories that belonged to the Crown of Aragon, which are now dispersed between Spain, Italy and France. Artisans and merchants moved easily around this territory. Archive documents attest to the presence of master glass-blowers in Catalonia. Their output had a major influence on productions throughout the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Monarchs and members of the upper class collected prestigious glass pieces or used them at their dinner table to impress guests. These glass pieces were richly ornamented with enamel, filigree or gilding. This large, Venetian-style ewer is unique, thanks to its height and its majestic handle. The decoration is typical of the Catalan assimilation of Venetian decorating techniques. The decoration comprises embossed filigree, which animates the surface of the piece (as opposed to Venetian glass, where this decoration is integrated into the body of the piece).

Between 1910 and 1920, Armand Baar travelled in Spain. He visited Madrid, Granada, Seville and Barcelona. He was an avid admirer of Spanish glass and visited many museums. While there, he took notes (shapes, colours, decorations) and made a number of sketches. Numerous acquisitions were made in antique shops and auction houses. The collection has subsequently included exceptional pieces from Spain, which are representative of the golden age of Catalan glass.

VENETIAN GLASS AND THE "VENETIAN STYLE"

In the early 11th century, Venice became one of the leading maritime and commercial powers. The city also became a key hub for glass in Europe, thanks to the assimilation of glass-making techniques from the East. In 1291, the glass-making workshops were moved to the nearby island of Murano, as a result of the nuisance caused by the many kilns in the city. A strict policy of protectionism was put in place: glass makers were threatened with imprisonment and even death if they revealed manufacturing secrets. The success of Venetian glass was the result of technical and decorative innovations employed by the artisans. In approximately 1450, they invented *cristallo*, a clear, colourless glass. In the 16th century, they developed the filigree decorating technique. This involved adding streaks of white or coloured glass in the molten glass mixture. These streaks may form a pattern of parallel, spiral or overlapping lines. The renown experienced by Venetian glass makers led to a variety of imitations across Europe, which would be referred to as "Venetian-style".



Ewer, second half of the 16th century – early 17th century, Catalonia, Spain © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

TRAVEL GOBLETS WITH BUTTERFLIES

This pair of luxurious travel goblets, which were protected by a leather-covered wooden carry case, are unusual pieces, which are distinct from standard pieces made from clear and cut Bohemia crystal. They showcase the creativity and talents of glass makers. This pair of goblets is interlocking; the smaller of the two does not come into contact with its larger counterpart thanks to a hide sheath. The interior features a gold-leaf inlay, while the exterior walls are adorned with a marble decoration that is inlaid with undulating friezes. The small goblet is completed with a butterfly and the large goblet is completed with a moth. These veined or marbled decorations, which are coloured with understated shades, resemble precious stones, such as agate and jasper. This technique, which was developed during Roman times, was brought into line with contemporary tastes by Venetian glass makers in the 16th century and, later, in the 18th century. This process involved including copper crystals in the glass paste, in order to add a golden, glittery appearance. This material is then called "stellaria". This method, which is referred to as "goldstone", is based on luck rather than a clever calculation of the amount of copper used.

BOHEMIA GLASS

The 18th century was the golden age for Bohemia glass (today known as Czechia), overtaking English crystal and, in particular, Venetian glass, which had previously dominated glass production in Europe. Bohemia made its mark by focusing on international trade and regulations that focused on internal protectionism. The glass workshops developed very pure glass, which was obtained with high-quality quartz and potash. Lime was added to this. The discovery of new bleaching process that involved the use of manganese dioxide – known as "glass makers' soap" – made it possible to produce clearer glass. When working with this thicker material during production, artisans demonstrated their expertise with two decorating techniques: deeper cuts and wheel engraving. The latter, which was discovered by Caspar Lehman in approximately 1600, an engraver in the court of Rudolf II in Prague, refined the decorating process for coats of arms, foliage scroll work and flowers, as well as genre and religious scenes. Even today, Bohemia glass remains the gold standard in the collective consciousness.



Travel goblets, 18th century, Bohemia © Grand Curtius, City Liège

"COCKCHAFER AND WHITE WATER LILY" GOBLET

The simple shape of this goblet is enhanced by the abundance of decorative motifs designed by Émile Gallé and their variety. A river landscape is depicted in the front centre. Two fishermen – one seated and the other in motion and holding a fishing rod – are depicted near the rocks in this design. It is rare to see characters depicted in Gallé's decorative repertoire. The miniature view is treated with the grisaille technique lined with a purplish-pink colour. Two cockchafers with outstretched wings are depicted in a surprisingly "Art Deco" style, with their treatment resembling that of scarabs in Egyptian art. In the foreground, large blue, green-grey and pink lotus leaves adorn the bottom of the goblet. These flat-tint leaves can also be found on the other side of the piece. From a technical standpoint, the parison of translucent, colourless glass is superimposed at points with multiple layers that have been coloured using oxides. The lotuses have been chemically etched, while the cockchafers in relief are depicted using the cameo technique, a technique that Émile Gallé favoured. This involved progressively cutting the various multicoloured enamel layers until the desired pattern was achieved. The details were achieved with a small engraver's lathe, which had a fine diamond point.



ÉMILE GALLÉ

Émile Gallé was born in Nancy in 1846. His father, Charles, had studied painting on porcelain, but opted for a career as a travelling merchant. He was married to Fanny Reinemer, whose father owned a glass and porcelain shop. After the death of his father-in-law, Charles took over the shop, which was named "Gallé-Reinemer". Business flourished. The teenage Gallé loved botany, which he started to study at the age of fourteen. In 1865 and 1866, he visited Saxony. He discovered glass-blowing at the glassworks in Meisenthal and studied the chemistry, techniques and formal designs involved in glass work. In 1867, he joined the family business and became the artistic director. Ten years later, he took over from his father and managed the "Gallé" business. He devoted himself to designing and producing glass and crystal. He was a love of flowers and plants and amassed a personal collection of approximately 3,000 species. This allowed him to draw decorative motifs from the natural world. He was also fascinated by insects, in particular beetles, dragonflies and butterflies. He participated in the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889 and 1900 and won the Grand Prix for glassworks. In 1901, the artist established the École de Nancy and became its president. He died prematurely of leukaemia in 1904. His glassworks continued production until 1936, even after his death.

Emile Gallé, goblet with cockchafers, 188, Nancy
© Grand Curtius, City of Liège

HORTA VASE

After a trip to the United States, Georges Deprez, the director of the Val-Saint-Lambert glassworks, imposed a new, deeper-cutting technique in the cutting workshops, which had been managed by Hubert Fouarge since 1883. This rich or "American" cutting became the indelible brand image of Val on an international level. During the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, which was held in Paris in 1925, the "Art Deco" style came to the attention of the general public. The Val-Saint-Lambert glassworks exhibited in a Belgian pavilion designed by Victor Horta, an architect and a leading proponent of Art Nouveau in Belgium. Approximately seventy pieces were exhibited. The glassworks won the Grand Prix – the top award – in the "Glass" category. This vase, which was named in honour of Horta, is a masterpiece. Its size, which is more imposing and audacious, was designed by Hubert Fouarge. This tall, rounded vase, which was made from clear crystal and lined with pale amethyst satin, is enhanced with cabochons. These were applied when hot and then cut. The size of the hammered circular facets gives this piece a very appealing optical effect.



Hubert Fouarge, Horta vase, 1925, Val-Saint-Lambert,
Liège © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

VAL-SAINT-LAMBERT

In 1825, François Kemlin and Auguste Lelièvre, the two associates of Aimé-Gabriel d'Ar-tigues, who had founded the glassworks in Vonèche, purchased the Abbey of Val-Saint-Lambert with the intention of opening a glassworks there. In 1826, the kilns were fired and the Société Anonyme des Verreries et Établissements du Val-Saint-Lambert produced its first glass pieces, using Bohemia or Vonèche-style glass or press-moulded, semi-circular glass. The Art Nouveau period was productive: cut glasses were produced for luxury table services and fine glassware flourished thanks to the French artist Léon Ledru, who managed the Art Department starting in 1897. Avant-garde pieces with original shapes and curvilinear cut patterns came into existence, along with the first acid-etched designs with naturalistic decorations. From 1905 to 1908, the Muller brother, who had previously collaborated with Émile Gallé, were hired to teach fluogravure (layers of enamel and acid etching) to the glass-blowers at Val-Saint-Lambert. They produced nearly 500 pieces. The period between the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century saw "VSL" reach its peak. The factory employed between 4000 and 5000 people and was among the industry leaders worldwide, in terms of both quality and financial performance. The glassworks produced a wide variety of Art Deco pieces. Easier shapes were produced, characterised by an angular design with sharp edges. A new colour palette was employed to dye the glasses. Starting from the 1930s, Charles Graffart and René Delvenne created the "Luxval" line. This comprised pieces that were produced using press-moulded, semi-circular glass, thus reducing production costs. The stylised decorative motifs referred to flora, fauna and sports. Varying levels of success were achieved in the following decades, but "VSL" stubbornly stuck to its core values of expertise, the quality of its glass makers, engravers, cutters and its secret processes for manufacturing materials. After a series of takeovers, the company went bankrupt in 2013. In 2018, the entrepreneur, George Arthur Forrest, bought a 75% share in the Val-Saint-Lambert glassworks. A new kiln was recently purchased. This will allow production to resume and for new, original pieces to relaunch this prestigious brand.

PISTOLS WITH IVORY MOUNT (1660-1670)

These pistols with an ivory mount were a speciality of Maastricht and the areas around it in the period between 1650-1675. These luxury weapons are the work of master gunsmiths, skilful iron workers and cross-makers who carve a precious material – ivory – that came from the East via Dutch trading posts. These pistols are characterised by handles that are most often sculpted in the form of human heads: ancient warriors (as in this case), heroes crowned with laurels, Turks, etc. The artists behind these sculptures are still unknown. The gun locks are often signed. However, these pistols bear no markings. They are attributed, with no formal proof, to Léonard Cleuter, a Maastricht-born gunsmith based in Liège, who would end his days as a mercenary leader.

FLINTLOCK

During the 16th century, simpler mechanisms, which were based on the same principle as the lighter, began to appear. A piece of flint with a bevelled edge, which is held in place by the dog, strikes a metal piece (the frizzen) when the trigger is pulled. The impact causes a spray of sparks, which fall into the flash pan with the ignition powder, causing the cover of the flash pan to raise. This system, which is more reliable than the matchlock and cheaper than the wheellock, would find popularity throughout Europe for more than two centuries.

LÉONARD CLEUTER

Maastricht-born Léonard Cleuter (approximately 1670-1690) was an adventurer and enjoyed a career as a mercenary. He occasionally earned his money by trading arms. After declaring bankruptcy in 1664, he borrowed money and established his own regiment.



Léonard Cleuter (attributed), Pistols with ivory mount, 1660-1670, Maastricht © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

LIÈGE RIFLE FROM THE EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE IN 1867

This double-barrel shotgun, which uses a Lefauchaux pinfire-cartridge system, is a masterpiece of 19th century chiselling and inlay. The barrels, which were designed by Léopold Bernard in Paris, are made from skelp. Damascus steel is an iron and steel alloy. It is made up of several colours that are welded and forged to each other in order to obtain patterns with varying levels of complexity. The chiselling and gold inlay of the relief, which is inspired by the "Neo-Renaissance" style, depicts stylised floral decorations and dogs. The trigger guard (a metal loop that protects the trigger) follows the sculpture in the round style and depicts a hunting dog on the look-out for partridges. The gun hammers are shaped like chimeras. This exceptional decoration is the work of Liège native Joseph Boussart.

This rifle was presented by Pierre-Joseph Lemille (the founder of the Arms Museum in Liège) during the Exposition Universelle in Paris 1867, as a representative of the Liège armoury, which was one of the most important in the world at that time.

PINFIRE CARTRIDGE

Invented in 1828 by Casimir Lefauchaux, the pinfire cartridge was patented in 1835. This cartridge contains mercury fulminate, which is ignited by a small metal pin that protrudes at a right angle and which is long enough to protrude beyond the curve of the barrel. The primer is contained within the base of the cartridge case. When fired, the hammer of the weapon strikes the pin vertically. It gradually fell out of fashion with the invention of the rimfire cartridge and centrefire cartridge. In fact, the pin was a hazard, since accidental impacts could cause it to explode.

CASIMIR LEFAUCHEUX

Casimir Lefauchaux (1802–1852) was a French gunsmith. In 1835, he filed a patent for a new type of ammunition: the pinfire cartridge. These cartridges contain the bullet, the powder and the primer. In association with Léopold Bernard, a gun manufacturer, he developed a hunting rifle that utilised this technology. A few years later, his son, Eugène Lefauchaux, took over the family business.



Liège rifle at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867, 1865, Liège © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

HONORARY RIFLE OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL, SON OF NAPOLEÓN III

The Chassepot rifle was adopted by the French army in 1866. It was produced by several foreign companies, including companies in Liège. The Liège producer G. MORDANT offered this luxury example, which is slightly smaller in size, to Eugène Louis Napoléon, the son of Napoléon III, who was twelve years old at the time.

The weapon bears the Liège hallmark, a serial number and imperial icons, as well as mottos that commemorate the young heir.

CHASSEPOT RIFLE

The chassepot rifle (also known as the Fusil modèle 1866) was named after its creator, Antoine Alphonse Chassepot. This rifle was adopted by the French army starting from 30 August 1866. The chassepot was the first bolt-action percussion rifle used by the French army. This breechloading rifle allowed a crouching soldier to fire and reload and had a more rapid rate of fire.

NAPOLEÓN EUGÈNE LOUIS JEAN JOSEPH BONAPARTE PRINCE IMPERIAL

Destined to become Napoléon IV, young Eugène Louis was the son of Napoléon III and Princess Eugénie. Born in 1856 – and desperately desired by his parents – he soon earned the nickname “The little prince” and was spoilt by his parents. The child was fascinated by uniforms and weapons and, from a very young age, was passionate about military life. At fourteen years old, he pursued his father in the Franco-Prussian campaign in Alsace-Lorraine. He was separated from his father and, after the defeat, sought refuge in Belgium before reuniting with his mother in England. They were subsequently joined by the defeated emperor. Now in charge of the Bonaparte family, the young man was called to revitalise the Empire. However, after joining the English army, he was sent to the Zulu Kingdom at 23 years of age. This British colony was in the midst of an uprising. He was killed in an ambush in 1879.



Honorary rifle of the Prince Imperial, son of Napoleon III, G. Mordant, 1868, Liège © Grand Curtius, City of Liège

GEERINCKX FLINTLOCK GUN

In the 1860s, Geerinckx, a Liège-born gunsmith, moved to 93 Boulevard Montparnasse in Paris. His work was renowned for the quality of the mechanisms and the plain finish of the parts. The "Almanachs de l'étranger à Paris" note that this gunsmith was one of the few who still manufactured his guns and rifles entirely in Paris. In addition to producing guns, Geerinckx had a firing range, that is, a place where shooters could stand and shoot at a training target.

PERCUSSION LOCK

Thanks to developments in chemistry in the 18th century, the explosive properties of mercury fulminate and silver were discovered. As a result, the black powder that was used for firearms was replaced by fulminates at the beginning of the 19th century. In terms of mechanics, the dog was replaced by a hammer that strikes a piston and the primer.



Geerinckx flintlock gun, 1889
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INFO

+32 (0)4 221 68 17
infograndcurtius@liege.be
www.grandcurtius.be

