

Welcome to the **MuMo**

The Musée des Moulages (museum of castings) opened in 1899 as part of the University of Lyon. Its first director was Henri Lechat (1862-1925), a French art historian and professor at the University of Lyon. He was previously a member of the French School of Athens (EFA), and an antique Greek statues specialist. The museum was originally dedicated to the study of art history and archeology. Today, it is located in a former industrial premises of the 3rd district of Lyon, and remains a place of mediation and knowledge, which is open to the public.



Photographie of the Musée des Moulages at the Hirsch palace, 1936 © Université Lumière Lyon 2, MuMo

The museum's exceptional collection gathers up to 1900 plaster casts, faithful full size copies of famous statues – sculptures in the round (rondes-bosses), bas-reliefs and figurines – along with archeological items and photographs. It reflects the evolution of western sculptures from archaic Greece to the 19th century. A selection of 200 plaster casts is currently on display, following a thematic circuit.

The “bon creux” technique

The collection is also a depiction of a complex plaster casting technique. In the 19th century, the “bon creux” technique was the most often used in the cast workshops using a plaster mould to make the cast. Plaster being a solid material, meant the mould would have to be made of different pieces allowing for it to be disassembled and reassembled without breaking. The process of visualizing how many pieces the mould would need is called “reasoning the mould”. The collection shows the traces of the intersections between the different pieces, which are called seams. The arrival of flexible materials like silicon allowed to make moulds that were simpler and less expensive. This time-saving innovation brought with it the end of the outdated “bon-creux” technique.



Francesco Carradori, *Istruzione elementare per gli studiosi della scultura*, Firenze, 1802, Source Bnf.

Musée des Moulages of Université Lumière Lyon 2

Direction Sciences et Société

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Open

> Regular openings

Wednesday and Saturday – 14h / 18h

> Special openings

fall, winter and spring vacation :

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday – 2 p.m. / 6 p.m.

Guided visites • 1 hour

on opening days at 2:30 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Reservations

> Groupes

week days – 9 a.m. / 4:30 p.m.

> Drawing sessions

first Friday of the month – 10 a.m. / 12 a.m.

Closed

on holidays

and summer and Christmas vacation

Free entrance and activities for all.

Accessible for people with reduced mobility.

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Permanent exhibition



THE CIRCLE OF THE ANTIQUES

 This presentation in a circular arc is a reference to the first museum, located in the rotunda of the faculty of literature and law at the University of Lyon in the beginning of the 20th century. These plasters are copies of famous antique statues that were discovered in Rome during the 16th century. They were themselves copies of Greek bronze statues that were lost. These copies were distributed in Europe, from the Renaissance to the 19th century and were models to imitate; they are often copied or reemployed and are still part of today's culture. The castings from the end of the 19th century are also a representation of artworks that might have been damaged or restored but also un-restored, like the Laocoon. They are a statement of the material history of the original pieces.



WRITINGS

In the 19th century, the first room of the Musée des Moulages was dedicated to Egyptian, Assyrian, Mesopotamian and Hittite art. A big part of those plaster casts have been moved to the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée – Jean Pouilloux, but the museum still keeps a small selection of casts presenting lapidary inscriptions. Hieroglyphs, cuneiform writing and Greek inscriptions are gathered here as an object of study for epigraphy, the study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions.



ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE

Antique architecture was based on the notion of the architectural order that determined the creation of the shapes, proportions and decorative elements that were used in the elevation of a building. This section presents the capitals of the Doric order, the Ionic order and its Corinthian variation. A lot of elements are purely ornamental, but some show figurative representation, such as the metopes or pediments of temples. The pediment of the temple of Olympia, restored in 2023, is a perfect example of the monumentality of this sculpture, that was made to remain readable many meters above ground.



MEDIEVAL GALLERY

Today, because sculptures and walls of churches are often deprived of any color, it is difficult to imagine them painted. In the medieval period, just like in Antiquity, sculptures were polychromic. The pigments faded away with time, wear and sometimes man's intervention. Thanks to video mapping, the medieval gallery of the museum offers the colorful restitutions of three of its castings, based on archeological remains and hypothesis founded on the comparison with other artistic testimonies like sculptures, illuminated manuscripts and stained-glass windows of the original statues dated from the same period.




ROMAN ART



In the 4th century B.C.E., the Roman Empire extended to Greece's territory, creating an artistic transmission between the two cultures. Roman citizens collected Greek artworks or their copies, and Roman artists used Greek models to create a new realistic and expressive art style. Their statues, with idealized bodies, remployed the Hellenistic elegance, while the portraits were individualized with distinctive traits, evoking moral qualities. Monumental artworks, such as the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, are a statement of the imperial desire to spread strong political messages, similar to an antique advertising poster.




THE MODERN COLLECTION



Henri Focillon (1881-1943), art history professor and director of the museums of Lyon, opened, within the faculty of literature and law, a second plaster castings museum in 1913. Thanks to his network of scholars and artists, he formed a collection of hundreds of plaster castings of artworks from the medieval, the Renaissance and the modern period; a collection that grew even more with his successor, René Jullian. It is to him that we owe the transfer of the rare plaster reproduction of the Gates of Paradise from the Museum of Fine arts to the University's collection.



MONSTERS AND MYTHOLOGY

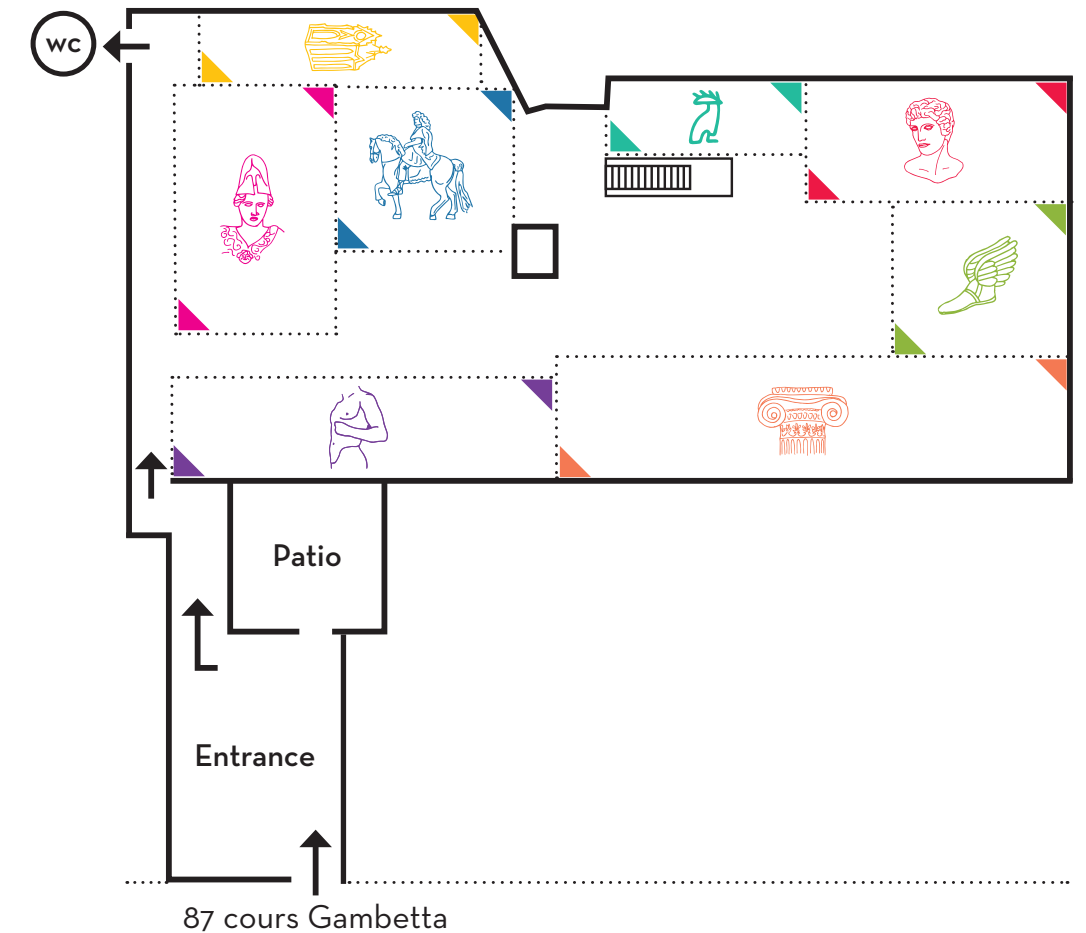


Mythology and Homeric texts form an inexhaustible repertoire of shapes and stories that allowed Greek culture to spread through the entirety of the Mediterranean. Representations of heroes, monsters and gods in human form originate from those tales. The divinities can thus only be differentiated by, in most cases, the attributes that are associated with them. They rule over all human activities and their representation in the form of statues is both used for worship in the temples, and as offerings in sanctuaries and public places.



THE BODY IN GREEK ART

In the 19th century, art history was mostly studied by comparing archeological discoveries of sculptures. Codes of interpretation and specific styles were thus established. In the 7th century B.C.E., the *kouros* (young man) or the *korè* (young woman) are represented with rigid postures and an “archaic smile”. Sculpting then acquired technical means of representation that were more complex and natural. The male body, always nude, became idealized through the representation of athletes and soldiers. The treatment of the female body, which was fully clothed in the beginning, went through a crucial change in the middle of the 4th century B.C.E. with the *Venus of Knidos*, the first feminine nude of Greek sculpture.



Photographe of the Musée des Moulages of Lumière Lyon 2 University, 2023 © Bertrand Perret