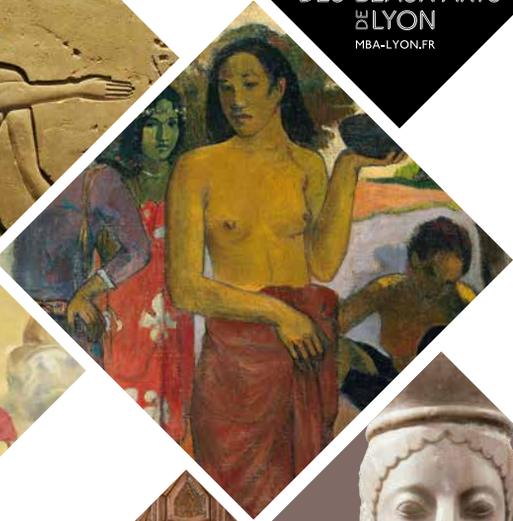


# THEMATIC TOUR

# MASTERPIECES



MUSÉE  
DES BEAUX-ARTS  
de LYON  
MBA-LYON.FR



Discover thirteen emblematic masterpieces from Antiquity to modern art with the aid of this handy illustrated tour and its short explanatory texts.



CHAPEL

**AUGUSTE RODIN****THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY**

Before 1900, marble, acquired from the artist in 1903

A naked woman is sprawled out sensually over the huddled body of a monk who is wearing a rough habit. His head against the floor, he kisses his cross fervently in an effort to escape from the temptation of her alluring body. The Bible tells us that Saint Anthony was haunted by visions of temptresses, and it was these visions which finally led him to undertake his desert retreat. Rodin deliberately left this sculpture unfinished, as was often the case. The traces of the sculptor's tools can be seen on the saint's wool fabric, in contrast to the smoothly polished style of the female figure's skin.

This was the first sculpture by Rodin to be acquired by the museum. It constitutes the genesis of a significant collection of his works, most of which are exhibited in the museum's garden, the chapel and on Level 2.



2

## TEMPLE GATE FROM MEDAMUD

Egypt, reign of Ptolemy IV (circa 221–203 BC), donation of the French Oriental Archaeological Institute in 1939

This monumental gate originally marked the entrance to the Medamud sanctuary (Upper Egypt). The facade decor shows King Ptolemy IV wearing the crown of Lower Egypt (on the left) and the crown of Upper Egypt (on the right). He is going to the temple to meet the mighty bull Montu, the local divinity of Medamud. The entrance features curls of hieroglyphic inscriptions which evoke the longevity of the Pharaoh's reign, and the god Amon is welcoming the king to the temple on the other side of the gate, on the right.

In 1939, the door was completely reassembled in the rooms of the museum, in accordance with the instructions of Alexandre Varille, the Egyptologist from Lyon, who was in charge of the excavations at Medamud at the time of its discovery.



3

## KORE

Greece, circa 540 BC, marble, entered the museum's collections between 1808 and 1814

This statue of a young woman (Kore in Greek) comes from the Athens Acropolis. She is wearing a light-weight linen tunic (*chiton*) and a woollen cloak (*himation*). She is crowned with a *polos* and the bird she is holding is a gift for Athena, goddess of the city. This remarkable work is representative of an evolutionary period in archaic Greek sculpture.

It is difficult today to imagine that 2600 years ago the Kore was brightly coloured. Tiny remnants of paint (red, blue and yellow), some of them visible to the naked eye – in particular some reddish brown in the hair – are, however, evidence of this.



4

## THE ANNUNCIATION

Italy, mid-14th century, polychrome walnut wood,  
acquired in 1884

These life-size figures of the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary probably come from an Italian church. They are talking and Gabriel, on the left, is moving forward respectfully, his hand on his heart. His wings are missing. The Virgin Mary looks astonished and is leaning backwards, as if surprised and intimidated by the angel's apparition. The New Testament's Annunciation episode relates that God chose her to be the mother of Jesus. Her statue has articulated arms which allowed it to be clothed differently according to which holy day was being celebrated.

Each figure was carved from a single block of walnut wood.



5

## ELEMENT OF A CENOTAPH IN HONOUR OF BAIBARS I

Syria, circa 1277, poplar, boxwood and jujube wood  
with ivory marquetry, acquired in 1887

This panel is a part of a funerary monument and it evokes the memory of Baibars, a warlord who died in 1277. His name can be seen in Arabic calligraphy in the upper section. The wood features geometrical patterns of carved boxwood and jujube wood polygons which are embedded with ivory and spaced evenly around two ten-pointed stars. Wood was a major trading commodity at the time for the Occident, the Byzantine Empire, Africa and India, and in Egypt it was considered to be a precious material. That is why craftsmen used every piece of wood, however small they were.

Baibars, the First Mameluke sultan, was an emancipated slave. He imprisoned Louis IX, King of France (Saint Louis) in 1250, during the Crusades.



6

## THE TREASURE OF TERREAUX

Lyon, France, buried en 1358-1360, gold and silver

This treasure was discovered in 1993 during the construction of a parking lot under the Place des Terreaux, in front of the museum's main facade. The small clay jar contained 545 gold and silver coins of various origins which belonged to a foreign banker. The treasure offers an insight into the beginnings of international trade in Lyon. It was abandoned in about 1360, during the Hundred Years' War, at a time when the plague was decimating the population of Lyon.

The museum's numismatic collection is the second largest in France after that of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. Composed of almost 50,000 medals, coins and seals, it also contains some remarkable Antique and modern treasures.



7

## HECTOR GUIMARD BEDROOM OF MADAME GUIMARD

1902-1912, pear tree wood, gold bronze, stippled maple wood veneering, donation of Adeline Oppenheim-Guimard in 1948

This bedroom ensemble is a remarkable illustration of Art Nouveau. It was created by Hector Guimard for his private mansion which he built and decorated and where he and his wife settled in 1909. The building was sold when the artist died, and some of its contents were donated to the Petit Palais museum in Paris, where the dining room may still be seen, and to the School of Nancy museum. The bedroom furniture was donated to the museum of Fine Arts of Lyon, and visitors can admire its supple forms, inspired as they were by nature. The slight curves and inverted curves demonstrate the mature Guimard style.

Hector Guimard (1867-1942) is well known for his entrances for the Parisian metro.



8

### PAOLO VERONESE BATHSHEBA BATHING

Circa 1575, oil on canvas, sent by the French State in 1811

A man wearing a crimson velvet coat and a golden cloak is interrupting a woman who is bathing. Veronese depicts the moment when David, King of Israel, sent a messenger to Bathsheba to declare his master's love for her. The king can be seen standing in the middle of the garden, surrounded by his court. The story of David and Bathsheba is told in the Old Testament's Book of Kings. It tells of how David sees Bathsheba bathing and falls in love with her. He then sends her husband Uri to die in battle in order to increase his chances of winning her love. The ewer is decorated with the coat of arms of the Badoer family from Venice. They are believed to have commissioned this work.

A great master of 16th century Venetian painting, Veronese is admired for his sumptuously ornate costume reproductions and rich chromatic palette.



9

### PETER PAUL RUBENS, SAINT DOMINIC AND SAINT FRANCIS PROTECTING THE WORLD FROM CHRIST'S WRATH

Circa 1618-1620, oil on canvas,  
sent by the French State in 1811

In the lower part of the painting, Saint Dominic and Saint Francis - who had made vows of obedience, frugality and chastity - are protecting the Earth from the wrath of Jesus Christ, restrained by the Virgin Mary. According to a medieval legend, Saint Dominic would have seen Christ becoming angry with humanity because it had given itself over to the three cardinal sins of pride, avarice and lust. Painted by Rubens in around 1618-1620, this monumental work decorated the high altar of the Dominican Church in Antwerp, and it was acquired by the museum in 1811 following the confiscations of the French Revolution.

This monumental painting measures 5.65 m x 3.65 m.



10

### **THÉODORE GÉRICAUT, THE MAD-WOMAN OR THE OBSESSION OF ENVY**

Circa 1819–1822, oil on canvas, acquired in 1908

This pale-faced woman wearing a white head covering has a deranged gleam in her eyes. She appears to be insane. The artist uses extraordinary details to reproduce certain elements of her expression, such as the grimace and the bloodshot, glazed look in her eyes. This realist painting demonstrates the artist's compassion for those who have been devastated by physical and mental suffering. It is part of a series of portraits of the insane by Géricault which is now housed in several museums around the world.

The circumstances under which these portraits were created are little understood. They may perhaps have been made at the request of Doctor Georget, a physician at the Salpêtrière Hospital, to illustrate a book about madness, although there is no evidence of any link between Géricault and him.



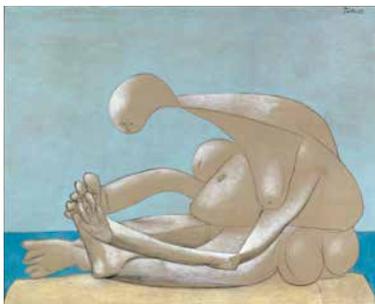
11

### **PAUL GAUGUIN NAVE NAVE MAHANA**

1896, oil on canvas, acquired in 1913

A group of women are represented in a tropical landscape that features remarkably rich shades of red and ochre. They are standing rigidly and silently, with grave expressions on their faces. The trees and their branches highlight the off-set symmetry of the composition. The monument-like quality of the women and the rhythm of the elements which make up the frieze remind us of Ancient Art forms. Gauguin painted this canvas during his second stay in Tahiti. It seems to embody an exotic inner vision which was perhaps inspired by the people and things he saw around him. They seem to have evoked in him the longing for a lost paradise.

The title of the painting means “delightful days” in the Tahitian language of the Maori.



12

**PABLO PICASSO**  
**WOMAN SITTING ON THE BEACH**

February 10th 1937, oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas,  
Legacy from Jacqueline Delubac in 1997

Picasso painted a naked bather sitting on a beach. She is holding her foot in both hands and examining it studiously. Picasso makes a point of representing all the parts of her body, as would a sculptor. The forms are outlined in charcoal and the relief is expressed with white pastel. Picasso may have been inspired for this canvas by his companion Marie-Thérèse Walter, who was an omnipresent figure in his work during the 1930s.

This work was painted a few months before *Guernica*, which is exhibited at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid.



13

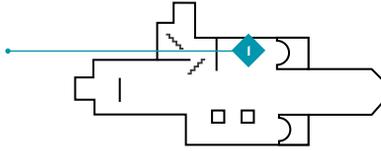
**PIERRE SOULAGES**  
**PAINTING 202 X 143 CM,**  
**NOVEMBER 22th 1967**

1967, oil on canvas, acquired in 2011

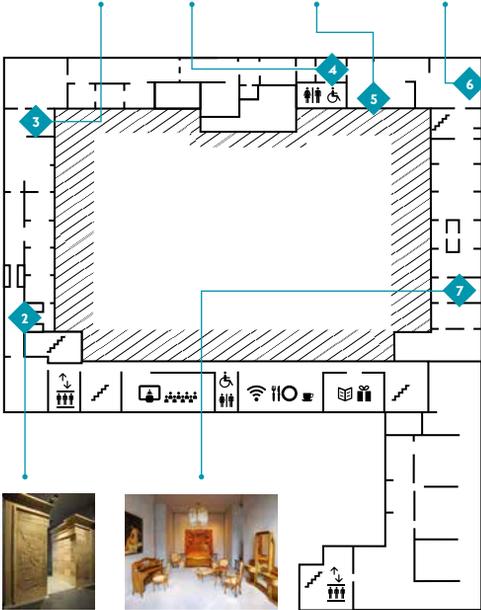
The colour black almost totally covers this canvas, sparing only a few small areas where a brown translucent matter had previously been applied in a manner that provides both shapes and a surface for the artist to work with. By confronting these two colours, Pierre Soulages found a means to explore that quality of black which allows it to project contrasting light onto the whiter colours that it surrounds or suggests.

Since his early days, Pierre Soulages has explored the different possibilities of black, playing with its contrast against a pale background, using it with another shade or introducing texture to create ever-changing reflections.

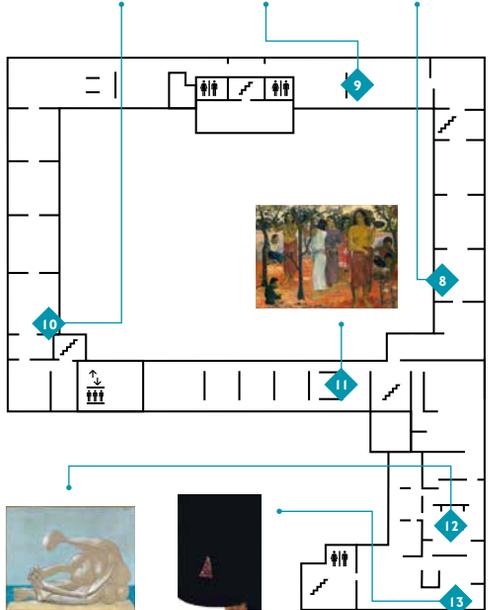
CHAPEL



LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2





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Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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**This thematic tour was designed by:**

Laura Clair, Aude Gobet, Véronique Moreno-Lourtau and Anne Théry for the Education Department. Geneviève Galliano, Salima Hellal, François Planet, Stéphane Paccoud and Ludmila Virassamynäiken, curators in charge of the collections.

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