

Architectural Heritage and Contemporary Lighting Design at the Musée de Cluny

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The Musée de Cluny serves as an innovative museum, embodying a vision of "context-aware museum development." This paper explores the seamless integration of technological elements and cultural values in the presentation of this historic private residence. A thoughtful approach to lighting considerations for both indoor and outdoor spaces is evident, where light serves as a nuanced symbol, fostering opportunities for heightened understanding and critical engagement with the environment.

In the early years of the 13th century, the University of Sorbonne established itself in what would become the Latin Quarter in Paris. The Abbots of Cluny in Burgundy, like many others, sought to establish a school and a pied-à-terre. The college, built in the second half of the 13th century, was located on the current site of Sorbonne, the pied-à-terre near the baths. At the end of the 15th century, Jacques d'Amboise, abbot of Cluny (1485-1510), decided to rebuild the Parisian abbey near the baths.

The construction, carried out in a very short time, is now the oldest intact example in Paris of a hotel particulier (private residence) with a courtyard and garden. The palace is surrounded by a low merloned blind wall, "pierced" only by a very simple gate (the ancient carriage entrance) and a small door for pedestrians. The two-story building with a slate roof (with a high balustrade concealing the attachment) and large dormer windows consists of a main body with two wings enclosing the courtyard. Different floors are accessed by spiral staircases. The original layout of the rooms has been preserved inside, at least in terms of the volume of the rooms, the orientation of the entrance, and the

chapel. The National Museum of the Middle Ages was created in 1843 to bring together two exceptional Parisian complexes, the Gallo-Roman baths of Lutetia Parisiorum (1st-3rd century) and the late medieval hotel of the Abbots of Cluny (late 15th century). It aimed to house the rich collection of medieval objects collected by Alexandre du Sommerard (in the Hotel de Cluny) and the remaining pieces of the large collection commissioned by Alexandre Lenoir during the Revolution, dismantled during the Restoration (in the building of the baths). The latter collection had previously been housed in the convent of the Petits-Augustins, now the Museum of French Monuments since 1975. Lenoir, driven by a commemorative and commendatory intent, relying on false attributions due to a lack of historical-scientific expertise and an open mind, believed that the works he collected, rescued from the times of the Revolution, should testify, century after century, to the development of French artistic history.

The Musée de Cluny represents the first museum based on the idea that one must "musealize by contextualizing." Authentic works, in an authentic context, are exhibited according to their authentic functions, without abstracting and abandoning the idea of the encyclopedic accumulation of artifacts. The collections offer a unique panorama of French art and history in the early 16th century and allow a journey through almost fifteen centuries of history. It can be said that the museum's intention is to become relived history rather than merely displayed, following the Ruskinian romantic conception of surpassing the death of architecture, going beyond the reality of things, beyond the

museum tradition itself. Du Sommerard invented the reproduction of a house from the past, as in a planned backward journey, the life of the city. These purposes still belong to the Musée du Moyen Âge, which has added, to du Sommerard's intentions, not only new installations but also more updated forms of entertainment, such as shows of medieval music and poetry. The restitutions are evocative and at the same time relevant and suitable for a comprehensive perception. The most interesting hall, intended to display the tapestries of the cycle of "La Dame à la Licorne," is circular and allows an instantaneous view of the cycle, as the setup, similar to that of a hunting pavilion, helps to place the viewer back in the atmosphere of the time and identify a type of environment suitable for the era. Several factors contributed to the setup, including the chromaticism that, in addition to serving as a background, perfectly recalls environments and eras now sedimented in the collective imagination, through highly impactful stereotypes: materials and light that complete the whole, providing warmth and intimacy.

The Gallo-Roman Baths of Lutetia

French archaeologist Didier Busson recounts that "Lutetia Parisiorum, ancient Paris, was built around the current Rue Saint-Jacques, the true axis of the Roman town, south of the Seine, probably by local leaders, Gauls romanized and enjoying the support of Rome, executed with local means but following a typically Roman pattern, attesting to the universality of the empire." The preservation status of the site allowed Didier Busson and his team to accurately record the different layers and various construction epochs of the neighborhood. This area had been abandoned since the 3rd century, remaining countryside until 1632 when, based on the plans of François Mansard, the Convent of the Visitation was built, eventually giving way in 1910 to the current Institute of Geography. The Gallo-Roman baths of Lutetia represent one of the most spectacular examples of ancient Gallic architecture preserved in France. Lutetia was divided into two urban ensembles, one located within the city and the other on the left bank of the Seine.

Various monumental complexes developed here: the Roman Forum located on the hill of Sainte-Geneviève, the arenas in Rue Monge, the baths to the east near the Collège de France, to the south near Rue Gay-Lussac, and to the north, the Cluny baths.

The preservation of the baths is mainly due to the continuous reuse of the complex since the Middle Ages. Three large rooms can be easily identified: the cold room (frigidarium) incorporated into the museum with its vault 15 meters high, the hot room (caldarium), delimited to the west by Boulevard Saint-Michel, and another room, to the south, at the corner of Boulevard Saint-Michel and Rue du Sommerard. These last two rooms are partially ruined from the 18th century. The walls, in height, have retained their original structure characterized by the use of small squared stones separated at regular intervals by rows of bricks. The walls inside were covered with mosaics, marbles, or paintings. The frigidarium preserves some traces: the fragment of mosaic currently exhibited, "Love dominating a dolphin," could constitute the last remnants. These complexes, like many other

thermal centers, are considered among the most representative places of Roman civilization.

"Illuminating" the Museum

Natural light is a crucial factor in contemporary museum design. While white light optimizes the enjoyment of artworks, studies have highlighted the damaging effects of direct light, leading to degradation, alterations, and even the disappearance of some colors. Therefore, illumination today utilizes the phenomena of light reflection and refraction. Since November 28, 2002, in the Latin Quarter of Paris, the Musée National du Moyen Âge has shone with a new light. The Ministry of Culture and Communication/Directorate of Museums of France, with the support of the Électricité de France Foundation, curated the lighting of the facades of the buildings. The project was entrusted to Anne Bureau, a lighting designer. The type of lighting preserves the intimacy of the place, making it perceptible in a complex and busy urban environment. The intervention reveals the meticulousness of the designer in seeking, through light, a natural and balanced effect, respectful of the era to which the buildings belong. In this case, historical care translates into the design of fixtures similar in form and type of generated light to torches or modern candles: the soft and flickering light that illuminates the facades of the building and the garden side recalls a flame, generating continuously moving shadows alternating with light. The lamps placed fully reflect the identity of the place, not only at night but also during the day. The lighting technology adopted in the thermal rooms allows hiding the electrical parts of the system (accessories and distribution cables) and powering the devices intended for lighting with a network that develops in the upper part. The concept of diffuse lighting for a general view of the whole and punctual for the specific understanding of details has been applied.

Direct lighting sources, appropriately recessed into "track" elements, have been used to illuminate the sculptures. The courtyard - In the evening hours, light sources behind the crenellated wall illuminate the facade in a warm and amber tone; the light separates the volumes, keeping the shadows sharp. From a single point next to the entrance door, a group of projectors, with a decidedly important visual impact, illuminates the main front, while the top of the staircase tower is lit by a sparkling light effect. Near the museum's entrance, a lantern, fixed with a sconce, suggests a nocturnal presence in response to the courtyard's illumination.

The Medieval Garden

The garden of "La Fôret de la Licorne" was set up in 2000, inspired by the museum's medieval collections. It consists of the unicorn forest, with the path marked by the footprints of the animals present in the tapestries of La Dame à la Licorne: rabbits, foxes, the lion, and even the unicorn; a small medieval vegetable garden, divided into sections with plants suitable for cooking and medical use, and a meadow full of flowers present in the background of the tapestries always from La Dame à la Licorne, called, not by chance, Millefleurs.

It is a recreation of the outdoor space, inspired by the museum's collections: tall trees evoke the unicorn forest around two small clearings frequented at lunchtime by students, mothers with children, the elderly, and tourists. The space closest to the entrance has been arranged as a medieval garden: a flowerbed represents the ménagier (the useful plants flowerbed, what we would call a vegetable garden); the next flowerbed alludes to the true garden of simple plants (with medicinal plants); followed by the celestial garden where the rose, violet, lily, and iris represent the Virgin; finally, the garden of love, where fragrant plants evoke courtly and sensual love. The final space is the flowered meadow, adorned with a fountain, beyond which one accesses the museum. Also, of great effect is the nighttime view of the garden, with its particular illumination. Here the light seems to come from the courtyard where "small luminous objects" emphasize the profiles with a warm white light. Some projectors mounted on the ground and arranged among these objects generate soft and gradating lights on the facades (light of amber tone). Openings and turrets are illuminated by means of a system of optical fibers with a flickering effect.

A device containing a disc with irregular fragments, including dichroic glasses generating different colors, rotating, causes random effects of color and direction evoking movement similar to the flame's light. This light effect is directed towards the windows and turrets with mini projectors placed in sealed containers, embedded in the courtyard floor. The vault under the chapel porch is also illuminated with grazing light with the same yellow-amber hue that the lighting system generates from the ground. Some silhouettes of plants and trees can be distinguished against the light from Boulevard Saint-Germain. The Musée de Cluny's lighting system has been generally conditioned outside by the luminous intensity emitted by the public lighting in the surroundings. For this reason, a weak main illumination level was created, integrated, then, with the fiber optic spotlight system. Numerous effects such as photoluminescence, contrasts, moving glares, highlight all moments of the visit to communicate understanding of the site and the exhibited works. In addition, paintings, photographs, and video projections accompany the value-based, meaningful visitor journey of discovery and knowledge of the places. It can be affirmed that the lighting of the Musée de Cluny represents a valid attempt at integration between cultural values and technological elements, seeking to satisfy the legitimate aspiration to recontextualize places, fully embracing the questions posed by contemporaneity. It is about building an additional opportunity for knowledge and, therefore, the growth of common critical awareness. The results have been significant: a comprehensive perception of the place has been achieved from every point of view, with innovative and original interventions, thanks to lighting techniques with which the designer, through a suggestive use of light and its "forms," seeks a harmonious effect respecting the architectural, historical, and symbolic values of the monumental complex.

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