

The only château in the Loire Valley built in the riverbed itself, the Château de Montsoreau was commissioned by Jean II de Chambes, a close advisor to King Charles VII, in 1450. Many famous figures have left their mark on its history, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, Anne of Brittany, Claude of France, Henry IV of France and Francis I. Its avant-garde architecture has inspired artists from Rodin to Turner and writers from Flaubert to Alexandre Dumas.

Transformed into a contemporary art museum and opened in April 2016, the Château de Montsoreau is a new art venue just two hours from Paris in the Loire Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage listed area. Stretching for more than 2,000 m², it boasts a permanent collection of artworks linked to the Art & Language movement, and is believed to be the world's largest collection of works by this group of artists involved in the founding of Conceptual Art.



A unique renaissance

Owned by the Regional Council of Maine and Loire, in 2015 the building passed into the hands of the collector Philippe Méaille, who planned to instigate a programme of restoration prior to exhibiting the works in his collection. Six months of intensive installation work, in partnership with Bâtiments de France association, returned the château to its former glory. The Renaissance château once again carries out its primary function as a place that is open to all, welcoming artists and their artworks. Visitors now find themselves at the heart of a unique work of art and architecture in which this Loire Valley château meets the avant-garde. Free to stroll through the collection of works created by the Art & Language collective, they also have the opportunity to admire fifteen monumental fireplaces, the palm-vaulted staircase and the terraces overlooking the river some 35 metres below. Built at the water's edge, the château is at one with the river and has re-established links with its surroundings, offering visitors a chance to cycle along the Loire or discover the local Saumur vineyards.



A new contemporary art venue in the Loire Valley

Immortalised by Alexandre Dumas in *La Dame de Monsoreau*, as well as by both Turner and Rodin, the château has always been a source of inspiration for artists. In its new configuration, the monument can be discovered through the prism of contemporary art, while, similarly, its contemporary art can also be seen through the prism of history. The ceremonial rooms are hung with a display of works created by the Art & Language collective from the mid-1960s to the present day.

Known for their deliberately provocative personalities, the four British artists that developed the movement – Michael Baldwin, Terry Atkinson, Harrold Hurrell and David Bainbridge, joined by Mel Ramsden and Charles Harrison in 1970 – challenged the conditions for the creation of art and brought language back into the heart of the creative process.

A programme of talks given by figures from the art world, as well as a number of performing arts events – dance, theatre and music – will bring the château to life throughout the year.



A fun and interactive visitor experience

Information panels and themed itineraries tailored to different types of visitors have been designed to explain the context behind the production of the artworks, to locate them within an art historical chronology, and to introduce the artists. The arrangement of the display and the interactive dimension of the collection help immerse visitors in their visit through a dialogue with the artworks.



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