

## **OVID IN THE JURA**

### **The Extraordinary Story of a Wallpaper**

18.02.–30.10.2022

*Ovid in the Jura* is a themed exhibition, centred on a major object from the collections of the Swiss National Museum, which adopts a multidisciplinary approach blending history, art history, restoration/conservation, and illustration. The object in question is a parlour decorated with wallpaper produced in the 1790s by the Parisian factory of Arthur & Robert. The decor was rediscovered in the 1950s on the first floor of a farm in the hamlet of La Cibourg, not far from La Chaux-de-Fonds.

The exhibition opens with a giant cartoon strip recounting the eventful history of the wallpapered parlour from La Cibourg which is displayed opposite a range of archive documents, introducing visitors to the work of both historians and the illustrator Fanny Vaucher. Accustomed to working from historical accounts and memoirs, she based her narrative on a scientific dossier containing not only information about the wallpaper and its owner, the wine merchant Charles-François Robert, but also facts about the era, covering topics such as clothing, means of transport and furniture.

In the second room, the art historians take over to introduce visitors to the world of wallpaper and the characteristics of this type of decor: its materials, manufacturing technique, composition, installation and iconography. They explain how Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a key narrative around which the European imaginary was constructed, influenced the decorative arts.

The third room focuses on the work of the restorers. A film documents the ambitious campaign of conservation and restoration carried out by the Collection Centre of the Swiss National Museum, which took nine months and involved some ten specialists. This time-consuming operation revealed an older and even rarer decor beneath the *Metamorphoses*: a set of wallpaper with a landscape motif dating from the 1760s.

Having digested the information about these various aspects, visitors will enter the final room, in which the wallpapered parlour from La Cibourg is displayed in all its glory. The ceiling and floor have been recreated using photographs from the 1950s, when the decor was still in place at the farm. Seating in the centre of the room provides a place to rest and admire the ensemble.

A lavishly illustrated publication (144 pages and 66 illustrations) in the *Trésors des musées* series from Livreo-Alphil accompanies the exhibition. It contains articles on the decor itself and the factory that printed it, the farm where it was found, its owner Charles-François Robert, the operation to save it, a description of the object and its materials, plus of course the cartoon strip by Fanny Vaucher.

#### **For further information, contact**

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