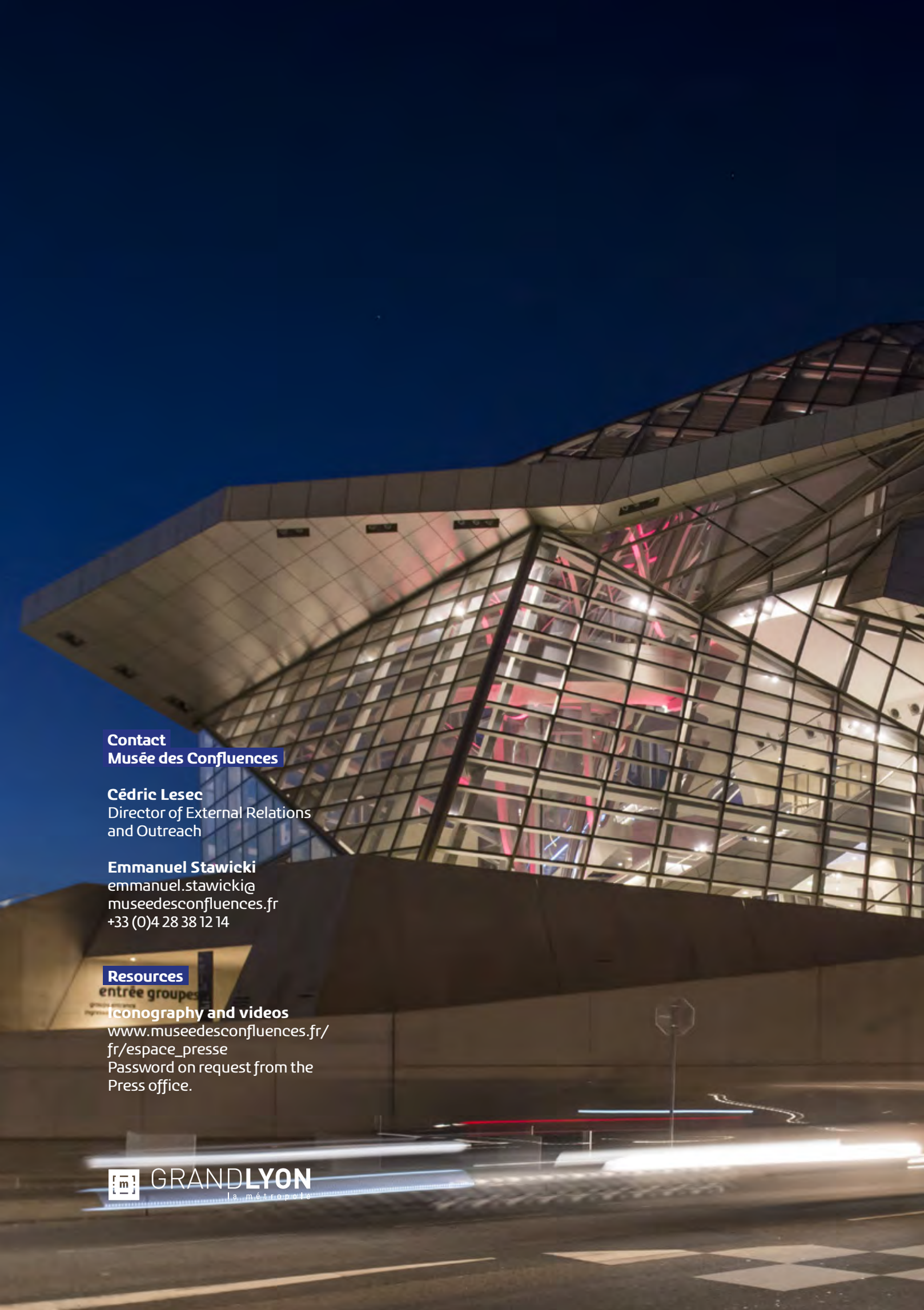
musée des
confluences

Press kit



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Resources

Iconography and videos
www.museedesconfluences.fr/
fr/espace_presse
Password on request from the
Press office.

GRANDLYON
la métropole

***Murex pecten* - Venus comb murex**

Collected in the Philippines, 2001

Inv. 45025862

© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

The Musée des Confluences' purpose

The Musée des Confluences creates conversations between the sciences to understand the history of life and humanity.

Located at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône, in an architectural structure designed to be a place of meeting and reflection, the Musée des Confluences deals with big universal questions: humanity's origin and future, the diversity of cultures and societies, as well as the place of humans in the living world. The permanent exhibition trail includes four exhibitions that are unique in offering an interdisciplinary approach for visitors.

By opening up the sciences to each other, the museum reveals new ways of understanding and unravelling the complexity of our world. These perspectives encourage curiosity and invite us to learn with emotion and wonder.

The Musée des Confluences has inherited collections with a history that spans five centuries. The 2.2 million objects kept in the museum form an important part of the French public collections, in both the natural and human sciences.

Fanny Dubot
© Renaud Alouche

© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

"Beyond its defining geographical location, the very aptly named Musée des Confluences is based on a philosophy of convergence, a taste for exchanges and the intelligence of combined perspectives.

For us, key success factors have been the balance struck between the permanent exhibition trail and temporary exhibitions, a regularly updated and diversified scientific and cultural offering, and the fundamental approaches that the museum has been built on: an interdisciplinary outlook, a clear narrative direction and the use of immersive theatrical scenography in exhibition designs, as well as the decision taken from the outset to keep entrance fees accessible.

In December 2019, the museum's Board of Trustees adopted its new scientific and cultural project. Following a period during which its operations were organised, stabilised and established, the Musée des Confluences is entering a new stage of this project aimed at its development and expansion."

Fanny Dubot
Chairperson of the Musée des Confluences

Hélène Lafont-Couturier
Director of the Musée des Confluences

Vertical display cabinets at the Palais Saint-Pierre in the early 20th century

© Departmental Archives of the Rhône

A brief history of the collections

While museums' identities are first and foremost based on their collections, their histories are varied, shaped by meetings, reconstructions and migrations.

The history of the Musée des Confluences reflects the patchwork of objects that form its collections. These collections bear witness to museums that are now gone: Lyon's natural history museum, the Musée Guimet, as well as the Musée colonial de Lyon created by Édouard Herriot in 1927.
In 1979, the museum's stores were enriched by thousands of masks, sculptures, everyday objects, and items related to rites and rituals, from the Catholic missions of Lyon's Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

More than ever before, the meaning of the Musée des Confluences' name goes beyond its location at the meeting point of the rivers Rhône and Saône, reflecting the cross-fertilization of its collections.

The museum has earned the trust of collectors. In recent years, major donations have significantly enriched the collections and are helping further raise the museum's profile.

Five centuries of history

From the cabinets of curiosities of the Monconys brothers to those of Doctor Jérôme-Jean Pestalozzi and Pierre Adamoli in the 17th and 18th centuries, and all the way up to the deposit made by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1979, the museum's rich heritage has been formed by many collections and is still being added to today, including some notable sets of scientific objects.

From the cabinet of curiosities to Lyon's natural history museum

17th century— The Musée des Confluences' history begins with the growing spirit of science and encyclopaedic curiosity in one of Lyon's most well-known cabinets of curiosities, owned by the brothers Balthasar de Monconys and Gaspard de Liergues. The cabinet was home to objects considered rare or strange, collected over the course of journeys and meetings, including minerals, stuffed animals, medals, various works and other curios.

18th century— In 1700, Jérôme-Jean Pestalozzi, a doctor at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital, acquired and added to the collection. Handed to the Academy of Sciences, Humanities and Arts of Lyon on the 31st of December 1771, this collection joined that of Pierre Adamoli. Located on the first floor of the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall), these two collections were opened to the public from 1777 to 1789 and formed the original stores of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Lyon (Lyon's natural history museum).

19th century— Located in the Palais Saint-Pierre building, the collections were further added to through the work of learned societies and scientific expeditions. The museum also attracted many donations at the instigation of its directors: Claude Jourdan, Louis Lortet and then Ernest Chantre. In 1879, a donation made by the latter enabled the opening of an anthropology and ethnology gallery.

From the Musée Guimet de Lyon to the Musée Guimet d'histoire naturelle

1879— At the instigation of Émile Guimet, a museum of religions was opened on Boulevard des Belges. This museum was closed four years later following the decision of its founder to give his collections to the French state. The Musée Guimet de Paris was opened on the 20th of November 1889.

1909-1913— Édouard Herriot transferred the collections of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle to Boulevard des Belges and suggested that Émile Guimet move some 3000 objects displayed at the museum of religions there. The return of this major collection enabled the opening of the Musée Guimet d'histoire naturelle.

1927-1968— In 1927, Édouard Herriot created a 'Musée des Colonies' (Museum of the Colonies), which was housed in the building on Boulevard des Belges. This museum went by several names in succession – 'Musée colonial', 'Musée de l'Union française' and 'Musée des Pays d'outre-mer' – before closing in 1968. These diverse collections joined those of the Musée Guimet.

1978— The museum's collections were enriched by the of an exceptional set of objects collected by the missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which was founded by Pauline Marie Jaricot in 1822.

The birth of an interdisciplinary museum: the Musée des Confluences

1991— The museum changed hands from the City of Lyon to the Department of the Rhône, which decided to rethink its scientific and cultural project by creating an institution that would disseminate knowledge about science and technology throughout France.

2001— The Department of the Rhône approved plans to create the Musée des Confluences. The interdisciplinary scientific committees and project teams for the future permanent exhibitions were formed. The 'Centre de conservation et d'étude des collections' (Centre for the conservation and study of collections) was created.

2007— The Musée Guimet d'histoire naturelle closed its doors. Work on the collections and a major acquisition campaign began.

19 December 2014— Inauguration of the Musée des Confluences.

Top, from left to right—

Building of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Lyon circa 1930
© Musée des Confluences

Portrait of Pauline Jaricot,
founder of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith
© Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires (Pontifical Mission Societies)

Bottom—

Main room of the Musée Guimet,
between 1963 and 1967,
© Departmental Archives of the Rhône

Donations since the opening

Upon its opening, the Musée des Confluences' popular success and totally new approach were welcomed by collectors and donors, who have placed their trust in the museum. Between 2017 and 2018, Ewa and Yves Develon gave the museum a selection of items from their collection of African art, Antoine de Galbert entrusted his collection of more than 500 headdresses from outside of Europe, which is still being added to today, and Hubert Bonnetain handed on a family collection of more than 7000 bird specimens.

From top to bottom—

Polygrapha cyanea cyanea
Donated by Michel Dottax
© Musée des Confluences

Bird collection
Donated by Hubert Bonnetain
© Musée des Confluences

Above, from top to bottom
and from left to right—

Mask
20th century - Papua
New Guinea, Sepik region
Donated by Claudine Gay and Gilles Sournies
Inv. 2018.45.1
© Musée des Confluences - Olivier Garcin

Mask, *Meru*
Before 1987 - Oceania, Papua New Guinea,
Melkoi people
Created by Thomas Selong
Antoine de Galbert collection
Inv. 2017.43.20
© Musée des Confluences -
Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Crest mask
South East Nigeria,
Boki or Igbo people
Donated by Ewa and Yves Develon
Inv. 2018.14.5
© Musée des Confluences -
Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Including both natural and human sciences, the Musée des Confluences' collections are made up of the following main elements.

Natural sciences

Minerals, rocks and gems
22,000 items are kept at the museum, including an extraordinary collection of fluorite minerals, left by Alexis Chermette, and a superb set of gems, donated by Pierre Fumey.

Fossils
The museum owns nearly 170,000 items, mainly from the Rhône-Alpes region, including a 14-metre-long dinosaur skeleton, and fossils from the quarry of Cerin, which are some 12 million years old and have been exceptionally well preserved.

Insects
The museum's stores contain 1.5 million specimens, including exceptional sets of beetles, plant hoppers and saturniid moths, as well as a collection of cocoons, butterflies and woven silk that is unique in the world.

Vertebrates
The collections inherited from the natural history museum have historically attracted many visitors. Others are entirely devoted to scientific studies. The various specimens help improve knowledge of biodiversity and measure its loss. The collection of birds is now the second largest in France after that of the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris.

Invertebrates
The museum keeps a huge collection offering an overview of the diversity of these animals, which are often much less studied than vertebrates and insects. The museum has inventoried nearly 490,000 mollusc shells, which are representative of the global fauna.

From top to bottom—

Fluorite
Naica, Mexico
Bequeathed by Alexis Chermette
Inv. 1006836

Dragonfly fossil
Lower Cretaceous - Brazil
Inv. 20269946
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Human sciences

Oceania
Formed of more than 1600 items, this collection ranges from the 19th century to the present day, including tapa cloth from Polynesia and New Caledonia, contemporary aboriginal works and several extremely rare objects.

The Americas
This collection reflects the customs and traditions of North American Amerindian societies of the past and present, as well as pre-Hispanic Mexico, pre-Columbian Peru, the Amazon regions, Chile and Tierra del Fuego.

Arctic circle
The Arctic collections include ancient and contemporary objects from Northern Canada and Quebec, as well as Alaska, Greenland, Siberia and Northern Europe, including ethnographic items related to the traditional lives of the Inuits, 80 contemporary Inuit works, and numerous natural history specimens.

Asia
The Asian collections include nearly 10,000 items from China, Japan, India, Mongolia, Korea, Central Asia, the Himalayan region and South East Asia. Among them, the collection of Dutch Sinologist Johann Jacob Maria de Groot includes more than six hundred statuettes, ritual objects and puppets related to Chinese popular religions of the late 19th century. Another remarkable collection is formed of around a thousand ceramics from China and Japan, Chinese and Japanese ivories, as well as lacquerware, weapons and armour from Japan.

Africa
This collection is formed of around 800 objects from North Africa, 5000 from sub-Saharan Africa and 650 from Madagascar, in addition to the antique and contemporary photography collection.
The donations of Denise and Michel Meynet, as well as the objects entrusted by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, have particularly enriched the museum's stores. Contemporary African art is also represented.

Europe
The Old World is mainly represented by prehistoric and archaeological items from excavations initiated by the museum in the 19th century. A set of scientific and technical instruments, which have reflected and shaped relationships between science and society, has also recently been acquired.

From top to bottom—

Statuette VIII. Zhao Gongming
Circa 1886-1887 - Fujian, China
Deposit from the Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, Paris
Inv. DMG11687

Scale model of dinghy
19th century - Tierra del Fuego, South America
Deposit from the Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires (Pontifical Mission Societies), Lyon
Inv. D979-3-554

© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

A building-landscape

An exceptional geographical location

The Musée des Confluences has a distinctive name and architectural design. 'Confluences' refers, first and foremost, to its exceptional geographical location. Just downstream from the museum, the waters of the Rhône and Saône meet, suggesting the ideas of convergence, mingling and fluidity.

The natural poetry of this spot on Lyon's southern doorstep made it an ideal location for this exceptional building with its imaginative architectural design.

A "building-landscape"

The Musée des Confluences also has a distinctive architectural design. The concept developed by the Austrian firm CoopHimmelb(l)au is based on the idea of building a museum that, rather than impeding access to nature, forms a transition between the structural elements and nature.

Designed to be like a bridge, the museum allows visitors to cross its hall and interior spaces without having to buy an entrance ticket or see an exhibition. This "building-landscape" skilfully interweaves nature, culture and the city.

Seen from the outside, rather than a main facade, the museum presents many facets, which form a unique, flowing outline that changes according to the position of the viewer.

Experiencing the building is a way to explore the ideas the museum is based on. The architectural structure is a physical representation of the balance struck between inside and out, past and present, nature and culture. Like the waters of the Rhône and Saône, which mingle for several kilometres after the confluence, the museum participates in its environment as much as it explains it.

Key figures

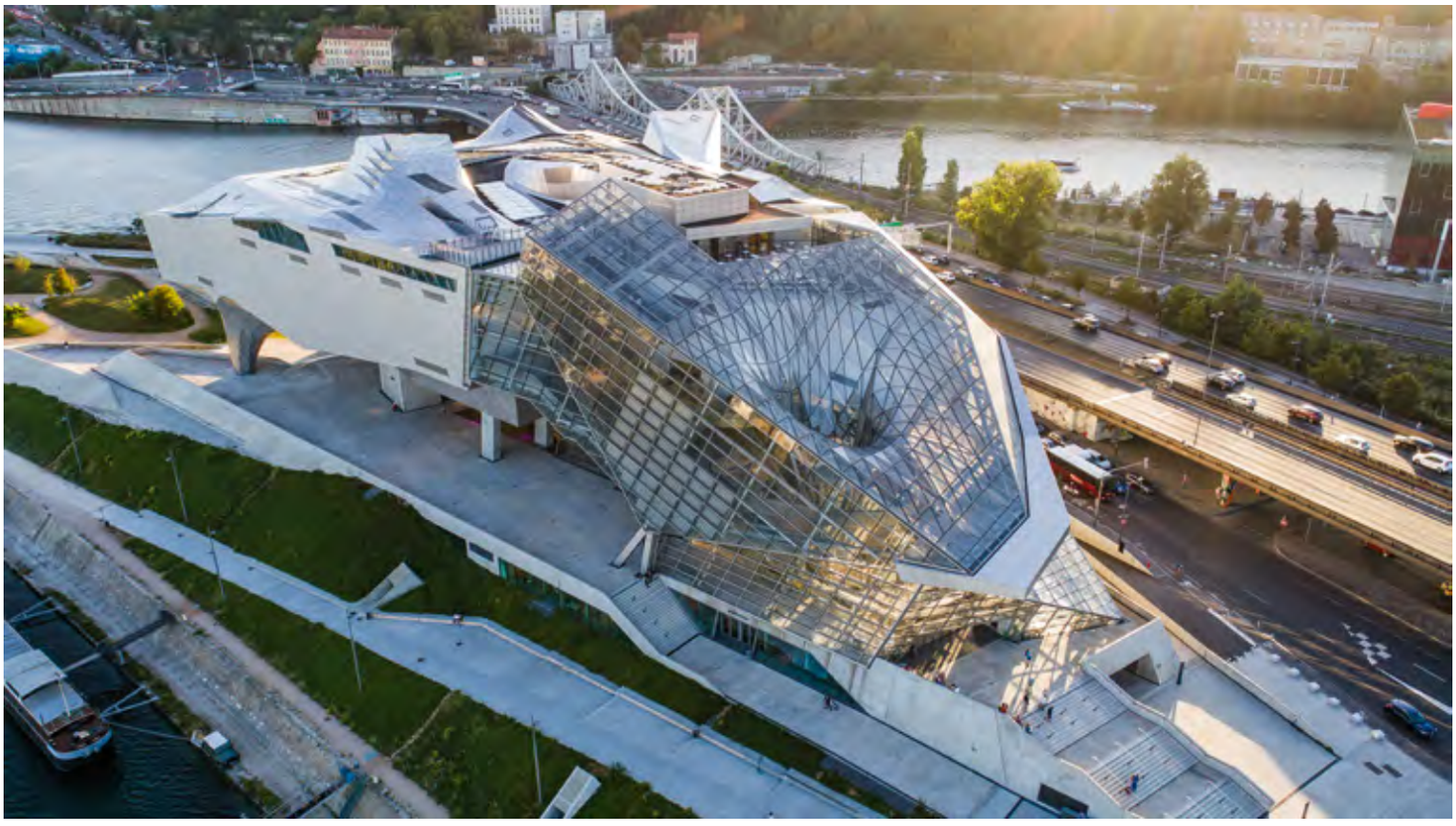
Building height
37 metres from the base

Total surface area
27,000 m²

Surface area of the permanent exhibition trail
2963 m²

Surface area of the temporary exhibition rooms
2107 m²

Garden
24,400 m²



Aerial views of the Musée des Confluences
© Musée des Confluences - Olivier Guerrin

General principles: the museum's signature

In addition to the richness of its collections, the Musée des Confluences stands out for its interdisciplinary approach, the narrative thread that runs throughout its programme and the intelligence of its exhibition designs. These three aspects come together to form the museum's signature today.

Interdisciplinarity

The museum's approach involves combining the perspectives of specialists from various disciplines to throw light on an exhibit, collection or theme. Interdisciplinarity shapes all areas of the museum, including its collections, exhibitions, cultural and scientific programme, guided tours and publications, as well as its governance method and corporate relations.

New and exciting spaces are opened up, where there are no barriers between the natural and human sciences. It enables a plurality of interpretations which, placed side by side, reveal further layers
of the meaning and history contained in an object. Given the diversity of the collections, taking a wider view in this way was necessary to establish a coherent narrative in the permanent exhibition trail.

The primacy of storytelling

Storytelling is a way to describe both imaginary and real events. Applied to the museum, this narrative method establishes the conditions required for understanding, so that each individual can take on board the various facets of the topic covered.

Storytelling is used in the museum's exhibitions, guided tours, publications and various other mediums. In this way, scientific content is made more coherent for visitors, whatever their level of knowledge.

The temporary exhibition *Venenum, a poisonous world*, for example, opened with an apple, representing the forbidden fruit and the poisoned apple in Snow White, while illustrating the issue of pesticide use, all of which are poison-related topics dealt with along the exhibition trail.

Exhibition designs

One of the ways in which the Musée des Confluences expresses its identity is the presentation of its permanent and temporary exhibitions, which visitors have pointed to as one of the museum's hallmarks. The success of its temporary exhibitions and the many requests from other museums in France and overseas to host them are a reflection of their originality and appeal.

From top to bottom—

Exhibitions *Venenum, a poisonous world* (2017) and *Hugo Pratt, horizon lines* (2018)
At the Musée des Confluences
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

Exhibition *Origins - Stories of the World*
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

The permanent exhibition trail

The evidence of a story of humanity

The permanent exhibition trail, which covers an area of nearly 3000 m², tells the great story of humanity through four separate, but linked exhibitions, which describe and present the question of humanity's origins and future, the diversity of cultures and civilizations, and the place of *Homo sapiens* in the chain of life.

Four exhibitions and four big, universal and fundamental questions: *Origins - Stories of the World*; *Species - the Web of life*; *Societies - Human theatre*; *Eternities - Visions of the beyond*.

Entrusted to specific exhibition designers, each offers a visitor experience that is closely linked to the narrative. This approach, which is not often seen in permanent museum exhibitions, can be surprising. It is, however, a major strength, as it allows visitors to become immersed in different ambiances, recapturing their attention and avoiding monotony or weariness.

Origins - Stories of the World

Where do we come from? All societies have felt the need to explain the origins of life, including the beginnings of humanity and its evolution. The exhibition *Origins - Stories of the World* explores this question along a trail that transports visitors through time in a spiral, from the appearance of humans to that of life itself and all the way back to the formation of the universe.

Two approaches to the question of origins run side by side: one based on palaeontology, the natural sciences, physics and chemistry; the other based on human sciences and illustrated through ethnographic collections and contemporary works. Engaged in a constant conversation throughout the exhibition, the two approaches become profoundly complementary.

First steps towards our origins

As soon as they enter, visitors are greeted by **three female hominids**. Designed for the Musée des Confluences, they were recreated by sculptor and plastic artist Élisabeth Daynès, in collaboration with a forensic anthropologist and a palaeoanthropologist, based on fossilised skeletal remains. These three women are the representatives of three human lines that coexisted until some 25,000 years ago: Homo neanderthalensis, *Homo sapiens* and Homo floresiensis. At the beginning and the end of the exhibition, they ask questions about our place and our future in this fourteen-billion-year history.

Alongside the hominids and the great apes, the trail begins with a reference to the **story of Sedna**. A mythical figure related to the origin of the Inuit people, the goddess Sedna was sacrificed by her father, falling from a boat after he cut off her fingers to save his own life. From her severed fingers the marine mammals were born. Our genesis is put into perspective all along the exhibition trail, by comparing the contributions of the exact and human sciences. It combines palaeontological discoveries, human creations, scientific evidence and the ways in which people from various cultures have viewed the origins of life and the world.

The adaptation of species

Camarasaurus. Appearing 155 million years ago, this dinosaur roamed the plains of Wyoming and is one of the largest herbivores to have walked the Earth. Standing 4.5 metres tall, its fossilised skeleton is 80% complete, which makes it a rare and unique specimen in Europe's museums. Alongside the pterosaurs, it shows how species have adapted:
the laying of amniotic eggs allowed certain species to leave the marine environment, gradually leading to the emergence of mammals. Certain prehistoric specimens with specific features linked to sexual selection or environmental pressures are presented:
such as the *Megaloceros giganteus* and the sabre-toothed cat.

Life and water

The story of our origins goes back to the first traces of life on Earth, trapped in the depths of the oceans.

Banded iron. In order for breathing to appear in the history of life, bacteria were needed to produce oxygen through photosynthesis. In the earliest times, it was trapped at the bottom of the oceans in the form of iron oxides. This rock, known as 'banded iron' and some 2.1 billion years old, carries the first traces of life on Earth.

La Goutte d'eau (the water drop). Halfway along the trail, this immersive installation symbolises the appearance of water: an essential condition for life to emerge. Droplets form on the walls and glisten, to the sound of deep, primitive water. The fundamental role played by water in the history of our origins is also approached through many stories presented
side by side all along the trail: Sedna the Inuit in the depths of the icy water, the Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent that lies in water holes and rivers, and Noah's Ark, which saved species from the great flood.

From top to bottom and left to ight—

Exhibition design
Origins - Stories of the World
© Musée des Confluences - Joël Laiter

Recreation of a *Homo sapiens* woman
Homo sapiens
-20,600 years - France
Atelier Daynès
Inv. MUSEO003
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Sedna
2007 - Canada
George Arluk (born in 1949)
Inv. 2007.15.1
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

The formation of the Earth and the universe

At the end of the trail, ever more accurate instruments used to measure time and space are displayed opposite the traditional Chinese pantheon. They reflect humanity's perpetual quest to better understand the origins of the universe and attempt to explain the workings of its evolution.

Conquering time and space

As it measures time and space, humanity is discovering an ever vaster universe. The development of our scientific knowledge also shapes our societies' perceptions. Along the trail, tools used to measure time, explore space and observe the stars are presented, including the astrolabe and Sputnik 2, the first vehicle to carry a living being into orbit around the Earth: the dog Laika.

The Chinese pantheon. The formation of the solar system and the Earth is presented alongside divinities involved in creation myths in India, Australia, Asia and elsewhere. The majestic Chinese pantheon has no less than 30 divinities, from the collection of Johannes Jacobus Maria de Groot, which embody the organisation of the divine world: a celestial bureaucracy formed of ministers, governors and officers that reflects human society. The exhibition ends with two questions.

The expansion of the universe is presented in a 3D-Relief film that retraces the evolution of the universe, from the big bang up to the present day: a story that is 13 billion years or so old.

Standing opposite this audiovisual production is **Shiva Nataraja**. The western vision of linear time, with a beginning and an end, is not the only way it is perceived by people. Indian cultures have developed a cyclical vision of time, which is subject to a constant sequence of creative and destructive cycles. While Brahma creates the world and Vishnu protects it, Shiva Nataraja – The Lord of the Dance – performs the cosmic dance that enables its destruction and rebirth.

The "wing of evolution": a space with many interpretations

The "wing of evolution" is an interlude along the visitor trail. It tells how life changes itself and how the environment contributes to the evolution of living things. It is more relevant to current events than ever, at a time when climate change is modifying our ecosystem and requiring life to adapt.

The species presented in this space reflect the role of climate changes and exceptional events in the evolution of life.

The mammoth of Choulans. Discovered in 1859 on the Montée de Choulans in Lyon, and still fresh in the memories of visitors to the former natural history museum, this mammoth lived at a time when Alpine glaciers still covered Lyon.

The fossils of Cerin. From a remarkable site, just a few kilometres to the north of Lyon, crustaceans, crocodiles and algae are evidence of the tropical climate that reined when this land was a vast tropical lagoon, some 150 million years ago.

Exhibition design

Agence Klapisch-Claisse - 831 m²

Marianne Klapisch and Mitia Claisse create exhibition designs that reveal messages, sensations and emotions.
Through their work, they like to tell stories that leave an impression. Bringing a topic to life, magnifying a collection and transmitting knowledge are the three basic aims that guide their approach.

Scientific committee

Roland Bacon, astrophysicist, **Élisabeth de Fontenay**, philosopher and essayist, **Pierre Gibert**, critical exegete and religious historian, **Pascal Picq**, palaeoanthropologist, **Pierre Thomas**, geologist

Shiva Nataraja, "The Lord of the Dance"
17th-18th centuries - State of Tamil Nadu, India
Deposit from the Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, Paris
Inv. DMG18529
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Species - the Web of life

Who are we? The place of the human species and its interactions with the rest of the living world are a universal concern.

Humans are animals that use both rationality and symbolism, relying on these two non-conflicting approaches to make sense of this complex world. The exhibition therefore places symbolic perspectives, which are specific to each culture, alongside the complementary and universal perspective of science, combining a quest for meaning and thirst for knowledge.

The visitor trail is structured by a web, formed of 27 km of rope. A powerful metaphor, this exhibition design gives tangible expression to the complex network that links the world's various species, which can be seen as a whole or as a series of connections.

The human being: a symbolic animal

From animal mummies to microscopes, the beginning of the trail gives varied examples of perceptions of the world, where humans define their place and relationships with other living things.

In Ancient Egypt, species were considered to be singular, in the same way as humans. Some were chosen to incarnate a divinity. This belief is reflected in **the animal mummies, a remarkable collection belonging to the Musée des Confluences**. Twenty or so mummies, including a ram, crocodiles, fish, ibis, falcon and cats, can be seen alongside the Sphinx: half-man, half-animal and guardian of the temple.

In this sequence of symbolic perceptions, the diversity of approaches is then illustrated through other contemporary societies. **Australian totemism is followed by the animism of the Inuits and the Amazonian Indians, and then the nature-culture dualism of the West**: a radical separation between humans and the rest of the world that began in the 17th century. We studied nature and marvelled at it, but as an object observed from the outside and through scientific instruments that kept it at a distance. The collection of magnifying glasses in many different shapes, as well as various microscopes (ordinary, with built-in compass, aquatic, botanical or for dissection), illustrate this turning point in the history of Western world views. This objectivization of nature offered the advantage of providing a framework conducive to the development of scientific thought.

Humanity in the diversity of life

The rest of the trail deals with the place of humanity in the world through the scientific approach, with a presentation of contemporary, objective and universal knowledge within a poetic exhibition design.

Classification. Painting a unique, colourful picture, the zoological groups offer a spectacular overview of biodiversity. Humans are included as the primate *Homo sapiens*, a mammal like any other, among 38 others shown here, including the muskox, duck-billed platypus, armadillo, giraffe and tiger. A larger family is then presented: the birds. More than 200 are perched on the branches of a structure that represents their relationships. Next come the molluscs, with their incredible shells, and, finally, a myriad of insects, the largest animal class, of unfathomable diversity, ranging from the butterfly to the beetle: several million species may remain to be discovered.

The bush of life. The classification of species makes it possible to comprehend this huge diversity. It is represented by a sculpture: the bush of life. Its many branches give tangible expression to the relationships between living things, with no preferred direction and no choice position.

The antelopes. The collection of antelopes reminds us that we sometimes need to beware of appearances when classifying species. While resemblances are generally inherited from a common ancestor, they can also be the result of adaptation to the environment.

From left to right and top to bottom—

Cat mummy
2nd century BCE - 1st century CE
Stabl Antar - Egypt
Donated by Gaston Maspero. Inv. 90001203
© Musée des Confluences -
Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Obeshimi
Edo Period (1603 - 1867) - Japan
Deposit from the Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, Paris. Inv. DMG12936
© Musée des Confluences -
Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Exhibition design
Species - the Web of life
© Musée des Confluences - Quentin Lafont

The human being: a distinctive animal

The trail continues with a focus on the specificities of *Homo Sapiens*, characteristics that are shared with other species, such as tool use, awareness of the body and transmission of acquired knowledge. While these abilities are not possessed by us alone, their combination and level of execution and development make humans a distinctive animal in the living world.

The prehistoric drawings. The capacity for abstract thought was revealed in early engravings on bones and pebbles, and continued with the invention of writing.

The Noh masks. The infinite range of human emotions is conveyed by actors in Noh theatre, who vary the expressions of their mask by tilting their head.

The radiology table. Through radiography, prostheses or transplants, humans develop knowledge and technologies to study, repair and modify their bodies. They go further than any other species in terms of awareness of their bodies, which they push to the limits.

The maternity figures. These statues of women with a child bring to mind fertility, as well as filiation: the social link that gradually forms a person in relation to their family circle. This process lasts a particularly long time in humans, allowing for greater immersion and learning of language, as well as the practices and values specific to their family
and society. Human beings have the ability and opportunity to learn much more than any other species.

Humans faced with their impact

Like all other living beings, humans are linked to their natural environment and interact with other species. However, in order to satisfy their needs, they significantly impact the web of life. The consequences of this on biodiversity are worrying and leave humanity facing major societal decisions.

The vanished animals. The dodo, the Tasmanian wolf and the passenger pigeon met their end soon after encountering our species. Steller's sea cow, a gentle marine mammal discovered in 1741 in the Bering Strait, was exterminated after only 27 years of hunting. Only very few skeletons remain, including the one displayed at the Musée des Confluences. Demographic pressure, overexploitation, habitat destruction, pollution and the introduction of species are the main causes of many extinctions.

Cultural and biological diversity: the dugong. The success of biodiversity preservation will depend on links formed with other species. This is demonstrated by the dugong in northern Australia, the only place in the world where a population of this marine mammal has been maintained, thanks in particular to the special relationship Aboriginal peoples have with it.

Exhibition design

Zen+dCoOffice pour Design - 937 m²

Trained as an architect, Zette Cazalas created the firm Zen+dCoOffice pour Design in Paris in 1995. Along with Jesus Pacheco, a qualified architect who joined the firm in 1998, she produced the museography of Musée Masséna in Nice (2006), that of the Musée national de la porcelaine Adrien Dubouché in Limoges (2012) and, more recently, that of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, among others.

Scientific committee

Martine Bungener, economist and sociologist, **Marc Jeannerod** (1935-2011), neurophysiologist,
François Kourilsky (1934-2014), biologist,
Guillaume Lecointre, zoologist and systematist,
Christian Lévêque, hydrobiologist, **Claire Salomon-Bayet** (1932-2016), philosopher

Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*
Mauritius
Donated by Claudius Côte
Inv. QV12
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Societies - Human theatre

"What do we do? " Human beings are migrants who come together, stop for a while and form societies, cultures and civilizations, which rise and fall as order is built and then toppled by unexpected or disruptive events. This exhibition looks at these processes through the lens of three constant factors: organisation, exchange and creation.

Visitors can explore collections from cultures and eras that are far apart, but, when presented side by side, produce meaning and awaken curiosity. With the freedom to move from exhibit to exhibit in any order, visitors can interpret and experience them in their own way.

The exhibition design creates a unique landscape: a theatre of objects where each one reveals its ingenuity and reflects its culture.

From the entrance, the room opens out in the form of a fan, behind a thin mesh of small screens that display a series of action verbs in eight languages. This graphical composition, accompanied by ambient sounds, suggests the themes of global diversity and human actions.

At this precise spot, visitors stand at the centre of an amphitheatre: the theatre of our actions, from where they can see an array of objects from all horizons.

In a line high above the collections, the idea of living together is expressed through images: in a slow, steady stream, scenes of our actions in contemporary societies, in various regions around the world, attract curiosity and inspire the imagination.

Organisation, exchange and creation: these three key actions that structure our daily lives are offered as frames of reference. With no particular direction to follow, visitors can wander around the exhibition and make their own connections or comparisons.

Three enclosed and colourful spaces at the back of the room are provided for visitors to continue the experience of their chosen theme and engage with the content in a fun and interactive way.

Organisation

Representing territory. Organising life in a community involves structuring territory. Representing an area means appropriating and measuring it, in order to take possession of it. The exhibition creates a conversation between two perceptions of territory: Western and Aboriginal.

The repeating circle, a Western cartography instrument from the late 18th century, helped conquer the world. In Australia, since the 20th century, Aboriginal painting has represented a physical, spiritual and political space. The denial of this bond with the land by the British, for two centuries, explains why these paintings are both a property deed and a political manifesto.

Organising society. The control of collective life takes various forms, which are presented here. During the Edo period (1603-1868), Japan was closed off from the rest of the world under the Bakufu regime, a military government, with discipline and hierarchy codified in particular by ceremonial rituals. Beyond their military functions, the sabres, armour, helmets and banners were so beautiful and refined that their power to impress people alone helped maintain order. They are now the symbols of an eternal Japan, frozen in time.

In this space, items from the collections also illustrate other major challenges, such as **organisation through administrative power and the role of religion in society.**

Exhibition design

Agence Du & Ma - 812 m²
Agence Du & Ma manages projects that involve the design of permanent and temporary exhibitions, mainly in the public culture sector.

Scientific committee

Alban Bensa, anthropologist,
Jean-Pierre Dupuy, philosopher of science, **Olivier Faron**, historian, **Frédéric Kletz**, organisational management researcher, **Denise Pumain**, geographer,
Victor Sanchez, physical science engineer,
Claudine Schmidt-Lainé, engineer and mathematician,
Thierry Valentin, anthropologist

Audiovisuals

Audiovisuals and experimentation are also a major part of this exhibition. They extend the narrative in relation to each theme. Located at the back of the room, the bright "cocoons" offer a fun break along the visitor trail, and a chance to experiment together with the ways we live in societies.

from top to bottom—

Repeating circle
1807 - France
Deposit from the Musée des Arts et Métiers CNAM Paris
Inv. D08714-0000

Baoulé statue
20th century - Côte d'Ivoire
Inv. 2003.11.1

© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Exchange

An essential part of social life, exchange is built on trust, altered through confrontation, and enriched through the transmission of knowledge and techniques. It takes on various forms that are interwoven in the subtle relationships between population groups or individuals, including cultural, monetary, scientific and technical exchanges.

Appropriation. Each culture has an authentic identity that is built, among other things, through the appropriation of the codes it has been influenced by. For example, with this **Baoulé statue** wearing a helmet, from Côte d'Ivoire, the sculptor incorporates the Western colonial helmet into traditional iconography to reflect the wearer's power and prestige.

Buying status. In Oceania, unlike the Western monetary system, people are linked to each other through exchanges. Power is won, lost and expressed through the accumulation, redistribution or hoarding of coins. During ceremonies, coins are evaluated and measured before access is granted to a higher rank.

Networking knowledge. In science and technology, the exchange of knowledge fluctuates between secrecy and sharing. From the 1930s onwards, international cooperation enabled the creation of the first particle accelerators and the understanding of matter, opening the path to nuclear technology and radiotherapy, among other things.

Creation

Human beings define themselves as *'faber'* and *'sapiens'*. Sometimes leaping and othertimes crawling forward, they innovate in order to adapt and shape their environment. This requires them, among other things, to use their knowledge and know-how to extract the materials they need to improve their living conditions from the environment; an area in which Lyon and the surrounding area have illustrated themselves on many occasions.

Adapting through innovation. From kitchen utensils to communication devices, innovations meet the needs of daily life. They can also create other needs and feed a consumption cycle. The arrival of electricity and motors revolutionized food preparation methods, in the same way as the deployment of telecommunication networks greatly expanded written and voice communication, with the widespread use of innovative objects.

At the cutting edge of innovation. Nothing is created *in a vacuum*: commercial, industrial and creative activities are developed in response to basic needs, such as clothing, protection and status. A descendant of Lyon's traditional silk industry of the 16th century, Brochier Technologies has adapted Jacquard weaving to new materials, such as fibre optics, in order to create luminous fabrics. This patented innovation, which was used for the first time at an Olivier Lapidus fashion show in 2000, enabled the creation of a unique wedding dress model. Intended as a collection item for the Musée des Confluences from the outset, it was designed by Mongi Guibane.

The age of modern chemistry. From this blue azurite, copper was born, and from pink amethyst quartz, the silicon used to make electronic chips and solar panels, for example. Since prehistoric times, humans have used minerals found in rocks to make tools. Since the age of industrial chemistry, our environment has been filled with objects made using mineral resources. Trade and production of these resources are at the centre of major geopolitical and environmental challenges.

from top to bottom and left to right—

Exhibition design *Societies - Human theatre*
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

Azurite
Copper mineral
France
Inv. 1000536
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Pectoral
Melanesia, Papua New Guinea - 20th century
Inv. 2007.1.66
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Eternities - Visions of the beyond

"Where are we going? " What happens to the body and spirit after death is a universal human question.

This exhibition looks at the subject by comparing our contemporary questions with those of civilizations from various eras, including Amerindian, African, Ancient Egyptian, Ancient Peruvian and Iron Age (Koban) cultures. The transparency of the exhibition design – the various sections of the trail are separated by metal mashrabiya, perforated according to the positions of the stars and distant twinkling galaxies, symbols of the beyond – echoes various practices that suggest a permeable boundary separating life and death.

Passages between two worlds

While human societies make a distinction between the visible and the invisible, they allow for the possibility of exchanges between these two worlds. Guardian or evil spirits are believed to be able to influence the world of the living.

To begin the trail, visitors are greeted with a figure that is common to North American Indian, African and Inuit cultures: the intercessor. A shaman or ancestor, this person is the point of contact between the world of the living and that of the spirits and the dead. Objects are made in order to communicate with the spirits, as well as to honour or guard against them.

Pipe stem and bowl. Pipes are emblematic and sacred objects. The smoke they release activates the link between the world of people and that of spirits.

The Vuvi mask. Exceptional people reach the status of ancestor and become intermediaries between the spirits and the living. This Vuvi mask from Gabon, which was added to the museum's collections in 1932, was used for initiation ceremonies and funerals.

The contemporary relationship with death

Like a pause along the visitor trail, **cocoon-seats, placed beneath a well-lit dome**, invite visitors to ask questions about the meaning of death in today's societies.

Longer lifetimes, as well as new economic and material conditions, are changing our relationship with death. While death is an inescapable reality for all, its meaning has evolved over the course of Western history. Still today, different interpretations are given by doctors, lawyers or philosophers, whose points of view can be heard in this space, allowing visitors to explore their own questions before continuing the exhibition.

The materiality of death

Subsequent sections of the trail compare the funerary practices of Egyptian, Peruvian and Caucasian cultures. Exhibits of human remains, grave goods and the three types of graves, displayed as they were discovered, reveal the materiality of death.

At this stage, the exhibition design constantly draws the attention of visitors to **vanitas images, contemporary motifs that accompany them along the visitor trail.**

Mummification, both natural and artificial, appears in cultures that are distant in time and space, as an essential marker of funeral rituals and care administered to the body of the deceased.

The mummy of Taubasthis. In Ancient Egypt, death was believed to be a passage to eternal life. Surrounded by highly elaborate rituals, the body of the deceased was mummified, covered in amulets, and accompanied by offerings, grave goods, servants and more. They are displayed here around Taubasthis, daughter of Phebos

The bearded men. These statues are very rare, dating from prehistoric Egyptian culture (the Predynastic Naqada Period, 3800 – 3100 BCE). They were found in sanctuaries or tombs and are probably a representation of male power that heralded the Dynastic Period, during

from left to right and top to bottom—

Mask
Late 19th century - early 20th century
Gabon, Vuvi people
Donated by Maurice Halley, Inv. 60004126
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Bearded man
3800-3500 BCE
Gebelein, Egypt
Inv. 90000172
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Exhibition design *Eternities - Visions of the beyond*
© Musée des Confluences - Joël Laiter

which the beard was one of the symbols of pharaonic power. They are a remnant of ancient funerary practices and the settlement that led to the beginning of the reign of the pharaohs.

The female Ichma mummy. In Peru, pre-Columbian societies venerated the dead, as ancestors who protected the world of the living. Most Ichma tombs are directly dug in the earth, with the body huddled up in a bundle of cloths known as a "fardo". Naturally mummified, the deceased holds her weaving tools and is accompanied by offerings, ceramics and everyday objects.

The Koban necropolis. The grave is presented as it was discovered, emerging beneath the archaeologists' brushes. The body is surrounded by ceramics and bronze items, which reflect the skill of the metallurgists in this region. In the mountains of the North Caucasus, the meaning of the burial rites of late prehistory is still not clear to us.

Here again, a subtle exhibition design encourages introspection and reflection. Visitors can view the deceased woman from various perspectives. When visitors stand at the foot of the grave, the body appears in a mirror, facing them like a vanitas. On the side, they can sit in an attitude of contemplation, as at a funeral.

Giving meaning to death

The trail ends with two motifs to reflect on, like two propositions of the relationship with death. On one side, the Buddhist Parinirvana offers a peaceful vision, in which death is the supreme achievement for any believer.
On the other, the Western vanitas invites us to consider the fragility of our condition and the impermanence of human existence.

The Buddha lying down in Parinirvana. For Buddhists, inevitable death is one stage in a constant cycle of rebirth, until the final death, which ends the perpetual cycle in order to attain Parinirvana. This 17th-century Khmer Buddha, which has exceptional traces of red paint and gilding on the face, is lying in an attitude of complete relaxation and gives off an astonishing impression of well-being.

The vanitas images. After travelling through periods and civilizations, the exhibition offers the perspective of biblical-based cultures, with the example of a Christian motif. In Western art history, the vanitas is an allegorical critique of the ego faced with inevitable death. To illustrate this idea, the Musée des Confluences acquired a work by Jean-Philippe Aubanel, *L'éternité parfois s'éveille* (Eternity sometimes awakens), completed in 2014, to end the trail.

Exhibition design
Agence Klapisch-Claisse - 383 m²
Eternities - Visions of the beyond was initially designed as part of a common trail with Origins - Stories of the World. For this reason, these rooms in the permanent exhibition trail were overseen by the same scientific committee and designed by **Mitia Claisse** *and* **Marianne Klapisch**.

Scientific committee
Roland Bacon, astrophysicist, **Élisabeth de Fontenay**, philosopher and essayist, **Pierre Gibert**, critical exegete and religious historian, **Pascal Picq**, palaeoanthropologist, **Pierre Thomas**, geologist

Buddha lying down in Parinirvana
16th - 17th centuries - Cambodia
Deposit from the Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, Paris
Inv.DMG14945
© Musée des Confluences - Pierre-Olivier Deschamps/Agence VU'

Much loved by visitors to the former Musée Guimet, on Boulevard des Belges, the whale has been admired by the general public once again since March 2019. Found in Corsica at the end of the 19th century, this fin whale skeleton now hangs between the museum's two exhibition floors.

The whale seen from the floor of the permanent exhibitions
© Musée des Confluences - Yannick Saunier

Temporary exhibitions

The Musée des Confluences has five rooms dedicated to the temporary exhibitions, ranging from 174 to 741 m² in size. It has hosted 26 temporary exhibitions since its opening.

The exhibitions that attracted the most visitors were *Venenum, a poisonous world*, with 600,000 visitors in 2017-2018, *Antarctica* (547,000 visitors in 2016) and *Hugo Pratt, horizon lines* (503,000 visitors in 2018-2019).

Each year, the programme includes three to four temporary exhibitions, including two major seasonal exhibitions, in the spring and autumn. On average, the exhibitions are open to the public for nine months. The decision to keep them open for a long period was made to give the greatest possible number of visitors the time to discover and rediscover them. 57% of visitors spend more than two hours visiting the museum. They can therefore explore several exhibitions each time they come.

These temporary exhibitions all bear the museum's signature. The juxtaposition of disciplines and collections, using a variety of approaches and media, as well as exhibition designs that extend the narrative, create an immersive experience that is much appreciated by visitors. The exhibitions also encourage visitors to question contemporary issues.

Find out more

"Upcoming temporary exhibitions" file

previous page—

Temporary exhibition
Prison, beyond the walls
(2019)
The design of this exhibition, created by Tristan Kobler, won an award at the Architecture MasterPrize™ 2020, in the 'Interior Design - Exhibition' category.
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

above, from top to bottom—

Temporary exhibition
Headdresses from around the World, Antoine de Galbert's donation (2018)
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

Temporary exhibition
Antarctica *(2016)*
© Musée des Confluences - David Haffen

Programme and distribution

Through its themes and exhibitions, the Musée des Confluences helps build an understanding of the world. The cultural and scientific programme, along with the publications, also encourage curiosity and spread knowledge.

A venue for distribution and creation

The museum offers visitors chances to enrich their experience with its cultural programme, **in particular through the *Vibrations of the world* series, which is based on the meeting of traditional cultures and the contemporary scene.** This programme helps protect and promote intangible cultural heritage that is fragile and changing. In the space of five years, it has enabled an exploration of the geographies of sixty or so countries on all continents.

A venue for debates

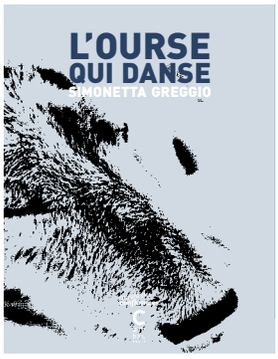
The museum has also established itself as a forum for debates and discussion, dealing with societal issues related to people and their environment, in order to grasp the complexity of the world and cover the latest scientific research. Supported by a network of scientific and academic partners, **these multi-disciplinary meetings are designed to make content accessible and encourage participation.**

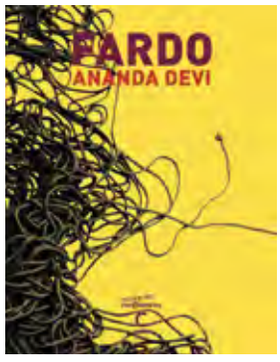
The museum in resonance

The Musée des Confluences has naturally found its place in major national events, such as the European Heritage Days, Festival of Science, Long Night of Museums and National Days of Architecture. In addition to free access, they are an opportunity to provide **original guided tours, workshops and conferences, often for a new audience**, as a means of encouraging museum-going.

Publications

Since its opening, the museum has forged a coherent and strong editorial identity, with more than thirty works jointly published. Book-objects or object-books, these publications espouse the establishment's approach and its focus on storytelling. Including catalogues, albums and short fictional stories, all of these works make use of images as a way to experience the collections, through a sensitive approach. **The *Récits d'objets* (Stories of objects) collection invites writers to imagine a literary fiction based on one of the museum's objects.** A cat mummy becomes the subject of a tale, a meteorite inspires a poem, a telephone gives birth to a detective novel…





opposite—

'La Marche du Cirque', Mathurin Bolze, Cie MPTA in June 2020

© Musée des Confluences - Sylvain Béguin

below (right)—

Compagnie Anou Skan in December 2019

© Thierry Fournier - Greater Lyon

above—

Harouna Dembele et Les Parissi in November 2019

© Musée des Confluences - Julien Dottor

opposite—

Nguyên Lê, Lionel Martin, Ballaké Sissoko, Philippe Pipon Garcia, Nils Petter Molvaer, Majid Bekkas and Vocal Iroko on stage for the museum's fifth anniversary in December 2019

© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

The museum's audiences

With more than 4.8 million visitors since it opened on the 20th of December 2014, the Musée des Confluences is the most frequented museum in France outside of Paris' major establishments.

It attracts various audiences, including many families and tourists, from other parts of France and the world. **Among non-group visitors, the largest age group is the 15 to 29 segment**, which accounts for nearly half of total visitor numbers.

The Musée des Confluences has established itself as a major cultural venue in Lyon and the surrounding area, thanks to a policy of original temporary exhibitions, and a rich and varied cultural programme, from concerts to conferences, making the museum a place of creativity, meeting and sharing of knowledge.

Its attractiveness is also due to its focus on audiences, with reasonable admission fees that are part of an approach of support and awareness-raising for segments of the public that seldom or never visit museums the rest of the year. Reflecting this accessibility, **one visitor out of every five says that they have not visited another museum over the past twelve months**.

Find out more

"The Musée des Confluences' audiences" file

Previous page—

Visitors at the temporary exhibition *Hugo Pratt, horizon lines* *(2018)*
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

From top to bottom—

Visitors at the temporary exhibition *A desire for art, the African collection of Ewa and Yves Develon* *(2019)*
© Musée des Confluences - Bertrand Stofleth

Discovery tour on the theme of architecture
© Musée des Confluences - Antoine Merlet

Expertise and business model

"We cannot stress enough the quality of the balances that have today been struck between the city, which covers more than three quarters of the museum's budget, and the museum, which has successfully completed all of the missions it has been entrusted with over the course of its first two years. The fact that the museum welcomes 750,000 visitors per year, as well as significant growth in the proportion of its own resources (16 to 20% of the budget, mainly due to increased ticket revenue) are a reflection of this."

Extract of the case study carried out in 2018 by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Cultural Heritage and Local Development: Maximising the impact. Lyon and the Musée des Confluences, France.

The Musée des Confluences is a **Public Institution for Cultural Cooperation of an Industrial and Commercial Nature (EPCC-IC)** with two governance bodies: a Board of Trustees and a Scientific Board. Its public funding is provided by Greater Lyon. This makes the Musée des Confluences a major part of the cultural policy in the metropolitan area, in terms of international relations, economic influence, social actions and, more generally, improving the quality of life of its residents.

The museum's significant proportion of self-funding is ensured by ticket revenue, concession agreements, private hire, project patronage, roaming exhibitions and publications.

Since 2019, the museum has consolidated its growth in business networks through the **establishment of an endowment fund**: a group of executives and entrepreneurs who share the museum's values and wish to support it in a sustainable manner.

Key figures

25% self-funding

In 2019, **76.28%** of spending by the Musée des Confluences was done within the territory of Greater Lyon

From top to bottom—

Private event at the Musée des Confluences
© Musée des Confluences - Thomas Aupet

Private event in the Grand Auditorium
© Musée des Confluences - Guillaume Perret

International reach

The Musée des Confluences' collections cover several millennia and a vast geographical area that stretches from Oceania to the coasts of America.

The museum embraces universality through the diversity and richness of its collections, in the fields of natural science and ethnography, as well as the great diversity of its audience (more than 20% of visitors are from overseas) and its vocation, which is to tell the story of humanity and life.

International collaborations and requests involve the museum's various areas of expertise, including museography, exhibition design, collections care and audience analysis.

The museum's influence and growth on the international stage takes on many forms, including the loaning of works in its collections and tours of its exhibitions, as well as co-productions of shows and exhibitions, scientific cooperation and missions in the field, involvement in conferences and representation in numerous bodies, the hosting of foreign delegations and museum institutions from around the world, the distribution and translation of publications, and membership of international museum networks.

In 2019, for example: *Antarctica* was presented at the Overseas Museum in Bremen (Übersee Museum Bremen), followed by the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels, *Venenum, a poisonous world* was adapted for the Musée de la civilisation in Quebec, and *Into the Wonder Room* for the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History (Pointe-à-Callière).

Making of Piyarentsi manioc beer
during a scientific assignment among the Ashāninka of the Amazon in 2019
© Jabiru Prod – Serge Guiraud

Aquarium de Lyon