

visitor trail

In the intimacy
of a great
artist's home



Musée
Gustave
Moreau



Creation of the museum

'I bequeath my house, located at 14, rue de la Rochefoucauld, with all it contains [...], to the state [...] with the express condition that this collection be conserved forever – that would be my dearest wish – or at least as long as possible, maintaining its integral character that allows the sum of the work and the efforts of the artist during his life to be recorded in perpetuity.'

Extract from Gustave Moreau's will, dated 10 September 1897

The Musée national Gustave Moreau was officially inaugurated in January 1903 in the heart of the New Athens district of Paris. The way the museum was organised has remained unchanged since then. It was set out by the artist's sole legatee, Henri Rupp (1837-1918), according to his instructions: the paintings are hung side by side without any attention to chronological order or theme. Nearly 25,000 works of art are kept on the four levels of the house-museum, revealing the many facets of the symbolist master.

Chronology

6 April 1826 Gustave Moreau is born in Paris.

1844-1846 Frequent visitor to the private studio of the neoclassical painter, François-Édouard Picot.

1846 Admitted to the École royale des Beaux-Arts, which he leaves in 1849 after twice failing to win the Prix de Rome.

1852 Admitted at the official Salon for the first time, with a large *Pietà*, which has since gone missing.

1857-1859 Second visit to Italy. Makes copies of works by the masters 1 2 .

1864 Presents *Œdipe et le Sphinx* at the Salon (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art).

1869 Presents *L'Enlèvement d'Europe* 23 and *Prométhée* 24 at the Salon. Receives bad reviews from the critics and does not exhibit again until 1876.

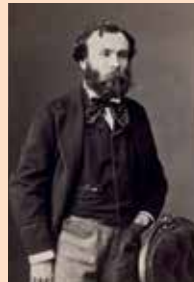
1876 Returns to the Salon with *Salomé dansant*, *Hercule et l'Hydre de Lerne*, *Saint Sébastien* and a watercolour, *L'Apparition*.

1880 Exhibits at the Salon for the last time with *Hélène et Galatée* (musée d'Orsay).

1892 Becomes professor at the École des Beaux-Arts. His pupils include Georges Rouault, Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet, Henri Charles Manguin, Edgar Maxence...

1895 Finishes *Jupiter et Sémélé* 21 and has his family home at 14, rue de La Rochefoucauld transformed into a museum.

1898 Gustave Moreau dies on 18 April.



Bingham Robert Jefferson
Portrait of Gustave Moreau



Anonymous
Portrait of Henri Rupp

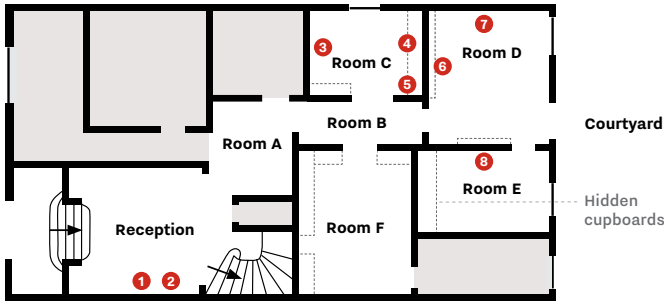
In July 1852, the architect Louis Moreau (1790-1862) bought a house located at 14, rue de La Rochefoucauld in the New Athens district of Paris, in the name of his son, Gustave. At the time, it consisted of three floors, topped with an attic. Louis Moreau quickly decided to make alterations to the building. The attic was transformed into a studio for Gustave with a private staircase to reach it. Little is known about this first studio.

After the death of his father in 1862, his mother in 1884, and his friend Alexandrine Dureux in 1890, Gustave Moreau found himself alone. He decided to expand the house-studio so that he could leave his work to posterity.

In April 1895, he commissioned Albert Lafon (1860-1935) to convert it into a museum. The architect raised and enlarged the house and designed a brick and stone façade. Two new living rooms were created on the street side of the first floor: a 'gallery' and an office. The second and third floors were converted into spacious workshops with large windows.

Ground floor

Works from different periods of Moreau's career are presented on this level.



In the **reception area**, one can see copies made by Gustave Moreau during his second stay in Italy, notably *La Mort de Germanicus* after the French painter Nicolas Poussin **1**, and a fragment of *Danaé* after the Italian painter Correggio **2**.

Rooms A to F house more than 400 paintings, hundreds of drawings, and a unique collection of watercolours by the artist.



7 *Fée aux griffons*
Oil on canvas



5 *Polyphème*
Watercolour

In **Room C**, which was once the dining room, two cupboards with pivoting panels house 677 drawings, most of them copies made by Moreau in Italy of works by the masters. Large format watercolours set in gold frames are also presented. In the room, one can view *Narcisse* **3**, *Ulysse et les Sirènes* **4** and *Polyphème* **5**.

Rooms D to F house Shakespearian-inspired paintings such as *Lady Macbeth* **6** and *Hamlet* **8**. *Fée aux griffons* **7**, which represents a recurring theme in Moreau's work, is probably an unfinished painting. Its neo-Renaissance frame is reminiscent of *Jupiter et Sémélé* **21** on the third floor.

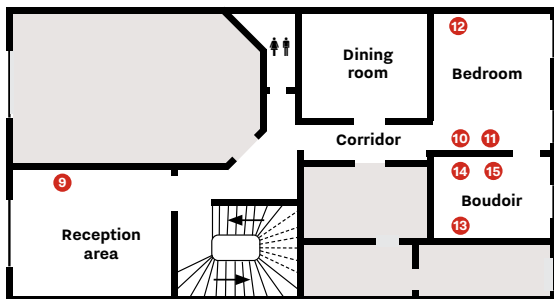
Hidden cupboards installed inside the thick walls (**Rooms E and F**), contain drawings and paintings fixed on large pivoting frames.



Open hidden cupboards, Room F

First floor, the ‘sentimental museum’

Gustave Moreau wanted to arrange the first floor where he had lived with his parents as a sort of ‘little museum’. Its symbolic arrangement is orchestrated not with everyday life in mind, but is designed for posterity.



9 Putto
Watercolour

The **reception area** contains studies based on the old Masters made by Moreau, both at the Louvre and during his second visit to Italy. These include a copy of Italian painter Raphael’s *Putto* 9, produced by the artist at the National Academy of San Luca in Rome. The bookshelves hold 16th and 17th century editions of the most famous architectural treatises (Vitruvius, Sebastiano Serlio, Philibert Delorme, Vignola, etc.), as well as a collection of antiques that belonged to his father, Louis Moreau.

In the **corridor**, the painter chose to display works by artists who were his friends or who he admired, including Théodore Chassériau, Eugène Fromentin, Narcisse Berchère and Edward Coley Burne-Jones.



10 Edgar Degas
Portrait de Gustave Moreau
Oil on canvas



13 *Andromède*
Oil on wood

The **dining room** is decorated with photographic reproductions of works by Gustave Moreau that he had sold some time before, as well as engravings by other artists. Several ceramics after French potter Bernard Palissy and by his followers are displayed on the credenza.

In the **bedroom**, there are numerous family souvenirs. On the right as you enter, there is a showcase displaying objects belonging to those he loved, as well as a portrait of the artist by Edgar Degas 10. There are several portraits of Pauline Moreau by Jules Elie Delaunay 11 and Gustave Ricard 12, testament to the artist’s attachment to his mother.

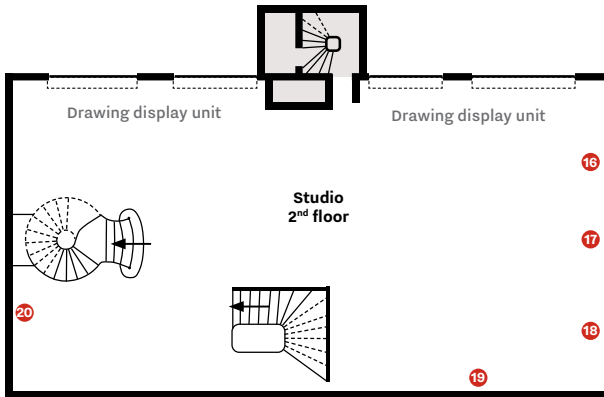
The **boudoir** is dedicated to the memory and furniture of his ‘very dear and only friend’ Alexandrine Dureux. Many of the works he gave her hang on the walls of the room, including *Andromède* 13, *Le Bon Samaritain* 14 and *Pasiphaé* 15.

Second floor, the studio

*'Gustave Moreau did not paint man; he painted human thought and imagination[...]
He is the chosen painter of myths, legends, symbolic feelings.'*

Ary Renan, *Gustave Moreau: 1826-1898*, Paris, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1900.

The studio on the second floor was specially designed by the architect Albert Lafon to be able to present large canvasses.



18 *Retour des Argonautes*
Oil on canvas



20 *Les Chimères*
Oil on canvas

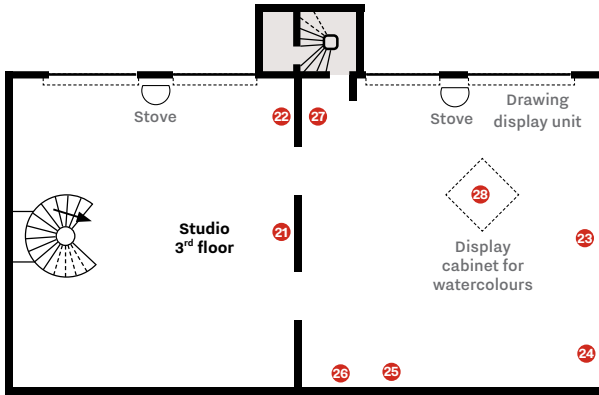
Many of the paintings show signs of having been enlarged to adapt them to the size of the studio. *Tyrtéé chantant pendant le combat* **16** and *Les Prétendants* **17**, paintings that the artist began working on very early in his career, were enlarged at the end of 1882. At the time, Moreau was considering organising a large, and possibly posthumous, exhibition of his work. *Retour des Argonautes* **18**, originally painted around 1891, was made bigger after the construction of the studios and he resumed work on it in 1897. *Les Filles de Thespius* **19**, which he probably started working on around 1853, was enlarged in 1882, but remained 'a work in progress'. The central part of the painting is testimony to the strong influence of Théodore Chassériau and his painting *Le Tepidarium* (musée d'Orsay) on the artist.

In contrast, the painting *Les Chimères* **20**, was produced in just four months. However, Gustave Moreau left it unfinished following the death of his mother in 1884.



The amount of graphic art by Gustave Moreau testifies to his passion for drawing. He wanted to have a selection of his artwork permanently on display. Nearly 4,830 drawings are exhibited on the second and third floors in **glass units with pivoting shutters**. They can be leafed through like a book, allowing visitors to consult them at all times.

Third floor, the studio



The first room is dominated by *Jupiter et Sémélé* (21), delivered to the German banker Léopold Goldschmidt in 1895. He donated it to the museum in 1903.

Le Triomphe d'Alexandre le Grand (22) tells the story of the defeat of Porus, king of northern India's army, by that of Alexander the Great in 326 BC. The artist saw the painting as a symbolic work, with no respect for chronological order. The only thing that mattered to him was the idea of India, a land of dreams.

Notable works in the second room include *L'Enlèvement d'Europe* (23) and *Prométhée* (24), both exhibited at the 1869 Paris Salon. His depiction of the Titan did not impress the critics. However, it attracted the attention of the French poet Théophile Gautier: 'It is not a Titan. It is a man to whom it seems that the artist wanted to give some resemblance to Christ.'



26 *Les Licornes*
Oil on canvas

Les Licornes (26), painted around 1888, is testament to the artist's fascination with the Middle Ages. Commissioned by banker Edmond de Rothschild, the painting was never delivered to him. Moreau finally gave up trying to sell it.

Two compositions on the theme of Salome are among the museum's most famous works: *Salomé dansant*, also known as *Salomé tatouée* (25), and *L'Apparition* (27).

The artist was much inspired by this story from the Bible, and depicted the Jewish princess as the archetypal "femme fatale".



28 *Les Licornes*
Watercolour

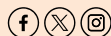
264 watercolours are presented in a four-sided revolving cabinet that was especially designed for them when the museum opened. Protected from the light, the paintings can be leafed through in the same way as the drawings. Moreau was aware that he sometimes obtained results using this technique that he failed to achieve in his other paintings: 'It's curious, this little watercolour today showed me a wonderful way that I do well only when I work at things without being too diligent.'



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