

Château de Prangins.

Discovering the Enlightenment A Cultural Tour around the Château

A new permanent open-air exhibition

Press release June 2010

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Château de Prangins.

The exhibition

The Château de Prangins has a new permanent open-air exhibition. It is a unique walk that retraces the site's history during the 18th and 19th centuries and reveals some of its lesser known features. This tour comprises a charming walk from the park to the panoramic terrace, discovering the architecture and landscapes of the estate along the way.

With around twenty stops en route, the tour takes visitors to the places where the history of Château de Prangins actually happened. Short texts in four languages (English, French, German and Italian) with copious illustrations shed light on some little-known aspects of the site. Visitors can follow the whole tour or just part of it, as they wish. The exhibition highlights the rich diversity and unique characteristics of Château de Prangins.

Passing through idyllic surroundings, the tour explores the history of the site throughout the two thousand years during which it has been inhabited, and examines the horticultural considerations that have helped shape the gardens as we know them today.

One of the most striking and original features of the project is the specially created markers for the various stops on the tour. Reflecting the fact that the 18th century saw the construction of the current château and substantial alterations to the terrain to accommodate the gardens, each of the markers is in the form of a silhouette – an art form that was popular at the time. For emotional impact, each of them depicts a figure from history who guides visitors, shows the way and points out some interesting new perspectives on the estate.

The figures are chosen to exemplify the topic of each section, and all of them represent people who lived either at Prangins or in the surrounding region. They include both men and women, aristocrats and commoners. Each silhouette is an original design inspired by contemporary sources.

Château de Prangins.

A different perspective on the Prangins site

The idea behind the “Discovering the Enlightenment” exhibition is to showcase the exceptional location of Château de Prangins while also telling the story of the buildings and the people who have lived in them. Far more than just a museum, the château is a heritage site and a public space which has witnessed numerous events down the centuries.

The 18th century is the ideal backdrop for the social, architectural and horticultural narrative. The current building was constructed in the 1730s and the permanent exhibition takes an in-depth look at this period. The Prangins site is also imbued with the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment, with a park and château that were constructed in accordance with the rigorous demands of the French style and yet are still the perfect place to stroll and enjoy the surroundings.

The special design of the exhibition covers the whole outdoor space of the estate and offers a different perspective on the site. Though based on meticulous research and real sources, its form and open-air location bring a lighter note to visitors' exploration of the site, complementing the permanent exhibition and encouraging them to venture outside the museum itself. The silhouettes, so expressive that they almost come alive, reinforce this light-hearted mood.

The texts on each of the twenty-one silhouettes combine reason with emotion, reflecting the Enlightenment era when feeling and intellect flourished side by side. In addition to the historical information, the tour offers an insight into the beauty celebrated in the 18th century, with evocative quotations and a rich and attractive iconography.

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Publication (in english, french and german)

To coincide with the opening of the exhibition, Château de Prangins has created a special publication that will appeal to both children and families young and old. “Amusing silhouettes!” is a book of activities and games designed to ensure that the tour is fun as well as educational. Featuring old-style games and experiences for all the five senses, it offers younger visitors a chance to discover the 18th century in a way that is both interactive and entertaining.

« Amusing silhouettes ! », Musée national suisse, 29 pages, CHF 5.-,
ISBN 978-3-908025-29-0.

„Chouettes silhouettes!“, Musée national suisse, 29 pages, CHF 5.-,
ISBN 978-3-908025-58-0.

« Verspielte Silhouetten ! », Musée national suisse, 29 pages, CHF 5.-,
ISBN 978-3-908025-59-7.

“Amusing silhouettes!” is available in the museum shop or can be ordered from
info.prangins@snm.admin.ch

Château de Prangins.

Silhouettes – technical details

Twenty-five metal silhouettes have been set up in the park around the château. They depict members of the Guiguer family, various well-known figures whose history overlapped with that of Prangins, and the servants and employees involved in the day-to-day running of the estate.

Design: Nicolas Koenig, designer (Flying Koenig, Vevey).

Face A > Quotation > Main topic > Secondary topic; 2-6 illustrations.

Face B > Personality > Presentation of the tour, plan, introductory text; 1-2 illustrations.

Texts in English, French and German. Italian available at the reception desk.

| | Figure | Theme |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 01 | Mozart, the composer | Hills and vales |
| 02 | Charles-Jules Guiguer, the general | Fine facades and square towers |
| 03 | Rosalie de Constant, the watercolourist of plants | Bucolic bliss |
| 04 | The boarder | Tennis and classrooms |
| 05 | Jean-Georges Guiguer, the heir | Under the lime trees |
| 06 | Edward Gibbon, the man of history | Down the ages |
| 07 | Voltaire, the philosopher of the Enlightenment | A garden... really? |
| 08 | Louis Guiguer, the banker | Stones and monument |
| 09 | The gardener | The garden is enclosed |
| 10 | Germaine de Staël, the woman of letters | A residence of prestige and leisure |
| 11 | Louis-François Guiguer, the enlightened gentleman | Natural beauty and ordered landscape |
| 12 | Matilda Guiguer, the much-loved wife | Shadows and scents |
| 13 | The servant girl | The stone trefoil |
| 14 | The governor | Farmyard and outbuildings |
| 15 | The minister | The Temple: belief, love and prayer |
| 16 | Samuel Engel, the Swiss Parmentier | Illustrated vegetables |
| 17 | The peasant woman | Attacking the moats |
| 18 | The art lover | Picturesque landscape |
| 19 | Huber “the bee man”, the wise beekeeper | Wings and petals |
| 20 | The shepherd | Orchard of free-growing trees |
| 21 | Joseph Bonaparte, the illustrious owner | Big events and small histories |

Château de Prangins.

Exemple (silhouette 7)

Voltaire, the philosopher of the Enlightenment

A garden... really?

Prangins is a veritable palace; but the architect forgot to include a garden (...).

Voltaire, *Letter to Nicolas-Claude Thieriot*, 24 March 1755

Text 1 Voltaire stayed at Prangins between December 1754 and March 1755 and had just left for “Les Délices”, in Geneva. The extract from the philosopher’s letter above illustrates his sensitivity to exterior design, with a reference to the Grand Siècle at Versailles. No parterres of embroidery, no topiary, no formal plantations of trees... must mean there is no garden! Yet Louis Guiguer had already enlarged the kitchen garden. A year later, after Voltaire’s departure, a promenade and lime trees planted in alternate rows were created with fashionable taste.

Text 2 Between the château and what is now the church was an area of rugged topography. Archaeological surveys have established that at some points the ditches could be more than twenty metres deep. The creation of the kitchen garden therefore required the construction of substantial terraces and the importation of large quantities of silt, sand and gravel to even out the differences of level.

Text 3 A famous author of plays, tales and essays, the French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) was the very embodiment of the 18th Century committed intellectual. In the name of reason, he protested against arbitrary power and religious intolerance as well as cruelty and injustice. At the end of 1754 he went into exile on the banks of Lake Geneva, and helped promote the burgeoning popularity of theatre in the region. He purchased “Les Délices”, close to Geneva, and then, in 1759, Château de Ferney in neighbouring France. In 1778, just a few months before his death, he returned to Paris, where he had experienced both imprisonment and adulation.

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General Information

Permanent exhibition

Discovering the Enlightenment - A Cultural Tour around the Château

From the 24th of June on

Preview

Wednesday 23 June, 18.30 pm, open to the public

With music and theatre from the Conservatoire de l'Ouest Vaudois. Festive procession around the château accompanied by a hurdy-gurdy.

Press contact and visuals

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For further information on the exhibition

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Publication

« Amusing silhouettes! », Musée national suisse, 29 pages, CHF 5.- ISBN 978-3-908025-29-0. In english, french and german. “Amusing silhouettes!” is available in the museum shop or can be ordered from info.prangins@snm.admin.ch

Château de Prangins.

Practical information

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Adress | Musée national suisse – Château de Prangins CH – 1197 Prangins T. + 41 (0)22 994 88 90 info.prangins@snm.admin.ch www.chateaudeprangins.ch |
| Opening hours | Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm |
| Admission | Exhibition « Discovering the Enlightenment » free Permanent exhibitions CHF 7.- / 5.- Temporary exhibition CHF 7.- / 5.- Combined ticket CHF 12.- / 8.- Children up till 16 years and schools free Historical garden free Guided tour on request CHF 120.- |

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Visuals

http://www.museenational.ch/e/prangins/presse_documentation/pressedossiers.php
or on request to rachel.vez-fridrich@slm.admin.ch, phone + 41 (0)22 994 88 68/90

1



Silhouette

Rosalie de Constant, the watercolorist of plants

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

2



Silhouette

Louis Guiguer, the banker, recto

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

3



Silhouette

Louis Guiguer, the banker, verso

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

4



Silhouette on the Prangins site

Charles-Jules Guiguer, the general

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

5



Silhouette in the courtyard of the Château de Prangins

Gemaine de Staël, the woman of letters

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

6



Silhouette in the courtyard of the Château de Prangins

Voltaire, the philosopher of the Enlightenment

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7



Silhouette on the Prangins site

The boarder

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

8



Silhouette on the panoramic terrasse

**Matilda Guiguer, the much-loved wife
and Louis-François Guiguer, the enlightened
gentleman**

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

9



Silhouette on the Prangins site

The peasant woman

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

10



**Book of activities and games « Amusing
silhouettes ! »**

Little girl with the hoop

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

11



**Book of activities and games « Amusing
silhouettes ! »**

Edward Gibbon to draw

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey

12



**Book of activities and games « Amusing
silhouettes ! »**

Matilda Guiguer to cut out

© Musée national suisse, Nicolas Koenig, Vevey