

EXHIBITION FROM 7 JUNE TO 3 NOVEMBER 2024,
AT THE MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL ESTATE OF MARLY



MUSÉE DU
DOMAINE ROYAL
DE MARLY

THE KING'S HORSES : THE MARLY HORSES, MASTERPIECES OF EQUESTRIAN ART



The Royal Estate of Marly, once a hunting residence of kings and the setting for the monumental *Marly Horses*, has always given an essential role to the horse. From transportation and aristocratic entertainments to military activities, equestrian buildings and artistic representations, horses have taken over the estate in various forms. Through a hundred paintings, sculptures, drawings, engravings, accessories, and archival documents, the Museum of the Royal Estate of Marly presents, on the occasion of the equestrian events of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, an original exhibition dedicated to the role of the horse at the Estate of Marly, from Louis XIV to the French Revolution.

After Guillaume Coustou, *Cheval retenu par un palefrenier*
(*Horse held by a groom*) called Marly Horses, Domaine national de Marly

The horse is intimately linked to the history of the Château de Marly. A key player in the royal hunts, which were at the origin of the creation of the estate, the horse is an essential daily companion of the royal family as well as the court. Its useful presence, as well as its artistic and symbolic representation, made it a powerful tool for demonstrating monarchical power.

Extending from the museum's interior spaces to the park, the exhibition retraces Marly's rich equestrian history, highlighting the imprint left by the horse on this emblematic place. Around a hundred works, equestrian accessories, and documents from prestigious public and private collections illustrate the various aspects of its presence within the royal estate through its uses, representations, spaces and buildings, along a journey in 7 stages.

HORSES AND HUNTING



To open the exhibition, visitors are immediately immersed in the thrilling atmosphere of a royal stag hunt, discovering the painting of *Louis XV chassant le cerf dans la forêt de Saint-Germain* (King Louis XV hunting deer in the Saint-Germain Forest) commissioned by the king to Jean-Baptiste Oudry to decorate his cabinet at the Château de Marly.

Jean-Baptiste Oudry,
*Louis XV chassant le cerf
dans la forêt de Saint-Germain*
(King Louis XV hunting deer
in the Saint-Germain Forest),
1730, Toulouse, musée
des Augustins

Horses are essential to the entertainments and leisure activities at the court of Louis XIV, who is particularly fond of hunting with hounds and horseback riding. This practice was much more than just a leisure activity : it was seen as an exercise of power, reinforcing the sovereign's virtues and preparing him both morally and physically for war.

The king hunts at least two or three times a week, and it is on these occasions that he is most often seen on horseback. Louis XIV hunts up to 140 days a year, about one day in three. It is from 1688 that he undertakes the development of the Marly forest for his hunting parties.

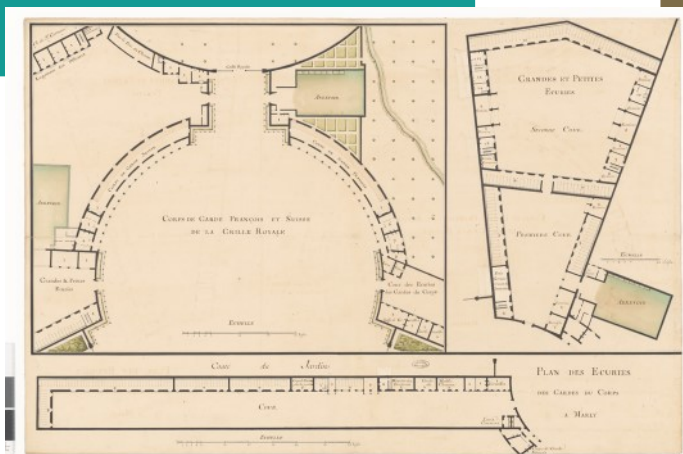
WALK AND CIRCULATION

The practice of hunting had a significant impact on the architecture and urban redevelopment of the domain. To facilitate circulation in the woods, hunting roads were built, creating star-shaped crossroads. Horses and carriages are essential for all the King's and members of the Royal Family's journeys between their various residences, for walks, and for official ceremonies on the estate.

Jean-Baptiste Martin l'Aîné,
Study for "La Prise de Condé-sur-
l'Escaut par Louis XIV le 26 avril 1676"
(The Capture of Condé sur l'Escaut
by Louis XIV on 26 April 1676),
Emile Hermès collection



EQUESTRIAN BUILDINGS. BUILDING FOR HORSES



Plan of the King's stables, Paris, National archives

In 1683, as work on Marly progressed and Louis XIV made regular visits, the administration of the King's Buildings planned the construction of stables. Located at the entrance to the estate, they were reserved for the royal horses and the mounts of the king's bodyguards. Unlike Versailles, Marly's stables were housed in a single building, accommodating both Great and Small Stables, or riding and draft horses. Under successive kings, new stables were built as the number of courtiers increased, reflecting the transformation of the estate into a reception place.

During the reign of Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette asked for new stables to be built for her own use. In the end, the Queen's stables were only used twice, in March 1782 and June 1789. The exhibition provides an opportunity to rediscover the history of these previously little-known stables. The architectural masterpiece is the *horse drinking pool*, gigantic in size and magnificence. Its decoration signals to the outsiders the existence of a royal residence whose treasures are hidden from passers-by. Visitors can still discover this monument, which closes off the park at its far end.

Adam-Frans Van der Meulen,
Prise de Gray (Capture of Gray),
28 February 1674, Marly-le-Roi,
Musée du Domaine royal de Marly

THE WAR HORSE

Horses were indispensable for demonstrating the power and prestige of the French monarchy. They were ridden in cavalcades, military parades and battles to demonstrate the grandeur of the king and his army. War horses are featured in a major series commissioned from the painter Van der Meulen, depicting the capture of cities under Louis XIV, and which adorn the apartments at Marly. Equestrian prestige was also evident in the parades and military reviews organized by the various kings on the estate.



THE ADVENTURE OF THE MARLY HORSES FROM COYSEVOX TO COUSTOU

In 1702, Louis XIV commissioned a group of two statuary groups from Antoine Coysevox, *La Renommée du Roi (Fame Riding Pegasus)*, to be installed over the Abreuvoir. During the Regency (1715-1723), these sculptures were moved to the entrance to the Tuileries, on today's Place de la Concorde. To replace them, Louis XV in turn commissioned two groups of horses known as the "Marly Horses" from Guillaume Coustou, Coysevox's nephew. These masterpieces, placed above the Abreuvoir in 1745, depict wild rearing horses held by naked grooms.

During the French Revolution, these statues left Marly and were also installed in Paris, at the entrance to the Champs-Élysées, Place de la Concorde, opposite the *Renommée du Roi* sculpted by Coysevox. In 1984, Marly Horses and the Coysevox horses were replaced by castings at the entrance to the Avenue des Champs-Élysées and the Parc des Tuileries. The original sculptures will be installed and reunited in The Louvre's Cour Marly, these two equestrian masterpieces proudly overhang the ensemble of statues, illustrating the rich equestrian history of the estate.



After Guillaume Coustou, *Cheval retenu par un palefrenier (Horse held by a groom)* called Marly Horses, Domaine national de Marly

HORSES AS A SYMBOL

Equestrian practice constitutes a symbol of good government. The horse, a sign of prestige, plays an important role in monarchical symbolism and in the iconographic program of the Château de Marly. Louis XIV skilfully exploited the equestrian imaginary in both moral and political terms, frequently depicting himself as a horseman in official portraits. Successive kings took up this symbolism by appearing on horseback, dressed in armor or royal costume. The king as commander-in-chief of armies and the king as Apollo are emblematic representations of the monarch, intended to reflect royal power, grandeur and majesty.



Pierre Mignard and workshop,
Portrait de Louis XIV à cheval en costume romain (Equestrian Portrait of Louis XIV in Roman style), Saint-Germain-en-Laye, musée Ducastel-Vera

MARLY HORSES AND THE GREAT ABREUVOIR, PRESTIGIOUS RELICS OF THE MARLY ESTATE



Jules Hardouin-Mansart, le Grand Abreuvoir,
the horse drinking pool, Domaine national de Marly

The Grand Abreuvoir, is one of the last buildings of Louis XIV's château, a vestige of its former splendor. Both utilitarian and decorative, it is part of the king's magnificence. While Versailles gives visitors a glimpse of its rich stables, Marly gives a place of honor to horses, unveiling this majestic drinking trough to passers-by. Equestrian art at Marly reached its apogee during the reign of Louis XV, when in 1739 the king commissioned the sculptor Coustou to create two groups of horses held by grooms, known as the "Marly Horses". Replicas of these sculptures, which crown the horse drinking pool trough on the Marly estate, complete the outdoor exhibition at the far end of the park.

Curator:

Karen Chastagnol,
Director of the Musée
du Domaine Royal de Marly

Catalogue under the direction
of Karen Chastagnol,
with contributions from
Ambre Bozec,
Valérie Carpentier-Vanhaverbeke,
Annick Heitzmann,
Carlos Pereira,
Benjamin Ringo.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Musée du Domaine royal de Marly
1 Grille royale – Parc de Marly
78160 MARLY-LE-ROI
Information : 01 39 69 06 26
<https://musee-domaine-marly.fr/>

OPENING HOURS

Wednesday to Sunday :
2:00 pm - 6:00 pm



PRESS CONTACT

AGNES RENOULT COMMUNICATION
Sarah Castel – sarah@agnesrenoult.com - 01 87 44 25 25
Visuals available at www.agnesrenoult.com



PARTNER EXHIBITIONS

Palace of Versailles
"The horse in majesty at the heart of a civilisation"
from 2 July to 3 November 2024

National Museum of the Renaissance - Château d'Écouen
"On horseback! Equestrian portraiture in Renaissance France"
from 16 October to 27 January 2025