

The Abbey Saint-André Opens Its Centennial Exhibition May 7 in Villeneuve-lez-Avignon

From May 7 - October 30, *The Saint-André Adventure 1916-2016, Retrospective on a Rebirth*



This year the Abbey Saint-André is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its acquisition by the collector Gustave Fayet, ancestor of the current owners, a wonderful opportunity to relive the adventure of the Abbey's rebirth. A moving retrospective, The Saint-André Adventure 1916-2016, is installed in the new temporary exhibition space at the Abbey as well as in its gardens. The bilingual (French/English) museum tour is rich in documentation. Photos, works, paintings, inscriptions, and personal objects tell the hundred-year-old story of the three iconic personalities who shaped the Abbey by their actions and their extraordinary sensitivities: the artist and patron Gustave Fayet, the poet Elsa Koeberlé and the Louvre Museum curator Roseline Bacou. The exhibition's contemporary staging, ingeniously integrated into the historic site, was developed by University of Avignon students of the agency Muséocom, which specializes in cultural communications and outreach for historic sites.

The exhibition will be on display from May 7 until October 30, 2016.

A Hundred-Year-Old Story Told in an Exhibition — May 7 until October 30



A Transformation in the Romantic Style

The artist Gustave Fayet, patron and friend of Paul Gauguin, acquired the Abbey Saint-André in 1916 to preserve this prize piece of cultural heritage. He entrusted the amazing place to his friend, the poet Elsa Koberlé, who had discovered it. The Alsatian artist undertook the first sweeping changes in remarkable style: the renovation of the ground floor of the Abbey where she lived with her friend Génia Lioubow, a painter, and the very personal creation of an Italianate garden with fan-shaped parterres, lily ponds, roses and a pergola. She engaged stone-cutters and builders, an undertaking that had discouraged more than one owner of the Abbey. At the death of Elsa Koeberlé in 1950, it was Gustave Fayet's grand-daughter, Roseline Bacou, just 27 years old and a curator at the Louvre Museum in Paris, who took over the reins and launched new projects with equal energy and enthusiasm. She opened the Abbey's upstairs rooms, created the Mediterranean gardens, brought the church foundations and cloister arcades back to life, and returned Sainte Casarie's Chapel to its original appearance, allowing her to open the Abbey to the public in 1990, the realization of a lifelong dream.

An Inspiration for Many Artists

This exhibition also sheds light on a century of lifestyles in the Abbey. Who today remembers the "young ladies of the fort," as they were called, swimming in the garden ponds surrounded by their cats or installed in their painting studio under the vaulted arches? Steeped in art, these three personalities made the Abbey a haven of culture, open to artists such as the poet and dramatist Paul Claudel and the photographer Robert Doisneau. They shared a singular art of living, full of creativity, inspired by arts and letters.

An Exhibition in Three Stages

The retrospective unfolds in three stages, presenting the close ties each of the three characters had with the Abbey Saint-André, as well as their family relationships and friendships, and their shared vision of its rebirth. It also showcases their connections to art as artists or collectors. All of the pieces presented in the exhibition are from the rich collections and archives of the Abbey Saint-André. Admission is included in the general admission price.

A Museum Tour Designed by the Students of Muséocom at the University of Avignon

The Abbey Saint-André chose Avignon's Muséocom, the young agency specializing in cultural heritage communications and outreach, to stage its centennial exhibition. "Their energy and creativity immediately attracted us, and their conception and scenario for the project were an excellent match for the passionate spirit that gives this place so much life," explain the current owners, Marie and Gustave Viennet. The collaboration with Muséocom began in November 2015 in order to create and mount the exhibition that opened May 7.



A Second Star to Mark the 100th Anniversary of a Transformation

The Abbey Saint-André has just received its second star in the *Michelin Green Guides to Provence and Languedoc*. The Guides award from one to three stars depending on whether a site is “Interesting,” “Deserves a Detour,” or is “Worth the Trip.” The second star is a reward highlighting the long-term enhancement work started in 1916 with the acquisition of the Abbey by Gustave Fayet, then the development of its gardens by Elsa Koeberlé, leading to the Abbey’s classification in 1947 as an *Historic Monument*, and finally the opening of the Abbey to the public in 1990 by Roseline Bacou after a second set of major renovations. The gardens received the designation *Remarkable* in March 2014, thus joining the prestigious circle of the 422 most beautiful gardens in France, with 15 located in Languedoc-Roussillon. This most recent star is an encouragement to the Viennet family to pursue its many projects to continue restoring and bringing life to the Abbey, welcoming all the arts.

ZOOM : An 18th-Century Abbatial Palace Surrounded by Stunning Terraced Gardens on a Mountain Facing Avignon’s Palace of the Popes

On the heights of Villeneuve-lez-Avignon (Gard), hidden within the walls of Fort Saint-André, the Remarkable Garden of the Abbey Saint-André unfolds on successive balconies offering sweeping views of the Palace of the Popes and the Alpilles Mountains on one side, Mount Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail on the other. Designated an Historic Monument, these romantic gardens surrounding an 18th century abbatial palace display a variety of moods: parterres in 18th-century Tuscan style, ornamented with pools and a pergola dripping with wisteria and roses, French-style groves of trees, Mediterranean rock gardens, a century-old olive orchard, and panoramic terraces. It is a rare site that harmoniously blends the art of gardening with a mosaic of religious heritage inviting a stroll through the history of Languedoc and Provence since the 6th century. An inspiring place, it is full of poetry, and often invites all the arts into its gardens. Open from March 1 until October 30.

Practical Information

More information and a complete calendar: www.abbayesaintandre.fr

Contact: 04 90 25 55 95 or info@abbayesaintandre.fr

Address: rue Montée du Fort, 30400 Villeneuve-lez-Avignon France

Amenities: Boutique, terrace café in the garden, picnic baskets for purchase (May 1 - September 30)

Open Dates: March 1 - October 30 except Mondays. Open all holidays, including Easter Monday and Pentecost Monday.

Hours: May - September, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.; March and October, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.; April 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Admission: Tour of Gardens (self-guided, including 2 hectares [5 acres] of gardens, history circuit with video and temporary exhibitions): full price 6 €; reduced price 5€; children under 8 free; family price with children 8-17: 2 adults and one child, 15.50 € or 2 adults and two or more children, 20.50 € - rate Pass (Avignon PASSion). Tour of Gardens (self-guided) **plus** Guided Tour of the Abbatial Palace **by reservation only**: full price 13 €; reduced price 12 €, free for children under 8.



Exposition du 7 mai au 30 octobre 2016
Renaissance de l'abbaye et de ses jardins

Abbaye Saint-André / Villeneuve-lès-Avignon
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