

WHAT'S NEW IN THE MIDDLE AGES?

11 October 2016 – 6 August 2017

CITÉ DES SCIENCES ET DE L'INDUSTRIE

"A great scientific saga will open the programme of the 2016-17 cultural season at the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie. After the success of From Dig to Labs: the Example of the Gauls, the exhibition What's New in the Middle Ages? presents a new vision of a thousand years of history based on recent discoveries in the field of rescue archaeology. It invites the public to travel back in time and take a fresh look at the mediaeval era." Bruno Maquart, Chair of Universcience.

Besieged castles, knights rescuing princesses in distress, outbreaks of plague. We have many preconceptions about the Middle Ages and those conventional impressions are tenacious indeed. Yet many discoveries made by archaeologists over the last few years show that this period of history is far more complex and fascinating than we thought. Produced together with the Inrap (French National Institute for Rescue Archaeology Research), the What's New in the Middle Ages? exhibition held from 11 October 2016 to 6 August 2017 at the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie in Paris paints an innovative picture of the mediaeval era, which lasted more than 1,000 years. Visitors will discover that eyeglasses and compasses were invented in the Middle Ages and that it was at this time that industry, suburbs and regional development first appeared. The exhibition paints a fresh picture of the mediaeval era, which still has so many wonderful secret treasures to reveal.

1st part: GALLERY OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The exhibition begins in a vast chronological gallery that presents 1,000 years of history. Large images are shown to counterpoint the frieze that explains key mediaeval periods. A sarcophagus and a few other significant items – including armour – are also displayed, giving an initial taste of the period.

2nd part: WHAT'S NEW IN THE MIDDLE AGES?

Welcome to the heart of the exhibition. Reconstitutions of iconic archaeological digs and recent historical research throw new light on the Middle Ages. There are six major sections to explore.

Which populations in what areas?

Were the Middle Ages one long series of battles and invasions? In fact, their history is much more a story of mass migratory movements than sudden invasions. Archaeology reveals this far more complex reality. There is a focus on ethnic mixing and the coexistence of cultural practices, as well as the knowledge and innovations spread by these migratory flows. Archaeologists sometimes find objects (such as garnets from Sri Lanka) that point to trade routes between West and East, the interaction of populations and the persistence of cultures and rituals. Queen Aregund, the Germanic wife of the Merovingian King Chlothar (6th century) was a key figure in this area.

■ Everyday rural worlds

What was daily life like for country folk? Where did they live and how did they dress? What did they eat and drink? How did they handle hygiene and health, take care of the sick and manage the dead? What were the trades (crafts, farming, etc.) and leisure activities (holidays, games, etc.) of these women and men in the Middle Ages? How does archaeology throw light on these subjects? An art and science installation answers these questions with a re-enactment of rural life in Saleux in the Somme region of France between the 7th and 11th centuries.

hands-on exhibit The Middle Ages were not an obscurantist era, but actually inventive and dynamic. A game presents most of the mediaeval inventions and innovations that improved the everyday lives of farmers: the wheelbarrow, the compass, the nailed horseshoe, eyeglasses, the spinning wheel, the hourglass, and so on.

Visitors also discover the fascinating story of Hildegard of Bingen, a visionary mystic, prophetess, woman of letters, naturalist, doctor specialising in plant medicine and even musician who died in 1179 at the age of 81!



Planned and coproduced with

Institut national
de recherches
archéologiques
préventives

Inrap



Les Chevreux suprématistes



Loïc de Cargouët, Inrap

■ People, landscapes and resources

Industry developed in the Middle Ages, especially with the proliferation of increasingly efficient windmills and the appearance of blast furnaces. While all the mechanical parts had been around since ancient times, it was not until the mediaeval era that they were put together to make the first machines. Middle-Age societies also began major development activities that had irreversible impacts on natural environments. The diversification of farming techniques, forestry, the management of natural locations, the harnessing of rivers and progress in the use of energy resources all continued during these centuries.

hands-on exhibit Carpologist (a seed expert) or anthracologist (a charcoal specialist): what will each visitor decide to be? Using two tools – a brush and scraper – they go on a virtual dig.

■ Middle-Age ruling classes

When mediaeval aristocrats waged war, they followed very strict rules in relation to land and peasants. They practised courtly love and challenged each other in contests derived from warfare, adapting various games (such as chess and jousts) to suit their taste. Here, visitors acquire a very different perception of these elites and their practices, far removed from the usual stereotypes.

■ Travel and trade

A 15-minute video explains the movement of people, goods, ideas and knowledge from the 12th to the 15th century. Three fabliaux tell stories of encounters between travellers: an African king, a student, a trader and a bogus pilgrim. In this section, visitors discover that during this period, northern commercial routes led to the development of new trading posts on the Atlantic and that great progress was made in shipbuilding and navigational technology, contributing to the emergence of a new cartography. Travel enabled the movement and spread of objects, materials and products, and facilitated the dissemination of ideas and cultural practices, opening up new horizons.

■ Towns in the Middle Ages

Who would have thought that suburbs were a legacy of the Middle Ages? Yet it was from the 12th to the 16th century that networks of small and medium-sized towns began to appear and grow. Throughout the 1,000 years of the Middle Ages, towns and the way they were organised evolved. Trade and the economy played an increasingly important role. The Church was omnipresent, but town halls, belfries and universities were built, shaping the towns and cities we know today.

hands-on exhibit The town of Saint-Denis to the north of Paris features in a major puzzle that enables visitors to grasp four founding stages in its development. Saint-Denis was an important symbol in the Middle Ages, both as a monastic and urban location, and as a sanctuary and economic hub.

Exhibition produced under the supervision of scientific curator Isabelle Catteddu, archaeologist (Inrap).

Une exposition conçue sous le commissariat scientifique d'Isabelle Catteddu, archéologue (Inrap).

PUBLICATIONS

• **A catalogue** co-published with Éditions de La Martinière – available in both paper (€29.90) and digital (€14.90) versions.

Chief editors: Isabelle Catteddu, archaeologist (Inrap) and Hélène Noizet, historian (Paris I University).

- **A book for young people** co-published with Fleurus (€13.50)
- **An activity handbook for children** (€4.90)

Practical information

Cité des sciences et de l'industrie

30, avenue Corentin-Cariou - 75019 Paris

📍 Porte de la Villette 📞 3b

Opening hours

• Every day except Monday from 10 am to 6 pm, and 7 pm on Sunday.

• Mondays: 24 and 31 October, 19 and 26 December

Special closing times

7 pm from Thursday 20 to Saturday 29 October, Monday 31 October and March 1 November, Monday 19 to Friday 23 December and from 26 to 30 December. 4.30 pm on Saturday 24 and 31 December. Closed on 25 December 2016 and 1 January 2017.

Admission rates on 1 September 2016

Full rate: €12 – reduced rate: €9 (over 65s, teachers, under 25s, large families and students).

Tickets include admission to the Argonaute and Planétarium.

→ Free for the under 2s, jobseekers and recipients of minimum social benefits, the disabled and their carers.

cite-sciences.fr



Les Chevreux suprématistes



Denis Gliksman, Inrap

LINKED TO THE EXHIBITION AN ENTIRE MEDIAEVAL SEASON IN GREATER PARIS

An opportunity to visit one museum after another, travelling by Métro, tram or bicycle!

Visit the Saint-Denis basilica and Fabrique, the Cluny Museum, the National Archaeology Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and the permanent collection of the Museum of Judaic Art and History to get the most out of this Mediaeval Season!

Press information

Camille Reyboz

01 40 05 75 04 / 06 17 44 56 24

camille.reyboz@universcience.fr