

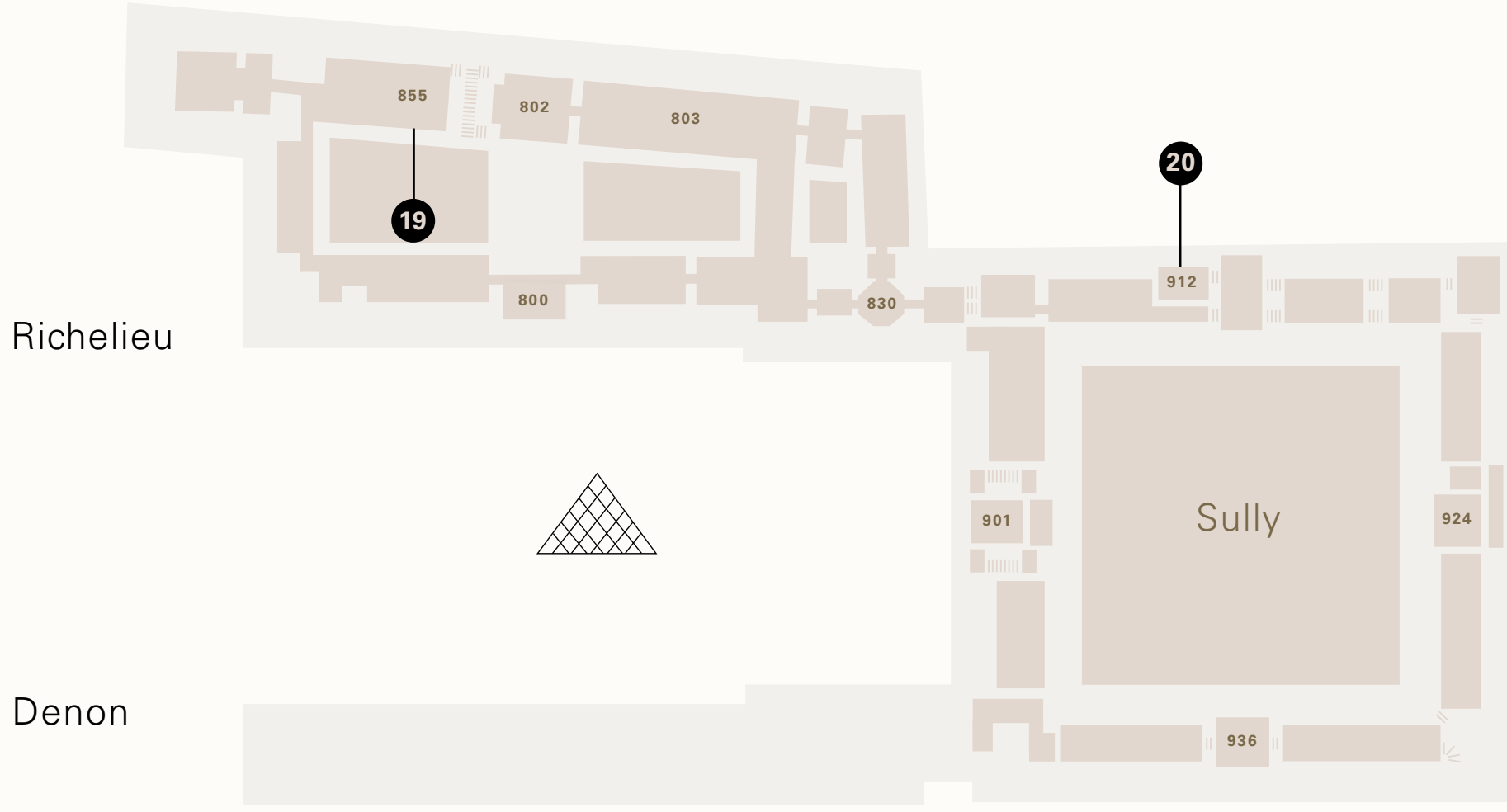
IN THE WORDS OF ATHLETES

Interactive map of the museum

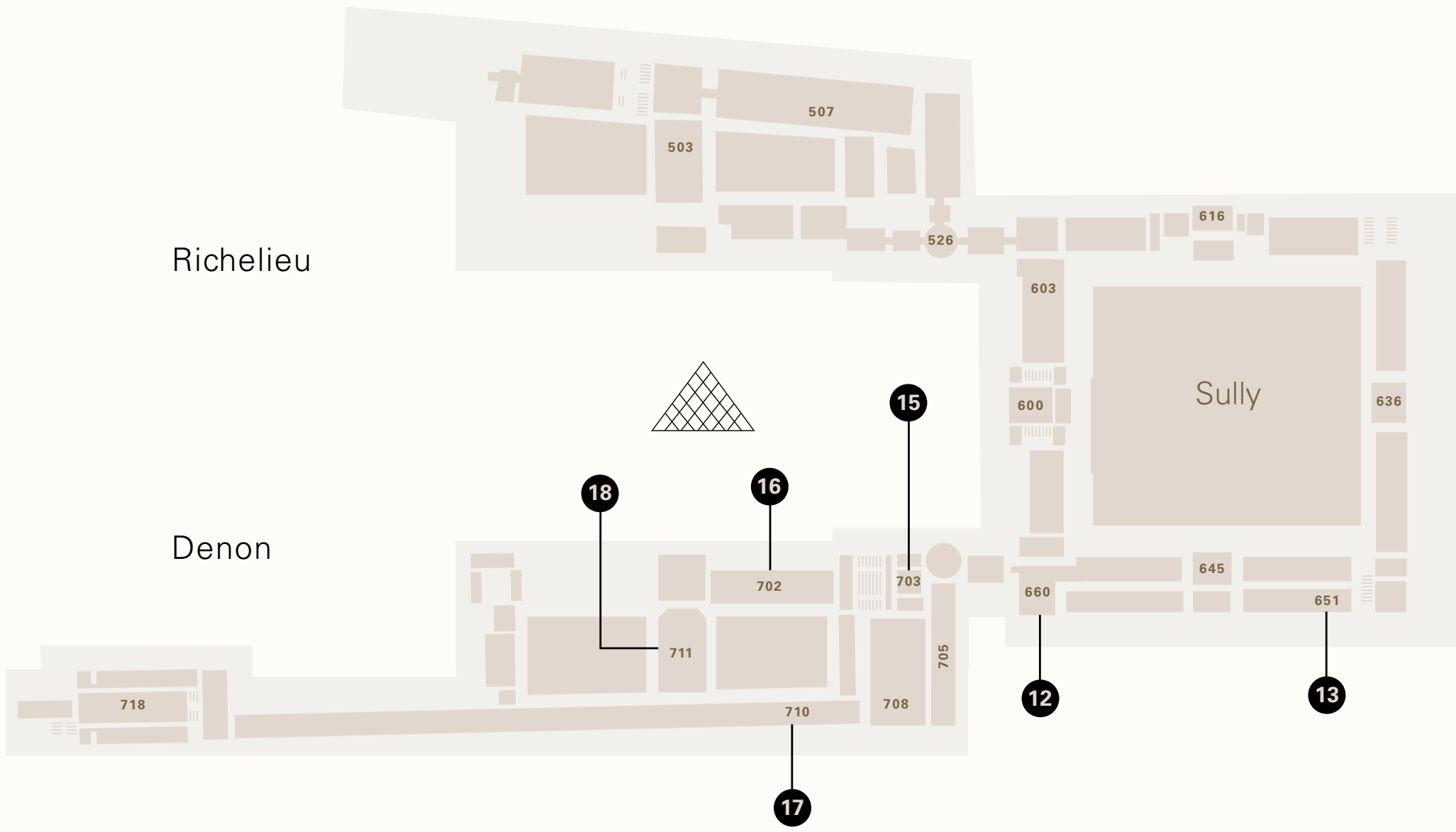
Explore the 'In the Words of Athletes' selection in the museum galleries

IN THE WORDS OF ATHLETES

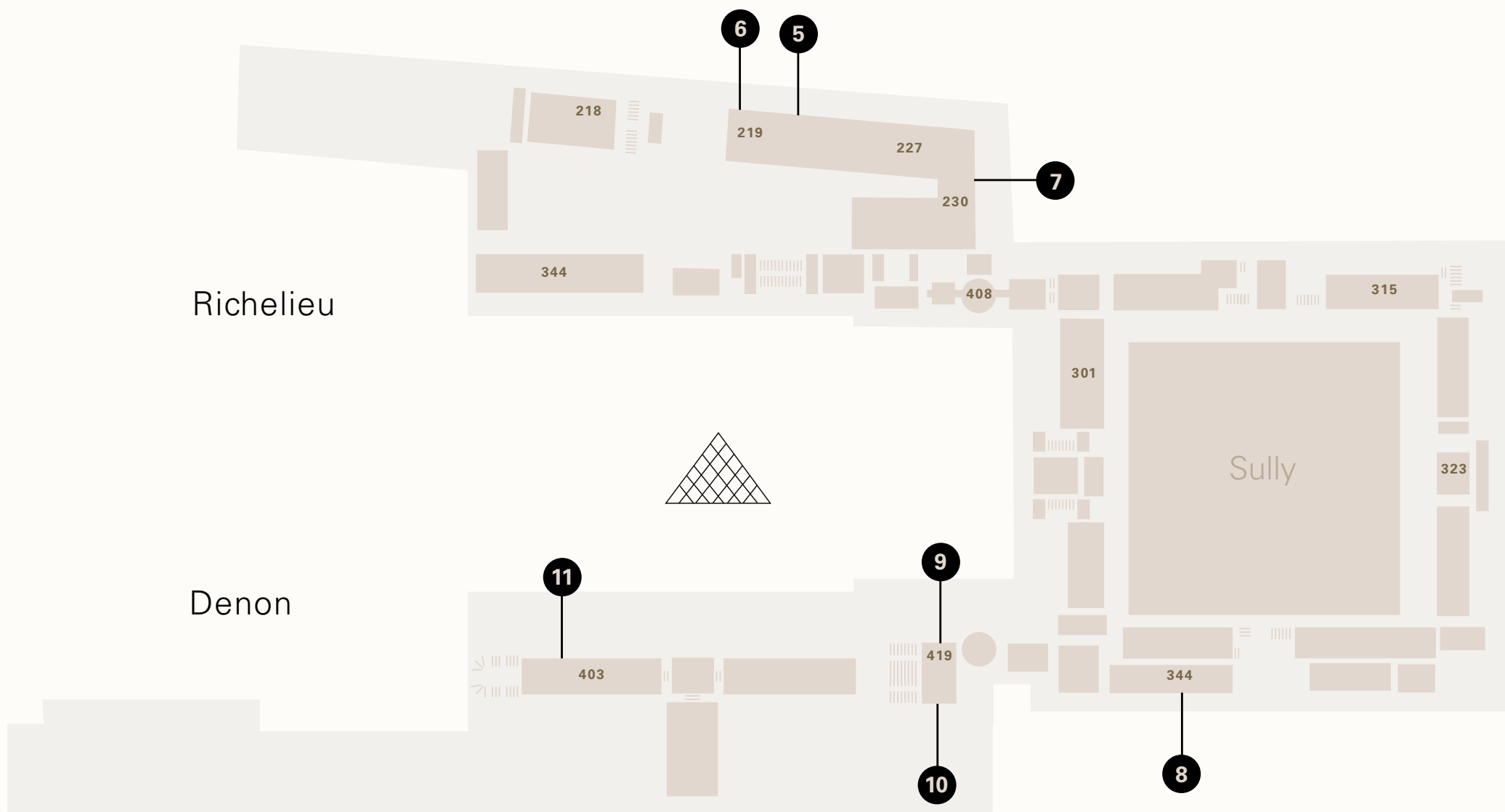
Interactive map



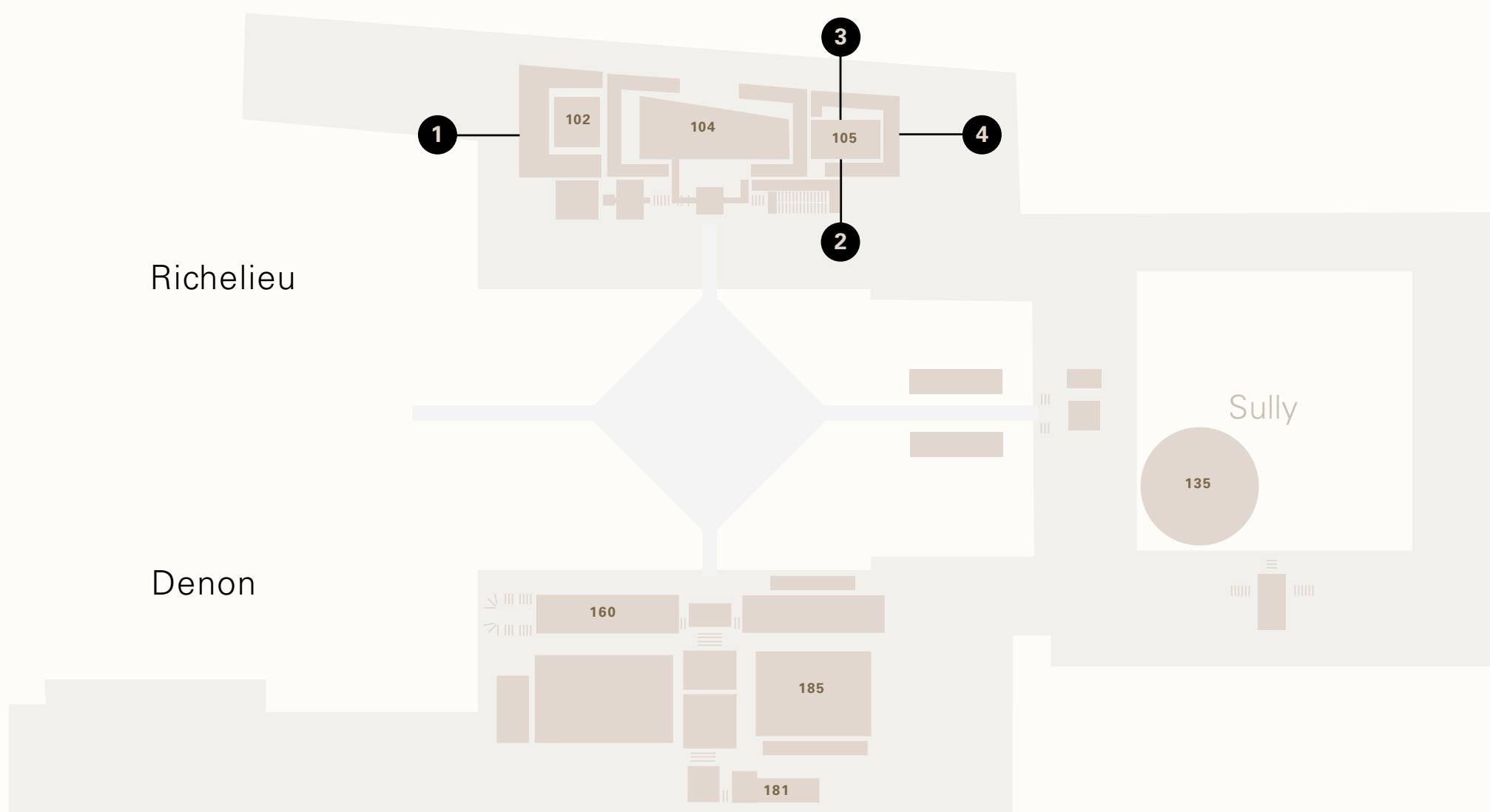
2 Level
Sully, Richelieu



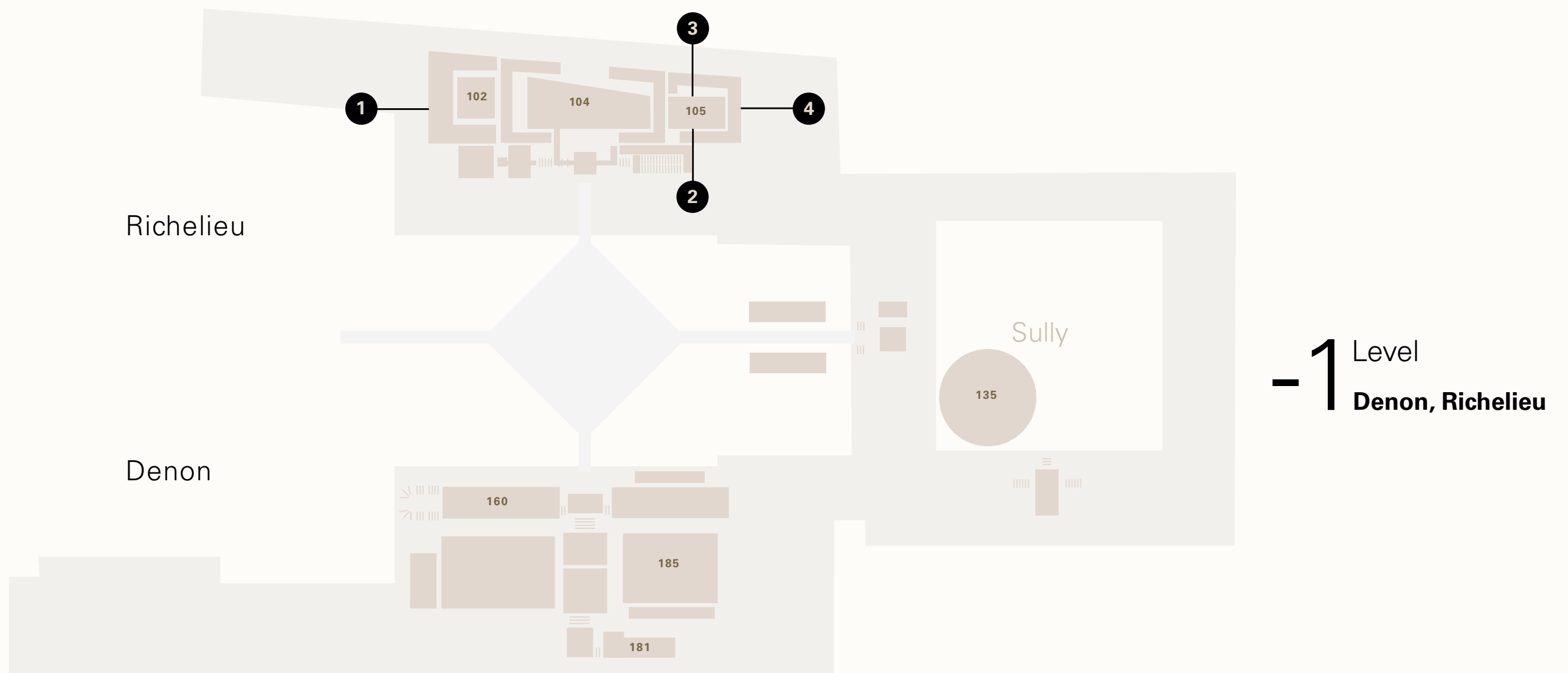
1 Level
Denon, Sully, Richelieu



0 Level
Denon, Sully, Richelieu



-1 Level
Denon, Richelieu



1



Hippomenes, (1711–1712)
Guillaume Coustou

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Tony Querrec

2



The Victory of Saint-Gothard, (about 1685)
Jean Regnaud

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ René-Gabriel Ojéda

3



Milo of Croton, (1672–1682)
Pierre Puget

© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais
/ Philippe Fuzeau

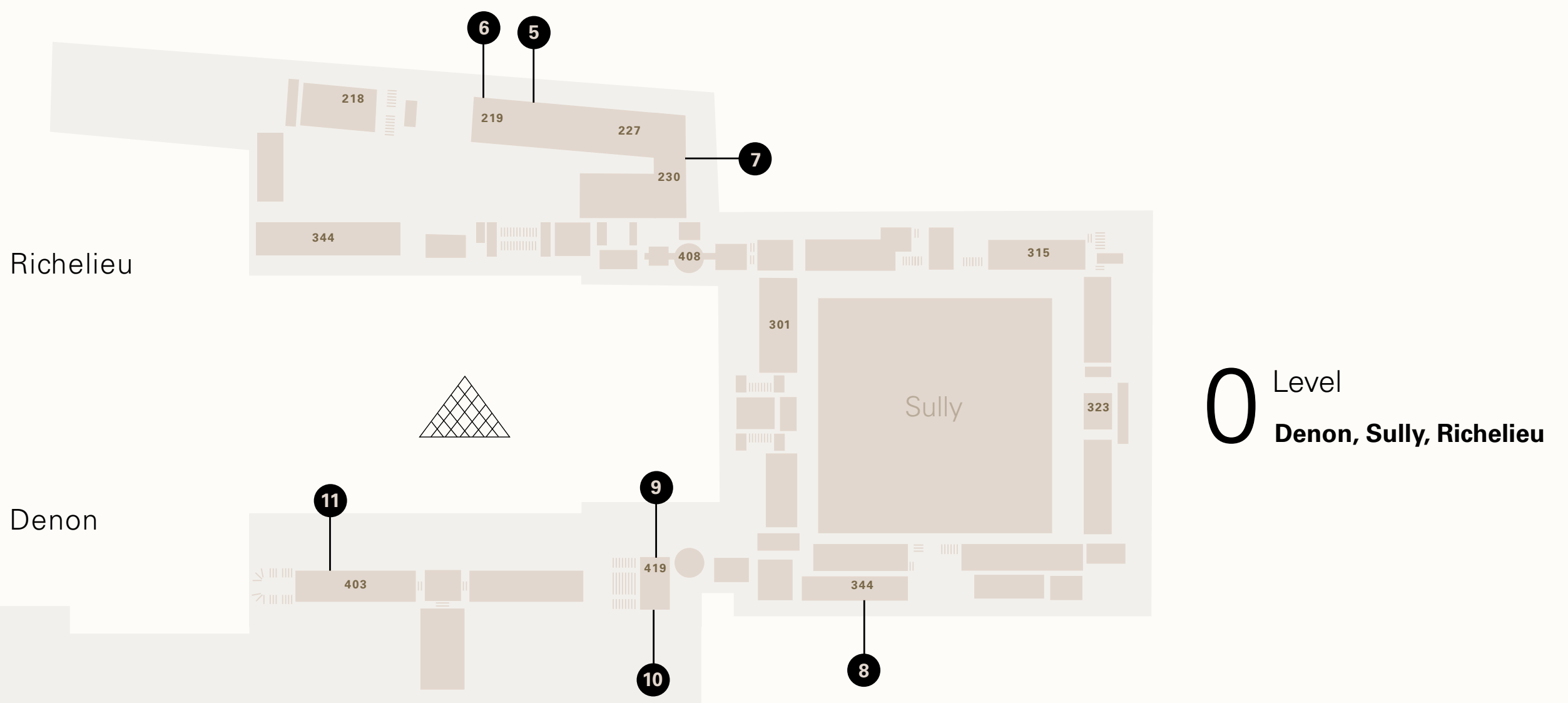
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The Soldier of Marathon, (1834)
Jean-Pierre Cortot

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
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Standing Écorché, (1776)
Jean Antoine Houdon,
Pierre Philippe Thomire

© 2022 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

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Milon de Crotoné, (1754)
Étienne Maurice Falconet

© 2007 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Pierre Philibert

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Orthostat depicting two archers, (about 744–727 BC)
Artist unknown

© GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

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Hermes Richelieu also known as ***Mercure Richelieu***,
(125–150)
Artist unknown

© 2003 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Etienne Revault

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Figurine of a Discus Thrower,
(about 450 BC)
Artist unknown

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

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Krater of the Niobids,
(about 460–450 BC)
Niobid Painter

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

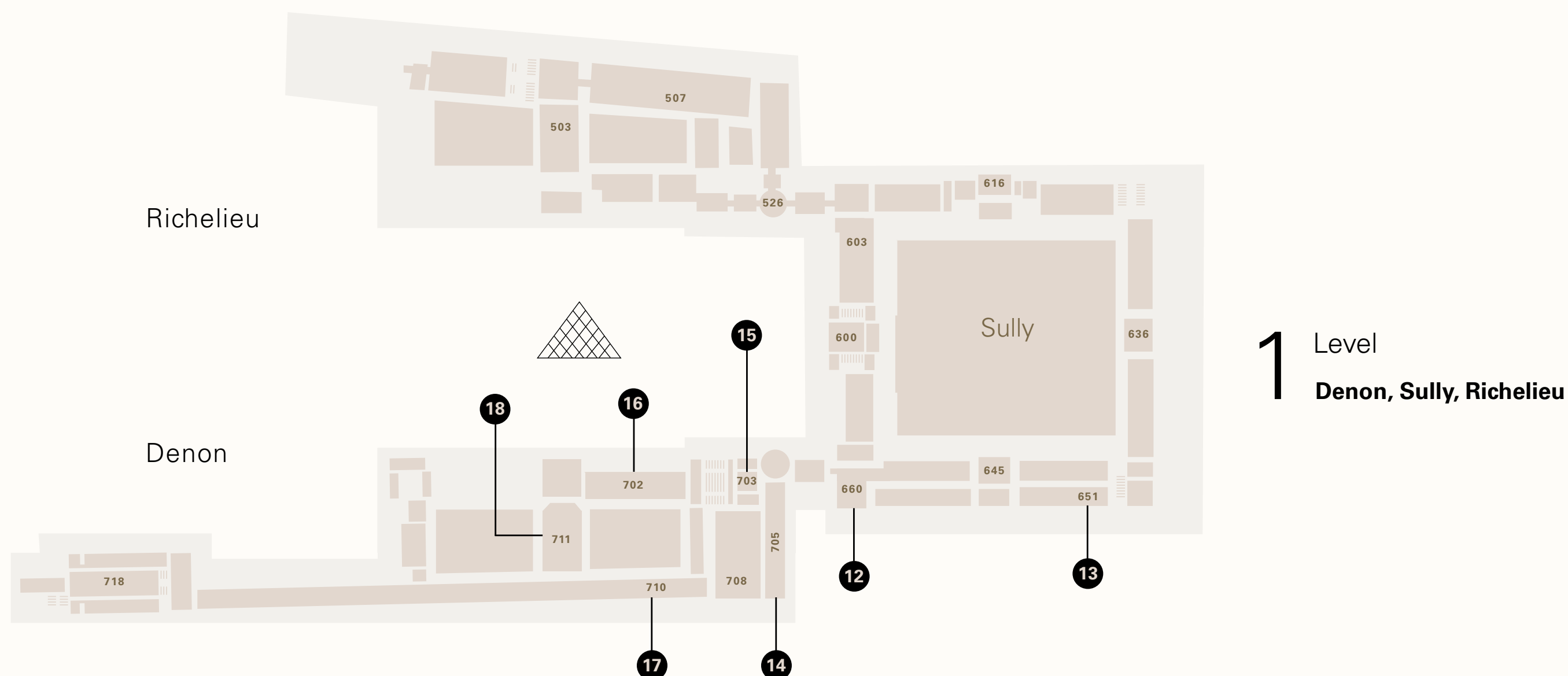
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Cupid and Psyche, (1787–1793)
Antonio Canova

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The Race between Hippomenes and Atalanta, (1765)
Noël Hallé

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

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Oath of the Horatii, (1784)
Jacques-Louis David

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Stéphane Maréchal

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Panathenaic Amphora,
(about 321–320 BC)
Nikomachos Series

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

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Saint Sebastian, (1475–1500)
Andrea Mantegna

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/ René-Gabriel Ojéda

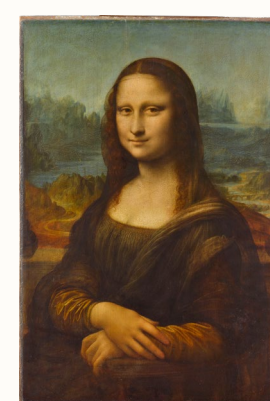
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Crown of Louis XV, (1722)
Augustin Duflos,
Laurent Rondé, Claude Rondé

© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais
/ Martine Beck-Coppola

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Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, known as the Mona Lisa,
(1503–1519)
Leonardo da Vinci

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Michel Urtado

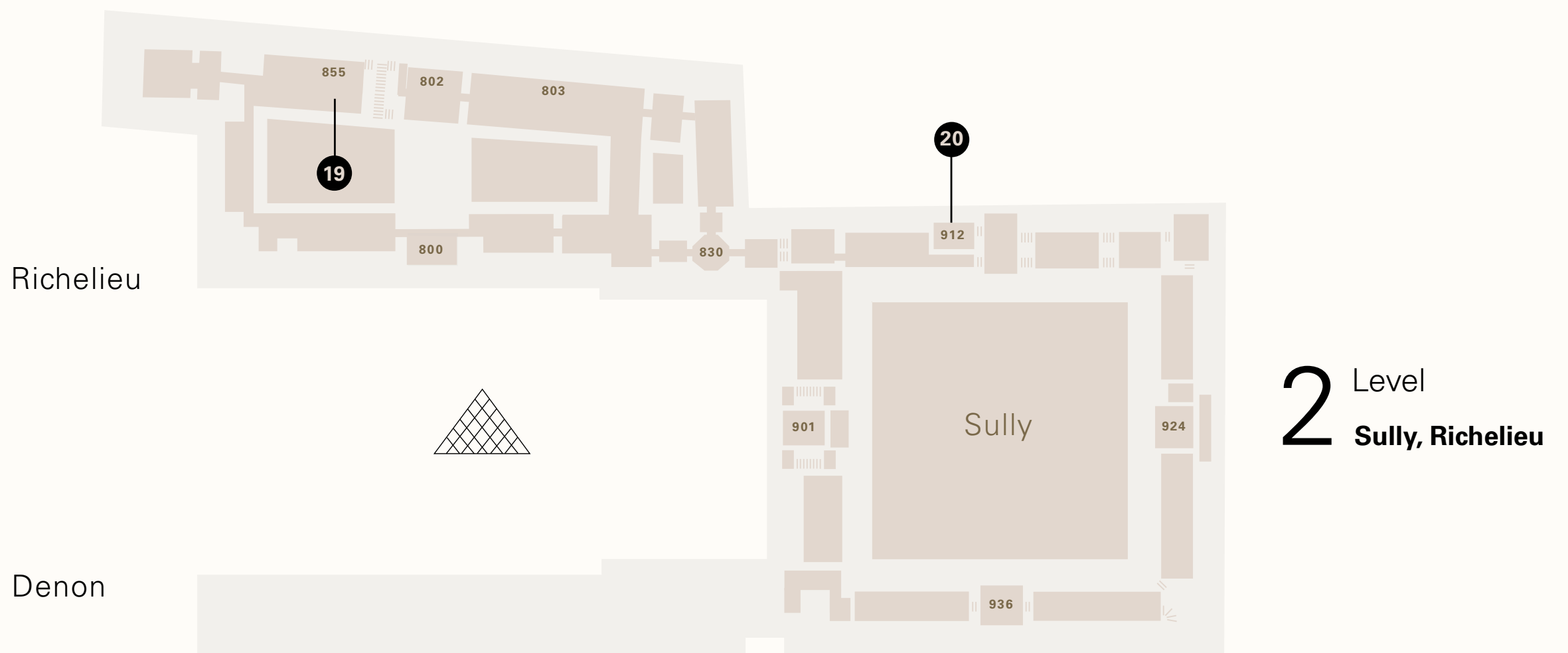
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The Winged Victory of Samothrace,
(about 200–175 BC)
Artist unknown

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Benoît Touchard / Michel Urtado / Tony Querrec

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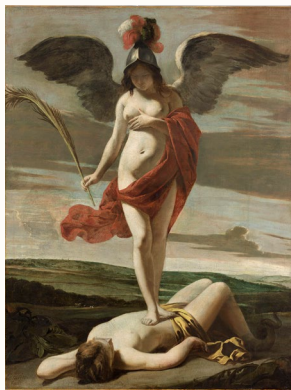
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Tournament in Front of Castle Steen,
(1635–1640)
Peter Paul Rubens

© 2005 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais
/ Angèle Dequier

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Allegory of Victory, (about 1635)
Louis Le Nain

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/ Mathieu Rabeau

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On the occasion of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, the Musée du Louvre invites great athletes to give their perspective on works from our collections that speak to them the most.

Luc Abalo, Handball



Gold medallist in 2008, 2012 and 2021 Olympics

World champion, 2009, 2011, 2017

Painter

© Aurore Fouchez

Hippomenes

(1711–1712)

Guillaume Coustou



1

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/Tony Querrec

‘I have always been fascinated by the process of giving shape and movement to a simple block of raw stone. Hippomenes’ way of holding the apple and throwing it reminds me of a handballer’s throwing stance. His expression makes me feel the effort behind the movement. Handball is a contact sport – we are pushed and pulled about, requiring even more energy.’

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Caroline Lopez, Archery



World Archery Championship medallist in 2021 and 2023

© Morgan Bove

The Victory of Saint-Gothard

(about 1685)

Jean Regnaud



2

© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)
/ René-Gabriel Ojéda

‘To me, this medallion evokes the feeling of winning a competition. In this work, the victor tramples what remains of the losers’ weapons. Symbolically, this represents all the competitors we have surpassed to achieve victory.’

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Lilian Thuram, Football



FIFA World Cup 1998

UEFA European Championship 2000

President, Fondation Lilian Thuram-
Éducation Contre le Racisme

© Yasuyoshi chiba afp

Milo of Croton

(1672–1682)

Pierre Puget



3

© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais
/ Philippe Fuzzeau

‘Milo of Croton, a famous Greek athlete of the 6th century BC, won many wrestling competitions. He was said to be unrivalled and was awarded the victor’s crown many times. In his old age, he challenged himself to split an old oak with his fist alone. His hand was trapped in the tree’s bark and he was devoured by wolves (here replaced by a lion). His last challenge killed him. He had not accepted the coming of old age. He did not recognise his limits, though we all must accept ours in the end. Is not humility before the passage of time a sign of wisdom?’

Matthieu Péché, Canoe



Medallist in 2016 Olympic Games

ICF Canoe Slalom World Champion 2017

Manager, CS-GO team, Team Vitality
(French e-sport club)

© Canoephoto

‘We are watching an unequal combat, but are unable to reason with the athlete. To keep him from the fray would be to kill him. To fight, to accept ambitious challenges and to shine through victory – that is his reason for living. The wrestler is giving himself over to his last match, against a ferocious adversary who will devour him, but he will remain worthy to the end and die on the playing field he loved.’

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© Yasuyoshi chiba afp

The Soldier of Marathon

(1834)

Jean-Pierre Cortot



4

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ René-Gabriel Ojéda

‘The feat that gave its name to the marathon was not an athletic, but a martial victory: the messenger who ran from Marathon to Athens to announce it died of his exertion. 25 centuries later, it became the supreme contest of the Games. War was the ancestor of athletics, which therefore were almost exclusively reserved to men. In 1912, Pierre de Coubertin claimed that the participation of women would be *‘impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic, and we dare add – improper’*. While today male and female athletes have almost achieved parity in number of participants, how long will it be before the same can be said of their global reach, or of parity among sports executives and policymakers? And, more generally, of parity in society?’

Matthieu Péché, Canoe



Medallist in 2016 Olympic Games

ICF Canoe Slalom World Champion 2017

Manager, CS-GO team, Team Vitality
(French e-sport club)

© Canoephoto

‘This work reminds me of the thrill of effort and the satisfaction of accomplishing what you set out to do. The raised arm is a sign of victory, despite a sprawled position that shows how exhausting this ordeal has been for the runner. In the face of approaching death, he looks ahead. I feel he is turning towards the future, opening the way to other, personal challenges to be faced. Did sports addiction exist even then?’

IN THE WORDS OF ATHLETES

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Nathalie Dechy, Tennis



WTA ranked 11, 2006

Winner, Roland-Garros mixed doubles, and two-time champion of the US Open women's doubles

International Relations Manager, French Tennis Federation

© FFT

Standing Écorché

(1776)

Jean Antoine Houdon,
Pierre Philippe Thomire



5

© 2022 Musée du Louvre, dist. GrandPalaisRmn /Thierry Olivier

'This écorché is fascinating: in the period it was created, it was used as a model to explain anatomy.

It can easily be connected to the world of athletics.

Athletes constantly seek out information that might improve their results. Their bodies are tools, machines, designed for ultimate performance. Athletes work on their bodies, strengthen them, torture them! They develop their muscles to be strong, explosive, flexible. They are experts who understand their bodies and watch out for injury, finding its causes to better avoid it. Women athletes also consider aesthetics and harmony. They are even more aware of their muscular structure.'

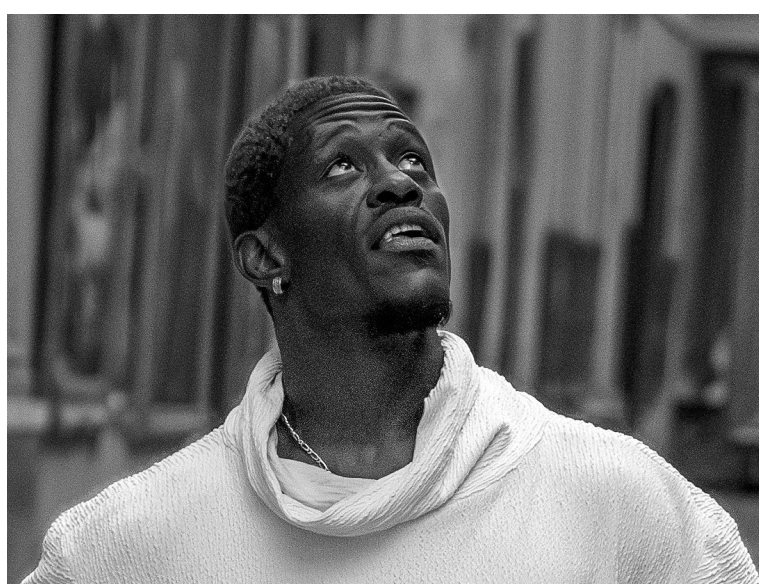
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IN THE WORDS OF ATHLETES

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Dany Dann, Breaking



Olympic qualifier, Paris 2024

© sbk/clementgonthier

Milo of Croton

(1754)

Étienne Maurice Falconet



6

© 2007 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Pierre Philibert

‘This statue, whose body dances with pain in the claws of a lion, transports me into the reality of breaking, now recognised as an Olympic sport.

This athlete exemplifies fighting spirit and surpassing one’s limits. He could be a model for us breakers. Like wrestling, breaking requires strength, extreme flexibility and an acute observation of one’s adversary. Milo fights like a lion and against a lion, a battle he cannot win. Vanity has overcome excellence. The work reminds us of the line we cannot cross when we are caught up in the ‘show’ of our discipline. Let’s dance, let’s win, with enough self-respect and humility to know that one day we must stand as an example, rather than petrified by the fear of being forgotten.’

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Caroline Lopez, Archery



World Archery Championship medallist
in 2021 and 2023

© Morgan Bove

Orthostat depicting two archers

(about 744–727 BC)

Artist unknown



7

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

‘This is a strange way to represent an archer! The sculptor probably didn’t have an archer present to inspire him and allow him to reproduce reality. Just try to shoot an arrow that way: first, it won’t go very far and, more importantly, you will almost certainly lose an ear.’

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Luc Abalo, Handball



Gold medallist in 2008, 2012
and 2021 Olympics

World champion, 2009, 2011, 2017

Painter

© Aurore Fouchez

Hermes Richelieu also known as ***Mercure Richelieu***

(125–150)

Artist unknown



8

© 2003 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Etienne Revault

‘From early on I wanted to be an artist. My passion for art stayed with me throughout my athletic career. I sometimes visited the Louvre to copy and draw. Here, I love the representation of human anatomy. I admire the elegance of the cape held to the side, the athletic physique. The athlete’s body doesn’t need to be particularly beautiful, but rather effective. The goal is not to achieve perfection, because perfection doesn’t exist.’

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IN THE WORDS OF ATHLETES

On the occasion of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, the Musée du Louvre invites great athletes to give their perspective on works from our collections that speak to them the most.

Emmeline Ndongue, Basketball



Silver medallist, basketball tournament, 2012 Summer Olympics, London

Gold medallist, EuroBasket, 2009

Working on outreach programmes for education, gender parity, inclusion and health through sports

© Olivier D'almeida

Figurine of a Discus Thrower

(about 450 BC)

Artist unknown



9

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

'The arched back, the horizontal discus, the bent legs, the straining muscles... We see the intense focus of the discus thrower. Nevertheless, the position of his hands is puzzling. Is this the beginning or the end of a throw? Has he just taken up the discus or is he about to hurl it full speed? Throwing a discus from that position is no easy exercise. And yet we can almost see the discus take flight.'

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Caroline Lopez, Archery



World Archery Championship medallist
in 2021 and 2023

© Morgan Bove

Krater of the Niobids

(460–450 BC)

Niobid Painter



10

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

‘This depiction of the twin divinities Artemis and Apollo drawing their bows is very exact and faithful to an archer’s technique. The precision of the two figures’ positioning strikes me as very realistic.’

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© Olivier D'almeida

Cupid and Psyche

(1787–1793)

Antonio Canova



11

© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Raphaël Chipault

‘Like Psyche who surmounts every task imposed on her to find Cupid again, the athlete tirelessly dedicates her energy, heart and spirit to the service of her art.

On the brink of exhaustion, roiled by emotions only she who has given her all can understand, she embraces and is embraced by her beloved.

This is the moment the athlete lives for: the moment when time stands still, when effort and sacrifice, freely given, produce individual and collective victory. A moment of grace shared with one’s peers.’

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Gold medallist in 2008, 2012
and 2021 Olympics

World champion, 2009, 2011, 2017

Painter

© Aurore Fouchez

The Race between Hippomenes and Atalanta

(1765)

Noël Hallé



© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

12

‘As a painter, I am struck by the way the light enters this painting, the use of colours. And I’m impressed by the painter’s ability to tell a story, to sum it up in a single image, to suggest a trajectory without showing it. My eyes are drawn to the crowd, especially the seated figure in red, on the right. In this scene, as in athletics, the spectators are part of the spectacle. During a match, they observe us, judge us, support us. They contribute to our achievement.’

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Matthieu Pécché, Canoe



Medallist in 2016 Olympic Games

ICF Canoe Slalom World Champion 2017

Manager, CS-GO team, Team Vitality
(French e-sport club)

© Canoephoto

Panathenaic Amphora

(about 321–320 BC)

Nicomachus Series



13

© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

‘Although we now have three places at the podium, sponsors and financial bonuses, the cult of first place and (eternal?) glory persists. While the actual prize awarded to ancient Athenian athletes (an amphora full of sacred olive oil) was trivial in itself, it seems to me to have been a symbol of social mobility in ancient Greek culture. The winner could sell the contents.’

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ICF Canoe Slalom World Champion 2017

Manager, CS-GO team, Team Vitality
(French e-sport club)

© Canoephoto

Crown of Louis XV

(1722)

Augustin Duflos,

Laurent Rondé, Claude Rondé



14

© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais
/ Martine Beck-Coppola

‘What the crown is to a king, the medal is to an athlete. A ruler is not really a king until his coronation and an athlete is recognised only when he or she has won a medal. The person has not changed but the object (crown or medal) raises its wearer to the rank of model.’

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Lilian Thuram, Football



FIFA World Cup 1998

UEFA European Championship 2000

President, Fondation Lilian Thuram-
Éducation Contre le Racisme

© Yasuyoshi chiba afp

The Winged Victory of Samothrace

(about 200–175 BC)

Artist unknown



15

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Benoît Touchard / Michel Urtado /
Tony Querrec

‘What price would you pay to stand among the winners? They are given everything: wealth, power, honours... Winners fascinate us. The greatest and most beautiful of victories – is it not to learn to know ourselves and love ourselves, in a world where there is so much pressure to be something other than what we are?’

Matthieu Piché, Canoe



Medallist in 2016 Olympic Games

ICF Canoe Slalom World Champion 2017

Manager, CS-GO team, Team Vitality
(French e-sport club)

© Canoephoto

‘Nike, goddess of victory, inspired a brand that has taken a key position in the world of sports. For me, this work, discovered in Samothrace, is a symbol of freedom. It is one of my favourites in the Louvre, probably because it includes an element that is essential to me as a canoeist: water. And she also has wings that let her fly wherever she wants – what a dream!’

Caroline Lopez, Archery



World Archery Championship medallist
in 2021 and 2023

© Morgan Bove

‘When I look at the Winged Victory of Samothrace, I immediately think of the relief on the back of the Olympic medal showing Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. From the celebration of a naval victory to that of an Olympic competition, the same symbol has persisted over time.’

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World Archery Championship medallist
in 2021 and 2023

© Morgan Bove

Oath of the Horatii

(1784)

Jacques-Louis David



© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Stéphane Maréchal

‘I associate this work with the moment before the competition. It reminds me of the honour we feel at the idea of representing our country, like the Horatii making their oath to their father to fight with courage, regardless of consequences. They vow to give the best of themselves, whatever the cost.’

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President, Fondation Lilian Thuram-
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© Yasuyoshi chiba afp

Saint Sebastian

(1475–1500)

Andrea Mantegna



17

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ René-Gabriel Ojéda

‘On 4 April 1968, the day Martin Luther King was assassinated, a photograph entitled *The Passion of Muhammad Ali* was published in an American magazine: it showed the boxing champion with his hands bound behind his back, his body pierced by arrows. Muhammad Ali signified through this image that he was a martyr, like the Roman centurion Sebastian, martyred for his faith. In the name of his religion, he refused to be drafted to fight in Vietnam. He always used his fame to serve the struggle for Black civil rights, for justice, against white supremacy. So, who are the martyrs of today?’

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© Yasuyoshi chiba afp

Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, known as the Mona Lisa

(1503–1519)

Leonardo da Vinci



18

© RMN - Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Michel Urtado

‘Why is this painting the all-round world champion in the category of art? Like the winner of the men’s 100 metres on the first step of the Olympic podium, the one everybody wants to be photographed with to capture a bit of his aura? The theft of the Mona Lisa made her famous. Fame is what makes the star; a star so super she dazzles and blinds visitors to all other works of art. Behind her glass shield, she cannot be touched. Her inaccessibility fascinates. We keep her photo religiously on our phones. Have you seen the Louvre’s other gems? Do you see the pearls, the human beings around you?’

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Gold medallist in 2008, 2012 and 2021 Olympics

World champion, 2009, 2011, 2017

Painter

© Aurore Fouchez

Tournament in Front of Castle Steen

(1635–1640)

Peter Paul Rubens



19

© 2005 Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Angèle Dequier

‘This painting is a time machine. The light suggests day’s end. I admire the depiction of the horses and riders. Their movement shows the intensity of the competition. I pay special attention to technique and the artist’s process in this work, as well as in the carnival scene also exhibited in this room. To appreciate it, we must open our minds, use our imagination and make our own movie out of what we see!’

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Silver medallist, basketball tournament, 2012 Summer Olympics, London

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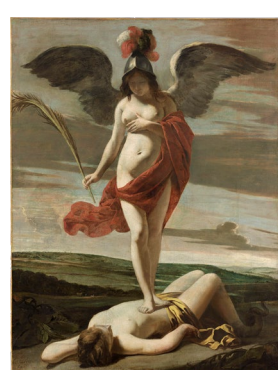
Working on outreach programmes for education, gender parity, inclusion and health through sports

© Olivier D'almeida

Allegory of Victory

(about 1635)

Louis Le Nain



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'Victory is beautiful, radiant, commanding. But she crushes neither the work nor her adversary, upon whom she gazes with a sort of compassion. She observes him carefully, perhaps trying to understand this vulnerable creature bearing the attributes of deceit and treachery. If she does not remain on her guard, he will degrade all her splendour. To prevail, one must recognise and beware of one's own weaknesses. And remember that to plan to cheat is to lose the battle before it has begun.'

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