



La cour Puget © 2010 Musée du Louvre / Angèle Dequier

SECRET TREASURES OF THE RICHELIEU WING

LOUVRE

Introduction

In addition to its great unmissable masterpieces like the Mona Lisa or the Venus de Milo, the Louvre hosts a multitude of marvels, less well known but just as extraordinary.

This trail invites you to explore the Richelieu wing for a journey through space and time, leading you from the gardens of Louis XIV to the galas of the Second Empire by way of the ancient cities of Mesopotamia.



La cour Puget © 2010 Musée du Louvre / Angèle Dequier



**Enter through the Richelieu wing.
Go straight through to the vaulted hall.
Turn right between the pillars to enter
the Cour Puget (room 105).**

The Cour Puget

1

Room 105
Richelieu wing
Level -1

Le As for the name Puget, it was given in homage to a great sculptor of the 17th century: Pierre Puget. In fact, he created the work that you are about to see.



La cour Puget © 2010 Musée du Louvre / Angèle Dequier

Cour Marly

This courtyard, like its neighbour the Cour Marly, is one of the iconic features of the Louvre. Once open to the sky, they were glassed over in the 1990s. The works exhibited here formerly adorned Parisian squares and royal gardens. They are now sheltered from the elements beneath this magnificent skylight.

On the lower level, we see works from the era of Louis XIV, originally features of great Parisian squares like the Place Vendôme and the Place des Victoires. On the middle level, these statues and vases were created for the royal gardens, particularly those of Versailles, during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV.



Take the stairs to your left to reach the middle level.
Turn towards the sculpture in the centre of the court,
which depicts a man being attacked by a lion.

A Lesson in Humility

2

Room 105
Richelieu wing
Level -1

Expressing Pain :

Puget's treatment makes pain visible not only on Milo's features but also in every detail of his body. This pain is moral as well as physical. The cup on the ground, won in an athletic contest, is the symbol of a transient glory.



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



Pierre Puget, Milo of Croton © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Philippe Fuzeau

**Pierre Puget, *Milon of Croton*,
1671-1682, marble**

'The poor man! How he suffers!'

That was how Queen Marie-Thérèse, wife of Louis XIV, reacted to this work.

Milo of Croton was a famous athlete of antiquity, an unrivalled wrestler who won the Olympic Games multiple times. He wanted to show that age had not affected his strength, and tried to split a tree trunk with his bare hands. But, overconfident and over the hill, he couldn't pull his hand out again. Trapped, he was devoured by wolves.

The sculptor Pierre Puget chose to replace the wolves by a lion, a more noble animal.

And rightly so: this *Milo* was meant for Louis XIV. The king found this work to his taste. He gave it a prime place in the central walk of the gardens of Versailles, facing Perseus and Andromeda, which you may see to the left of *Milo*.



**Take the staircase to the left to reach the upper level.
Turn right and follow the handrail to the big bronze lion.**

The Lion and the Serpent

3

Room 105
Richelieu Wing
Level 0

Another Interpretation:

A masterpiece of Romantic sculpture, this lion may also be seen as a metaphor for King Louis-Philippe's assumption of power in 1830. The lion is one of the most common royal symbols. Furthermore, the king's accession to the throne took place under the constellations of Leo (the lion) and the Hydra (or serpent).



Louis-Philippe, roi des Français
© 2021 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Mathieu Rabeau



Antoine-Louis Barye, *Lion and Serpent*
© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Thierry Olivier

**Antoine-Louis Barye, *Lion with serpent*,
cast in 1835, bronze.**

You can almost hear him roar. This bronze lion impresses by his size and realism and the intensity of the moment represented. The serpent rears up, ready to attack, while the lion tenses, ready to parry. The sculptor, indeed, slightly exaggerated his muscles to underline the fierceness of the battle..

In the 1830s, artists had never depicted animals this way – that is, until the arrival of Antoine-Louis Barye. The sculptor spent much time at the zoo of the Jardin des Plantes, observing the animals. Together with the painter Eugène Delacroix (*Liberty Leading the People*), he studied and sketched them. With Barye, the animal became the main subject of the work, and not merely an element of the setting.



**Take the steps to the left of the lion (room 236).
Turn left and go into the next room (room 234).**

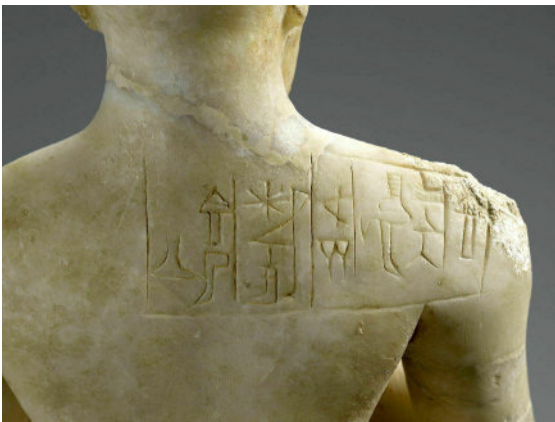
Ebih-II, of Mari

4

**Room 234
Richelieu Wing
Level 0**

Dedication:

An inscription may be seen on his shoulder: Ebih-II dedicated this statue to Ishtar Virile, the goddess of love. Ishtar is one of the most important divinities in the mythology of the ancient East.



Ebih II, détail de l'épaule © 2009 Musée du Louvre / Raphaël Chipault



Ebih II © 2011 Musée du Louvre / Raphaël Chipault

**Statue of the nu-banda Ebih-II,
about 2400 BC,
Alabaster, shell, lapis lazuli, black clay.**

This intense blue gaze in lapis lazuli against a background of shell underlined with black clay is that of Ebih-II. Around 2340 BC, he was a 'nu-banda' or superintendent, an important position including political and military responsibilities. He worked in Mari, in present-day Syria, in an era when the Eastern world was organised into realms ruled by princes or kings. Ebih-II wears a kaunakès, a skirt with long tufts of wool, worn by both men and women. He is seated, his hands joined, in a praying or 'orant' position.

This type of statue was set up in temples in order to perpetuate an act of devotion towards a divinity. The scale and dimensions of these statues vary according to the wealth of the commissioner. That of Ebih-II is of extraordinary quality and in an excellent state of preservation.



**Take the steps and turn left (room 228).
Walk through the room and go down the steps to
enter the next room (room 227).**

Nemo Censetur Ignorare Legem (No One Is Considered to Be Ignorant of the Law)



Code de Hammurabi, roi de Babylone © 2009 RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux

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**Room 227
Richelieu Wing
Level 0**

Lex talionis:

'If a man . . . gouges out the eye of a freeman, his eye shall be gouged out. If someone breaks the tooth of a freeman, one of his teeth shall be broken.' This is the same lex talionis found later in the Bible: 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.'

**Law Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon,
1792–1750 BC, basalt**

Drawing close to this great basalt stela, we see thousands of characters inscribed on its surface. This is one of the most important testimonies of the political and social history of Mesopotamia: it is one of the oldest legal texts, far earlier than the laws of the Bible.

Hammurabi, King of Babylon, had several similar stelae carved for distribution throughout his realm. All could read (or have read to them) the 300-odd articles of law inscribed in cuneiform writing and the Akkadian language.

It is, in fact, a list of examples of judgements establishing the sanctions applied to a great variety of crimes and misdemeanours, in domains as varied as family life, agriculture, commerce and administration.

The text concludes with a vow to transmit these words down through the ages. A vow fulfilled!



Facing the stela, continue through the door in front of you to the left to enter the next room: the Cour Khorsabad (room 229).

Inside an Assyrian Palace

6

Room 229
Richelieu Wing
Level 0

The five-footed bulls:
They have five feet! In this way they appear at once immobile and in motion. Between their feet, an inscription recalls the work of King Sargon II and curses anyone who harms the palace.



Taureau androcéphale ailé du palais de Sargon, gardien de portes
© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux



The Cour Khorsabad © 2010 Musée du Louvre / Angèle Dequier

The Cour Khorsabad

These great winged bulls with human heads are protective spirits guarding the entrance to the palace of Sargon II.

In the 8th century BC, the Assyrian Empire covered the Near East from Assyria to the north of present-day Iraq. King Sargon II decided to move the capital to Dur-Sharrukin, present-day Khorsabad, near Mosul. There he had a great city and an immense palace built.

One of the courtyards of this palace is evoked here. On the wall reliefs, formerly painted, we see scenes of court life, military campaigns, and protective figures, like the legendary hero Gilgamesh, subduing a lion in his arms.

When Sargon died, his son transferred the capital to Nineveh. Dur-Sharrukin remained unfinished and gradually was abandoned. It was not rediscovered until the 19th century, by French archaeologists.



Take the passage across from the winged bulls to return to room 228.

Exit through the left-hand door.

Turn right and go down the steps (room 234).

Cross rooms 234 and 236.

Take the escalator up one level.

On level 1, go straight on (room 500).

Continue past the café and on towards the room with the turquoise wood panelling (room 535).

Go through the next room (room 536) and exit through the left-hand door.

Once you pass the landing (room 539), head through the right-hand door.

From Palace to Museum: The Minister's Apartments

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Escalier du Ministre Richelieu Wing Level 1

Note:

Despite the name 'Napoleon III Apartments', the emperor never lived here. The reference is to the 'Napoleon III style' of decoration. The emperor and his family resided in the Tuileries Palace, which no longer exists.



Le palais des Tuileries (aujourd'hui disparu)
© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) - Jean Schormans



L'escalier du Ministre
© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN - Grand Palais / Olivier Ouadah

The Private Apartments of the Minister

A completely different atmosphere prevails in the rooms you have just passed through. These interiors have remained unchanged since the Second Empire (1852–1870). At that time, the Louvre was both a seat of power and a museum. In 1861, Napoleon III had just finished building the Richelieu wing. Part of the principal floor was reserved for one of the most important political functions: the Ministry of State. The architecture and interior design are the work of Hector Lefuel.

Even today, this staircase is known as the Escalier du Ministre, or Minister's Staircase. These intimate, cosy little chambers were known as the *petits appartements*, where the minister and his family lived. The *grands appartements*, on the other hand, were for formal receptions.

After the fall of the Second Empire, this wing housed the Ministry of Finance. In 1989, however, the ministry moved to Bercy and the Louvre became entirely and exclusively a museum.



Continue through the following rooms (rooms 540, 541, 542 and 543).

Stop in the Grand Salon (room 544).

A Second Empire Gala



Napoleon III Apartments: the Grand Salon
© Musée du Louvre / Nicolas Guiraud

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Room 544 Richelieu Wing Level 1

A Theatre Salon:

Did you notice the gallery over the passageway leading to the next salon? This was where musicians were placed. If necessary, this large salon could be transformed into a theatre holding nearly 200 guests.



Napoleon III Apartments: the musicians' platform
© 2012 Musée du Louvre / Antoine Mongodin

The Grand Salon and the Theatre Salon

On the decoration and furnishing of this grand salon, Hector Lefuel lavished all the luxury of the Second Empire. Here, the Minister of State gave sumptuous galas for his most prestigious guests. The furniture is both innovative and comfortable: the small chairs in delicate gilt wood can easily be rearranged. The round bourne sofa in the middle of the room invites sitters to loll at their ease. The indiscret, a bizarre triple armchair, encourages intimate three-way conversations. The monumental chandelier weighs 3 tonnes.

The painted ceiling evokes the major construction phases of the Louvre, from François I to Napoleon III.

In the next room, we may admire the portraits of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie. A little farther, the impressive dining room recalls the splendour of formal dinners.



To exit, go back the way you came, through the small apartments (rooms 544 to 535).

Go through room 500 to the escalators.

Go down to level -1.

Turn left to return to the Great Hall under the Pyramid.