

## Press kit

# « From Pompeii to Mariemont » - New Pavilion for the frescoes of Boscoreale





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## FROM POMPEII TO MARIEMONT – THE FRESCOES OF BOSCOREALE

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**After a colossal project, the frescoes of Boscoreale are once again on display at the Royal Museum of Mariemont.** Dating from the middle of the 1st century BC, these masterpieces of ancient Roman painting come from a luxurious country villa discovered in Boscoreale, not far from Vesuvius and Pompeii. The excavations of this Roman villa yielded exceptional wall paintings that are now dispersed in the world's greatest museums, such as the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

The panels preserved in Mariemont are among the most spectacular and since 2020 have been recognised as a "**Classified Treasure of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation**". Acquired by Raoul Warocqué in 1903, these frescoes have recently undergone an impressive restoration by the Centre d'Étude des Peintures Murales Romaines of the City of Soissons. Dozens of experts were mobilised for this ambitious project financed by the Baillet Latour Fund, thanks to the support of the King Baudouin Foundation.

The restored paintings are now installed in a new pavilion with clean lines and majestic volumes designed by the architects of Studio SNCDA and the artist Richard Venlet. The resolutely contemporary scenography reinterprets the spaces of the Roman villa, subtly alternating perspective and light. **This new presentation can be discovered at Mariemont from 25 June 2022.**

Professor **Massimo Osanna, Director General of the Italian Museums** and Honorary Director of the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, is the guest of honour at Mariemont and will be present at the press conference on the morning of 24 June.

### **A weekend of activities is organised on 25 & 26 June 2022**

#### **Saturday 25th June**

2.30-6pm: **meeting** with cultural mediators in the halls (free of charge and without reservation).

2pm-4pm: **art workshop** with the creation of a stencil with the motifs of the frescos. 4.5 € / person (reservation required: [mediation@mariemont.be](mailto:mediation@mariemont.be)).

#### **Sunday 26 June**

10.30 am: **lecture** by Prof. Alexandra Dardenay (Toulouse II Jean Jaurès University) reserved for the Friends of Mariemont.

2pm-4pm: "Les fresques Kesako? - **Visit, workshop and snack for families** (4.5 € / adult and 2.5 € / child; reservation required: [mediation@mariemont.be](mailto:mediation@mariemont.be)).

On the occasion of the opening of the new pavilion, the Royal Museum of Mariemont is proud to offer a **special edition of the "museum pass"**. This pass will be on sale from 1 June to 31 December 2022.

## THE FRESCOES OF BOSCOREALE: HISTORY, RESTORATION AND NEW SCENOGRAPHY

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### HISTORY

**The frescoes of Boscoreale** were discovered in 1900, during excavations carried out by Vincenzo De Prisco in the municipality of Boscoreale, **at the foot of Mount Vesuvius**. These frescoes decorated the walls of a luxurious country villa, known as the one of "Publius Fannius Synistor", after the name of one of its supposed owners. They date back to the middle of the 1st century BC and are very refined, with typical architectural decorations and perspective effects of the 2nd Pompeian style.

After their discovery, the paintings were quickly removed from the walls and sold at auction. The sale took place in Paris in 1903 and included **46 exceptional frescoes**. No less than nine buyers were to share this treasure. On the advice of his historian friend Franz Cumont, **Raoul Warocqué bought eight panels** that constitute one of the most important sets of ancient wall paintings. Raoul Warocqué was one of the main buyers, **along with the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of New York**.



The frescoes were transported to Mariemont three days after the sale. They were first exhibited in a small pavilion in the park, before being moved to one of the new wings of the **castle** built between 1909 and 1914. In 1952, they were restored for the first time by the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro (ICR) in Rome. In 1975, following the construction of the new museum, they were displayed in a small, **specialty equipped cabinet**.

In 2007, a condition report detected the presence of **alterations** and made it possible to envisage a **new restoration**. This operation was carried out between 2016 and 2019 by the Centre d'Étude des Peintures Murales Romaines de Soissons (CEPMR). A new scenography was designed in parallel by the artist Richard Venlet and the Brussels architecture studio SNCDA. On 3 June 2020, the frescoes were classified as a **"Treasure of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles"**.

## RESTORATION

The restoration project lasted **more than three years**. It was entrusted in 2016 to the CEPMR, one of the most reputable and experienced laboratories, in response to the need to remedy conservation problems caused by **previous restoration operations**.



As of 1900, the frescoes had been placed on **oak frames**, according to the practices of the time. The decors had been extensively modified before their sale in 1903. Later interventions would further alter the pictorial surface. The products used at the time were not compatible with the original materials, and in particular altered the colors. The wooden support had caused **cracks and deformations**.

At first, CEPMR's work therefore consisted of "**de-restoring**" the paintings. In 2017, the frescoes were removed from their old supports. They were then transferred to laminated honeycomb panels made of aluminum. These lighter supports **meet current conservation requirements** and allow for more museographic possibilities.

The operation was followed by several phases of **treatment of the paint layer**. Modern additions, camouflage and wear of the polychromy were removed in a cleaning process using gels and solvents. The surface elevations were refixed and the old fillings were treated. Gaps were retouched using the **stippling technique**.

Thanks to this state-of-the-art restoration, the paintings are now stabilized. They have **regained their original appearance**, their brilliance and their materiality. The abusive repaints of the past have been replaced by extremely refined but discernible touch-ups that respect all the deontological rules in force.

## NEW SCENOGRAPHY

The restoration of the frescoes allows them to be rediscovered in a new light. This enhancement deserved to be extended by a new scenography. The SNEDA studio and Richard Venlet quickly worked on a visitor journey that would echo the spaces of the ancient villa and the original exhibition areas of the frescoes.

The challenge was to redeploy the frescoes in an immersive space, a real capsule offering a unique experience to visitors. The choice of materials and the degree of lighting contribute fully to the construction of this atmosphere.



The SNCDA studio and Richard Venlet have displayed a real interest in the history of the frescoes from their exhibition in the ancient villa to their latest restoration. They also took into account the architecture of the museum and the spirit of its designer, Roger Bastin. They have thus produced an innovative scenography that subtly reinterprets the spaces of the villa of Boscoreale.

An impression of simplicity emerges from the space through pure lines, the play of light, majestic volumes, lightly textured surfaces, sober colors... A work in itself that does not forget its purpose: to magnify and enhance these exceptional frescoes.

## THE PARTNERS

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**The Royal Domain and Museum of Mariemont would like to thank all the partners who have supported it in the achievement of this vast project.**



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**The restoration operations were made possible by an exceptional sponsorship from the Baillet Latour Fund, obtained through the King Baudouin Foundation.**

**The King Baudouin Foundation** is a public utility foundation that supports projects or people working for a better society. It has been working for over 30 years to safeguard and protect our heritage. Its Heritage Fund acquires art works and historical documents which it promotes and makes accessible to all. With the help of numerous patrons, the Fund has been able to assemble a rich collection over the years. Patrons can contact the Foundation's Philanthropy Centre with their questions and wishes or for advice on how to implement their project. The various possibilities and tools are examined together. For example, the **Baillet Latour Fund** has joined forces with the King Baudouin Foundation for the practical organization of its call for projects.



**King Baudouin Foundation**, [www.kbs-frb.be](http://www.kbs-frb.be) /  
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**Baillet Latour Fund** <https://www.fondsbailletlatour.com>

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## AROUND THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PAVILION

### Activities for the public



**FOR THESE ACTIVITIES, RESERVATION MANDATORY** at the Cultural Mediation Service: + 32 64 27 37 84 or [mediation@mariemont.be](mailto:mediation@mariemont.be)

As from the inauguration, the new frescoes pavilion will be equipped with new mediation devices, including a backlit model and an interactive terminal. A wide range of educational content will be available to visitors.

### The guest of honor at the opening weekend

For the inauguration of the new pavilion, **Professor Massimo Osanna is our guest of honor**. He will give an inaugural lecture, inspired by his latest book, in which he presents the wealth of discoveries made under his direction in Pompeii.



Massimo Osanna is a renowned Italian archaeologist who was the **head of the archaeological park of Pompeii** for 6 years, from 2014 to 2020, . He is currently **Director General of all the museums in Italy for the Ministry of Culture**.



## Limited edition of the MuseumPass in the colors of the frescoes of Boscoreale (1 June – 31 December 2022)

To mark the opening of the new pavilion, the Royal Domain and Museum Mariemont is proud to present a limited edition of the MuseumPass.

This specially decorated card with the motifs of the frescoes is on sale in Mariemont from 1 June to 31 December 2022.

This "special Boscoreale frescoes" MuseumPass gives access to the same advantages as the non-limited series. It's available at the same price and has the same conditions for registering with MuseumPass.



## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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**Address:** 100 Chaussée de Mariemont, 7140 Morlanwelz, Belgium

**Hours:** Museum open Tuesday to Sunday, from 10:00 – 18:00 (April - September) / 10:00 – 17:00 (October). Last entry 45 minutes before closing time.

**Fees:** The **permanent collections** of the Museum are **free**. Temporary exhibitions cost €8 per adult. Other rates and discounts: [www.musee-mariemont.be](http://www.musee-mariemont.be).



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## PRESS CONTACTS

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## THE ROYAL DOMAIN AND MUSEUM OF MARIEMONT

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**The Domain of Mariemont** is at the same time a public park and a historical site, where the romantic ruins of an 18th-century castle are surrounded by exotic trees planted a century ago. At the heart of this verdant oasis is nestled the **Royal Museum of Mariemont**, which, as a scholarly establishment of the French Community of Belgium, preserves, studies and develops the collections of the celebrated industrialist Raoul Warocqué (1870-1917).

Encouraging a journey through times and cultures, it mixes the treasures of the world's greatest civilisations – especially ancient China, Rome, Egypt and the Near East – with those of our own history, that of Hainaut and Belgium.



## SAVE THE DATES

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Don't miss out on our next encounters in the Royal Domain and Museum of Mariemont!

- 25/06 – 26/06/2022: Inauguration week-end of the pavilion for the frescoes of Boscoreale
- 24/09/2022 – 16/04/2023: Exhibition *Egypt. Eternal Passion*
- 08/10 – 09/10/2022: Event - *Explorarium Domain of Mariemont*
- 12/11/2022 – 9/04/2023: Exhibition *Egypt. Eternal Passion - The multiple lives of coffins*