



MUSÉE DE CLUNY
le monde médiéval

PRESS RELEASE
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NICOLAS FLAMEL, ALCHEMIST OF PAPER

The exhibition that deconstructs the legend

Alchemist, immortal, magician, keeper of universal secrets... Nicolas Flamel is one of those medieval figures that capture the imagination. But who is the real man behind the legend? From 13 October 2026 to 24 January 2027, the Musée de Cluny – Musée National du Moyen Âge invites visitors to discover the historical reality of a figure often overshadowed by his legend in the exhibition ‘Nicolas Flamel, Alchemist of Paper’.

The Musée de Cluny houses one of the most tangible vestiges of the life of Nicolas Flamel (1330/1340?-1418): his epitaph. This stone, which intrigues and fascinates visitors, marks the starting point of a three-part exhibition featuring around fifty works, archive documents, artefacts, videos and music.

Drawing on the epitaph and archive documents, the life of Nicolas Flamel unfolds: a 14th-century Parisian burgher, a writer by profession, but also a major benefactor of religious and charitable causes and a shrewd property investor. Among the key artefacts on display in the exhibition is Nicolas Flamel's will, held at the Archives Nationales-fonds Hôpital des 15-20.

The legend of Nicolas Flamel, an alchemist reputed to have discovered the secrets of the philosopher's stone, did not emerge until the end of the 15th century, almost half a century after his death. The exhibition features the *Livre Flamel*, held at the library of Bologna University, which links Flamel's name to alchemy for the first time. Over the centuries, his legend grew, and writings purportedly penned by him began to circulate, including the *Book of Hieroglyphic Figures*, published in 1612.

Nicolas Flamel has become a source of inspiration for artists and creators of all stripes: Victor Hugo makes him Frollo's mentor in his novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*, while André Breton quotes him in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*. At the turn of the 21st century, popular culture embraced the character, who appears in the Harry Potter series.

At the end of the exhibition, a dedicated area invites visitors to explore the life of Nicolas Flamel in greater depth through videos, music clips and a reading space containing a selection of books.

A figure synonymous with Parisian heritage, Nicolas Flamel continues to embody a fascination with lost knowledge, the fringes of science and the promise of the invisible. The exhibition explores all of these facets of the man and the legend.

6 place Paul Painlevé
75005 Paris
T: 01 53 73 78 00

musee-moyenage.fr
@museecluny
Musée de Cluny - musée
national du Moyen Âge

The exhibition 'Nicolas Flamel, Alchemist of Paper' is on display in the 'Salle d'Actualités' of the Musée de Cluny, an exhibition space dedicated to temporary exhibitions showcasing the museum team's latest research.

The exhibition is curated by Maëlys Bitouzet, Registrar; Lora Houssaye, Registrar; Isabelle Leunuque, Documentation Officer; and Solène Sazio, former Documentation Officer at the Musée de Cluny, with research assistance from Romain Tach.

The exhibition has been organised with the special support of the **Bibliothèque nationale de France** and the **Archives Nationales**. It benefited from the generous cooperation of the Hôpital des 15-20, which opened its archives to researchers.

The exhibition is supported by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts.

Millefleurs, the magazine of the Friends of the Musée de Cluny, will unveil its new format this autumn with an issue devoted to the exhibition and magic and alchemy in the Middle Ages, on sale at the museum shop.

About the Musée de Cluny

Located in the heart of the Latin Quarter, the Musée de Cluny is the National Museum of the Middle Ages, inviting visitors to journey through time from the 1st to the 21st centuries. The 15th-century mansion was the private residence of the Abbots of Cluny, and abuts the Gallo-Roman thermal baths. The building now features a contemporary extension, inaugurated in 2018 and designed by architect Bernard Desmoulin.

This unique heritage site houses prestigious collections illustrating the extraordinarily vibrant creations of medieval artistry. From Merovingian jewellery to the Golden Rose, from the great sculpted altarpieces of ancient churches to the superb tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn, the museum is home to 24,000 artefacts of all kinds.

The chronological journey unveils a thousand years of history, showcasing watershed moments such as the spread of Gothic sculpture during the construction of Notre Dame cathedral or the Sainte-Chapelle, as well as innovations such as the development of Limoges enamel or the emergence and mastery of stained glassmaking. Aesthetic differences from the north to the south of Europe are highlighted in fully renovated spaces.

Press Contact :

Mathilde Fouillet

Deputy Director of Communication and Partnerships

mathilde.fouillet@culture.gouv.fr

T. +33 (0) 1 53 73 79 04

P. +33 (0) 6 61 70 13 24

Practical information

Museum entrance :

28 rue Du Sommerard
75005 Paris

Opening times :

Open every day, except Monday,
from 9.30 am to 6.15 pm
Open 1st and 3rd Thursday evening of
the month from 7 to 9 pm
Closed on 25 December, 1 January
and 1 May

Book/gift shop :

9.30 am – 6.15 pm, free entry
Tél. +33 (0) 1 53 73 78 22

Directions :

Métro Cluny-La-Sorbonne/Saint-
Michel/Odéon
Bus n° 21 – 27 – 38 – 63 – 85 – 86 – 87
RER lines B and C Saint-Michel –
Notre-Dame

Prices :

€12, concessions €10
Free for those aged under 26 (EU
citizens or on long stays in the EU) and
for all visitors on the first Sunday of the
month

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