

## MUSÉE DE LA ROMANITÉ

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## PRESS RELEASE



Augustus, Musée Saint-Raymond, Toulouse  
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**From 13 May to 19 September 2021, the Musée de la Romanité—in collaboration with the Musée du Louvre—is staging the first French exhibition devoted entirely to the imperial cult: 'The Roman Emperor, a mortal among the gods'.**

The exhibition traces the origins of the cult of the emperors, a practice started by Augustus, the first emperor of Rome in the 1st century BC. Throughout the exhibition, the public will discover the religious and mythical references that legitimised the power of the emperor and contributed to the construction of his image all over the Empire. At the crossroads between official art, politics and religion, the visit is in two parts with original scenography that affords a view of all the facts of the works.

The first part of the exhibition is devoted to Augustus, during whose reign the 'imperial cult' became established. In the Roman west, the concept covers a broad range of public religious events celebrated with focus on the emperor, considered during his lifetime as being the soul of the State and the guarantor of its prosperity. Although he tended to appear as the intermediary between men and gods and as a providential person, the emperor was nonetheless not considered to be a god. He became divine when he died but his status remained lower than that of the immortal gods.

However, from the reign of Augustus onwards, the imperial power undeniably strengthened its legitimacy on the basis of the religious honours received and the closeness of the emperor to the gods. His image, with a strong presence in Rome, in Italy and the provinces was one of the main vectors of this ideology, taking many forms: statuary, coins, architectural programmes, etc. The name and position of the emperor appeared everywhere in a host of inscriptions.

This presence in the Empire was not imposed unilaterally but was the fruit of a complex mode of communication between local authorities and central power. This dialogue was particularly significant in the 'Narbonnaise' (Gallia Narbonensis), a province where Romanisation was early and whose towns very soon benefited from the favour of Augustus, the founder of imperial power and reorganiser of the state.

The second part of the exhibition focuses on the different forms of the imperial cult in Gallia Narbonensis and the buildings dedicated to it in Vienne, Arles, Béziers and Narbonne. Not far from the museum, two Augustan sites in Nîmes are an invitation for visitors to prolong the exhibition in situ): the Maison Carrée and the Augusteum at the Fountain site. The general public often does not know the originality, historical importance and the political weight of these religious monuments. The exhibition shows them in a broad context by exploring the multiple aspects of the imperial cult.

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*Features accompanying  
the exhibition*

*The exhibition visit will be  
completed by a catalogue and  
several events (workshops,  
guided visits, lectures).  
More information will be  
released shortly...*

This is the first exhibition designed entirely by the Musée de la Romanité since its opening in June 2018. It assembles 149 works of which 30 are loaned by the Musée du Louvre. Furthermore, 64 works from the collections of the Musée de la Romanité and of which 46 have not yet been shown to the public, have been restored for showing on this occasion.

**Thanks to loans from 14 French and Italian museums, the Musée de la Romanité provides an occasion for the public to admire exceptional works whose aesthetic qualities are shown off admirably by the scenography.**

**Exhibition designed following an idea by :**  
**Dominique Darde**, Head Curator of the  
Musée de la Romanité

**Scientific Council**

**Michel Christol**, Emeritus Professor of  
Roman History, Université Paris I  
Panthéon-Sorbonne

**Pierre Gros**, Emeritus Professor of Latin  
Literature and Roman civilisation, member  
of the Institut. Académie des Inscriptions et  
Belles-Lettres

**John Scheid**, Emeritus Professor at the  
Collège de France, Chair of Religion,  
Institutions and Society in Ancient Rome

**Commissionership**

**Manuella Lambert**, Heritage Curator,  
Musée de la Romanité

**Scientific Co-Commissionership**

**Cécile Carrier**, researcher in the Collections  
Department, Musée de la Romanité  
With the collaboration of **Elodie Paris**,  
Doctor of Archaeology of Ancient Worlds,  
Université Paul Valéry - Montpellier 3

**Executive Co-Commissionership and loan  
management**

**Gérard Gory**, Head of the Collections  
Department, Musée de la Romanité  
Assisted by **Raffaella Gafà**, researcher in  
the Collections Department, Musée de la  
Romanité

**Museums loaning works**

**France —**

Musée du Louvre  
Musée départemental Arles  
antique  
Musée Saint-Raymond,  
Toulouse  
Musée d'Archéologie nationale,  
Saint-Germain-en-Laye  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Agen  
Musée archéologique, Saintes  
Musée archéologique, Dijon  
Lugdunum - Musée and Roman  
theatres, Lyon  
Musée NarboVia, Narbonne  
Musée archéologique Henri  
Prades, Lattes  
Museums of Béziers  
Palais de Justice, Nîmes

**Italy —**

Galleria Estense, Modena  
Aquileia Archaeological  
Museum

**The Ministry of Culture, through the heritage administration authority, has awarded the exhibition with 'national interest' status. It has received financial support within this framework.**

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Soutenu  
par

