

# GRUUTHUSE MUSEUM

BRUGGE



PRESS CONFERENCE 28 MAY 2019

## RENOVATED GRUUTHUSEMUSEUM OPENS ITS DOORS

After a five-year closure, the revamped museum opens its doors to give you a taste of Bruges' history.

Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, who gave the impressive Bruges city palace its grandeur, lived in accordance with the motto 'Plus est en vous'. This also instructs how we should view the collection today. Majestic tapestries, colourful stained glass windows, elegant wooden sculptures, historic lace, Burgundian manuscripts and Chinese porcelain; each one of these artefacts has a unique story which brings three periods of Bruges' rich history to life.

Free audio guides take you round the city palace. From the top floor you can admire the panoramic view across Bruges' rooftops and discover museum creations from young people.

It is not only the museum that has been fully renovated; the grounds have also had a complete makeover. The courtyard has been resurfaced, and from the central ticket shop you also get access to the stunning Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk.



## ‘STATELY CITY PALACE IN BRUGES’

***‘The rich and varied Gruuthuse collection is the starting point of the stories the museum wishes to tell.’***

Following a closure of almost five years, on 25 May 2019 the doors of the Gruuthuse Palace in Bruges will once again open to the general public. This imposing city palace in the heart of Bruges closed in 2014 to allow the implementation of a complete programme of renovation and restoration. New rooms, a new museum concept and a magnificent collection of artefacts now wait to be rediscovered.

In the museum you can journey through three crucial periods in the history of Bruges. First of all, there is the city’s Burgundian heyday, followed by the previously underexposed period during the 17th and 18th centuries, before finishing with the ‘rediscovery’ of Bruges in the 19th century neo-Gothic style that is so typical of the city today.

These three periods are brought to life by more than 600 exhibits, each of which has its own story to tell. From majestic tapestries to Gothic stained glass, from elegant wooden sculptures to refined historical lace, from the paintings of different periods to a 17th and 18th century dinner table, set with silver cutlery and luxurious Chinese porcelain.

The motif running through the display is ‘Plus est en vous’ (There is more in you), which was the motto of Louis of Gruuthuse, the man who first gave the palace its spectacular grandeur in the 15th century. Born in 1427, Louis of Gruuthuse was a shrewd businessman, an influential diplomat, a redoubtable knight and a refined man of culture. His family held the monopoly for the sale of ‘gruut’, which in medieval times was one of the basic ingredients for making beer. Later, he was even granted the right to levy a tax on the sale of beer. Louis and his contemporaries loved art and engaged sculptors, painters, cabinet-makers, glass artists and other creative spirits to embellish the homes and their surroundings.

‘Plus est en vous’ also applies to every piece from the collection now on display in the new museum presentation. There is more to every object than immediately meets the eye. Each piece contains its own rich history, stories about its fabrication and use, about the context

in which it was made. These are the stories that you can now discover in the new museum.

For the renovation project, the City of Bruges decided to opt for a total approach. As part of the new museum site, a brand-new contemporary pavilion has been erected between the Gruuthusemuseum and the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (Church of Our Lady), where in future Musea Bruges will not only sell tickets for both sites, but also for all other Musea Brugge locations in the city. The preservation and enhancement of our monumental heritage, by removing ticket sale facilities from both monuments, was one of the most important objectives of the project.

Following the opening, free audio-guides will direct the public through the palace, from the ground floor to the attic - now renamed *Studio+*, the place where the museum’s participation projects find their place.



## A NEW MUSEUM CONCEPT FOR EVERYONE

The majestic entrance hall of the renovated city palace immediately sets the tone for a visit to the new Gruuthusemuseum. The imitation brick features from the neo-Gothic period have been returned to the walls. A subtly lit carved wooden ceiling dating from the 19th century and the magnificent tapestry of 'The Seven Liberal Arts', a masterpiece from the museum's valuable textile collection, welcome visitors and lead them through to the first room.

Here, visitors will make their acquaintance with the palace's remarkable architecture. Pride of place is given to a stunning model of the building, and the history of its development through the centuries is explained via a multimedia application. This first room also introduces the main protagonist in the story the museum wants to tell: the City of Bruges itself. A series of large paintings immediately make clear that this will be the main theme.

In the rooms that follow, spread over three floors and three periods, the museum will shed light on the lives of the city's inhabitant across the centuries, by telling the stories attached to various artefacts from the collection. You will discover more about the Burgundian elite and

their love of spectacle in luxurious handwritten manuscripts. You will learn about the city's leading religious figures, who during the Baroque period restored grandeur to their churches with elaborate carvings and richly decorated silver. Last but not least, you will also get to know the founders of the 19th century neo-Gothic movement in Bruges, who laid the foundations for the appearance of the city as we know it today.

The museum wants to tell its story to as many people as possible. With this in mind, people with a sensory limitation will be able to follow this story, thanks to a number of special adjustments made to the museum trajectory and with the help of public mediation. With the collaboration of Tactile Studio, several touch stations have been integrated into the presentation, where blind and visually impaired visitors can feel the materials from which the artefacts are made, handle replicas and learn more about their production processes. Throughout the story, they will also be able to make use of a descriptive audio guide (from autumn 2019). For visitors with hearing difficulties there is a visio-guide in Flemish sign language and international sign language. In the years to come, the museum hopes to further refine and improve its facilities to make possible inclusive museum visits for all.

Adult visitors who prefer to do something active have also been thought of. Throughout the museum there are various multimedia elements where you can either browse in extra information, or play a game. Movies and touchscreens alternate and provide a more in-depth experience. If you really want to get creative, you can try your hand at drawing a shadow portrait, fitting an 18th century wig, or helping to colour a large colouring picture of Bruges.

## THE BUILDING AND THE RESTORATION

The city palace enjoys 'protected monument' status. Many elements are still authentic and testify to a glorious past: the monumental fireplace in the former kitchen, the many spiral staircase and, perhaps above all, the evocative and inspirational 15th century prayer chapel. This chapel forms the link between the Gruuthuse Palace and the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk. It is a unique Late Middle Age jewel that has now been fully restored.



The fundamental appearance of the building as we know it today was the result of work carried out in the 19th century under the guidance of city architect Louis Delacenserie. He implemented a thorough restoration of the city palace in accordance with the principles of the neo-Gothic movement, which was so popular at that time. Upon completion, the building was put at the disposal of the museum of the Société Archéologique de Bruges.

After the passage of more than 100 years following this first metamorphosis, a new and equally thorough programme of restoration was necessary. Since the temporary closure of the museum in 2014, specialist contractors have restored much of the interior woodwork and the stained glass windows, have improved the weight-bearing capacity of the old floors, have replaced the old guttering and drain-pipes, have cleaned the facades and generally repaired whatever needed to be repaired. But perhaps the crowning achievement was the renovation of the belvedere, the museum's distinctive tower.

The much-needed restoration of the prayer chapel is also impressive. The chapel escaped the neo-Gothic 'improvements' of Delacenserie, but its many users over the centuries had left their mark. Thanks to a successful fund-raising operation by the Friends of Musea Brugge, money was made available to restore the chapel to its former glory. As a result of this recent work, the chapel's authentic panelling will now be better able to withstand the future ravages of time. Similarly, a large part of the original polychrome decoration now sparkles and shines like never before.

### **'PLUS EST EN VOUS': THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE MUSEUM**

'There is more in you' or, more loosely translated, 'surpass yourself'. 'Plus est en vous' is the well-known motto of Louis of Gruuthuse. This Burgundian diplomat and builder of the magnificent city palace is given a prominent place in his beautifully restored former home. From now on, his portrait will occupy a permanent position of honour and it is intended that he will become the face of the new museum. His motto will also be the common theme linking the three time periods that give the new museum

display its structure.

In the Middle Ages, Bruges was an important hub for international trade. This made the city an ideal base for craftsmen and artists of many kinds, who strove to achieve new levels of refinement and perfection. The Burgundian court and its many political contacts provided an excellent source of wealthy, art-loving patrons. This is reflected in the museum collection.

The high quality craftsmanship of the Burgundian period was also the inspiration at the end of the 19th century for the neo-Gothic movement, which in its wake again brought to the city the influx of a new group of craftsmen, who regarded the artistic and cultural output of the Late Middle Ages as the ultimate example to be followed.

Even during the following period of the 17th and 18th centuries, years when the city was less prosperous than previously, the creation and fabrication of refined products did not stagnate. On the contrary, the discovery of the New World saw the arrival of new and exotic products such as chocolate, coffee and tobacco, which made necessary the manufacture of porcelain cups, copper kettles and other elegant items of tableware.



# Gruuthusemuseum

**Kom binnen en vertraag je pas**  
Entrez et ralentissez le pas  
Come on in and slow your pace

**Bewonder**  
Admirez  
Admire

**Verwonder**  
Laissez-vous surprendre  
Marvel

**Ontdek**  
Découvrez  
Explore

**Doe mee**  
Participez  
Join in



**1 tot 17**  
Permanent Tentoonstelling  
Exposition Permanente  
Permanent Exhibition

- Museum
- Kerk  
Eglise  
Church
- Ateliers  
Ateliers  
Workshops
- Tickets  
Billets  
Tickets
- Vestiaire  
Vestiaire  
Cloakroom
- Buggy parking  
Parking à poussettes  
Stroller parking
- Toiletten  
Toilettes  
Restrooms

Help ons de collectie te beschermen dus  
Aidez-nous à protéger la collection, donc  
Help us protect the collection so



Another important patron of the arts and crafts, particularly during the Counter Reformation, was the Catholic Church. In their fight to suppress Protestantism, the church fathers sought to express their power in material form. During the 17th century, this resulted in the exuberance of the Baroque period, when richly decorated woodcarving in the form of cabinets, communion rails, etc., and elaborate items of silverware served to underline the doctrinal strength of the 'true' religion.

## THE MUSEUM ATTIC

The tour of the museum ends in the attic, where you will find Studio+. Studio+ is not a 'classic' museum room, but is a space where visitors are invited to reflect on the story that the museum has just told, a place where it is possible to chat and exchange thoughts with other visitors in a relaxed manner. And if you just want to take a breather and keep your thoughts to yourself? That's fine as well! Take the weight off your feet in one of the comfortable sofas or enjoy the view over the city from a different perspective. Or perhaps you prefer to browse through our 'alternative' library with books about the history of Bruges? Young and old alike can find cartoon books in which the city features as a protagonist or guide books and reference works that will encourage you to explore the city further.

Studio+ is also the space that the museum wishes to make available for participative projects. The aim is to link the museum and its story of the past with the city of today. For the first of these projects, under the title of 'Pimping up the Palace', a group of young people have been invited to collaborate with four artists to explore what the heritage on display in the museum really means to them. Their task is to then convert

this meaning into their own contemporary work of art. For this project, Musea Brugge was able to rely on the generous support of the Flemish Community (Vlaamse Gemeenschap).

## MORE THAN JUST A NEW MUSEUM DISPLAY

The renovation of the Gruuthusemuseum involves much more than just the rearrangement of the museum display. The renovation project was based on an ambitious total approach that has resulted in a thorough make-over for the entire museum site.

The conceptual development and the implementation of the renovation programme was a joint venture involving the architects of noAarchitecten (Bruges/Brussels) and Madoc (Ghent), working closely with the museum team and various service departments of the Bruges city authorities. The display trajectory through the museum and the scenography match the character of the Gruuthuse Palace. The many (spiral) staircases and the alternating succession of richly decorated and sober spaces in various large and small rooms help to make the route through the museum an exciting voyage of discovery. Walking, looking, standing or sitting in a historic building, just like the people who once lived here, stimulates the imagination and opens up direct access to the past for visitors of all ages.

So that the attention of visitors can be focused fully on the palace, it was decided to remove ticket sales from the building itself. In collaboration with the city authorities and the Agency for Heritage Conservation and Management, the architects designed a new entrance pavilion. This pavilion is in keeping with the scale of a building that once closed off the inner courtyard for many centuries and its contemporary design is intended as a 'visual echo' rather than a direct copy of the historical monuments by which it is surrounded. By keeping sufficient distance from these surroundings but at the same time referring back to them, the new pavilion does not contrast with but rather complements the heritage around it, co-existing gracefully side by side. This elegant architectural intervention has returned to this unique space the closed nature that it previously had during the palace's heyday.



In the new museum pavilion, over time it will be possible to buy tickets for all museum locations except Belfort, including the adjacent Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, which in this way becomes integrated into the wider museum environment. The former 'stone museum' at the street side has been converted to provide space for two workshop areas, which are necessary for the educational activities of Musea Brugge. All sanitary facilities for the public have been centralized in this building. The surface of the inner courtyard has been re-laid to make it easier to walk on and 'comfort paths'

were created around the square to allow easy access for wheelchair users.

In this way, the museum forecourt has become a symbol for the openness of the museum itself. Openness towards the residents of Bruges, who are always welcome to visit and who can become the first ambassadors for the new museum. But also openness towards the many national and international visitors, whom we hope to welcome from the end of May. In this way, the Gruuthuse Palace can once again become one of the city's undoubted star attractions.

The Gruuthuse Palace has one of the smallest windows in Bruges on the side of Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerkhof. During the restoration it was established that the stained glass had to be replaced. A contemporary glass window seemed to be the ideal way for the museum to remember the major restoration and refurbishment. The design was commissioned to the Bruges glass artist Birgit Verplancke. The design is a dynamic interplay of lines that completes the contours of the stone frame. They form the beginning of a green bundle of herbs, referring to gruuut, and a swan. The colorful design is in keeping with the renovated Gruuthuse Palace.

## ADDITIONAL OFFER

### TAILOR-MADE VISITS



The museum offers descriptive audio guides (in English and Dutch) for visitors with a visual impairment. There are also various 'feel points' in the museum. Tablets are available with a guided tour in International Sign Language.

### GROUPS

Guided visit: € 80 (max. 15 people)  
Bookings via [www.visitbruges.be/ticketshop](http://www.visitbruges.be/ticketshop)

### PUBLICATION



Both for sale in the Museumshop, Dijver 16, Bruges.

- Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen (Dutch), 40 pages, € 10
- Ludion guide (Dutch/French/English), 128 pages, € 12

### AUDIO GUIDES

available in 6 languages: Dutch, French, English, German, Spanish and Italian.

**BRUGGE** MUSEA BRUGGE facebook.com/paleisjepimpen

PALEISJE PIMPEN PRESENTS

**EXCLUSIVE  
OPENING  
NIGHT!**

VRIJDAG  
**24 MEI**  
*save the date*

PREVIEW NIEUW  
GRUUTHUSEMUSEUM  
& INSTALLATIE VAN  
ONZE JONGERENCREW

FOOD, DRINKS & DJ OP  
EEN EPISCHE LOCATIE

GRATIS

BINNENPLEIN  
GRUUTHUSEMUSEUM  
DIJVER 17, 8000 BRUGGE  
DOORS: 20.00 UUR

## PALEISJE PIMPEN PIMP THE PALACE

Together with the Batterie, an art education organisation from Bruges, and with the support of the Flemish Community, Musea Brugge developed 'Paleisje Pimpen', a co-creation process tailored to the needs of its own youth crew.

This project allows a group of youngsters between the ages of 16 and 24 to participate in museum activities.

With four professional artists, the young people have given shape to their vision of the heritage of the renovated Gruuthusemuseum and its collection in photographs, installations, video and sound. The result is one artwork that will be on display in Studio +, the concluding room of the museum.

It is the final part of a project that started in November last year, where artists and young people are each other's equal partners. Everything starts with the young people, the artists anticipate and think along with them. The youngsters decide how their interpretation should be given shape in Studio +, and the museum ensures that they have the best possible opportunity to put these ideas into practice.

## AFTERGLOW

Since recently, Musea Brugge has been keeping its doors open after the normal closing time on the third Thursday of each month, and this between the hours of 17.00 and 21.00. This extended opening is always at a different location and the programme includes special activities, guided tours and workshops.

The evening opening of **20 June** takes place at the Gruuthusemuseum.

### Practical info

Visitors pay the reduction rate, i.e. 10 euro instead of 12. Children -18 years old: free access.



## PRACTICAL INFO GRUUTHUSEMUSEUM

The Gruuthusemuseum is open from 25 May 2019

Opening times: from Tuesday to Sunday from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tickets: € 12 (26-64 y.) | € 10 (>65 y. & 18-25 y.)  
free -18 y.

Combiticket Gruuthusemuseum + O.L.V.-kerk: € 14  
Guided visit: € 80 (max. 15 people) - [www.visitbruges.be/ticketshop](http://www.visitbruges.be/ticketshop)

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Vlaanderen  
verbeelding werkt

### **GOOD TO KNOW: MUSEA BRUGGE IS LAUNCHING A NEW WEBSITE!**

As befits internationally renowned museums and their rich permanent collections, the on-line presence of museums, visitor information and collection is a must.

Musea Brugge goes 'live' as of today with its own website.

The website integrates all useful visitor information from the 14 museum locations and its own museum calendar online. The website will in due course provide all possible information about Musea Brugge in five languages - Dutch, French, German, English and Spanish. A special feature is the link with the database of Erfgoedbrugge, which provides direct access to the collection registration. In this way, visitors to the website can also discover the collection pieces that are not on display.

[www.museabrugge.be](http://www.museabrugge.be) remains the direct website URL.

## HR IMAGES

Images to promote this museum can be downloaded via the following link:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/museabrugge/sets/>.  
Please mention the correct credits.

## MORE INFO

All arrangements can be made via [sarah.bauwens@brugge.be](mailto:sarah.bauwens@brugge.be) or on +32 50 44 87 08. Press visits to the museum are possible with an appointment: see under the heading 'pers' (press) on the website [www.museabrugge.be](http://www.museabrugge.be). The press file can also be consulted online and texts can be transcribed, again via [www.museabrugge.be](http://www.museabrugge.be), under the heading 'press'.

## REQUEST

We collect every possible review of our museums and events. Therefore we would like to ask you to send a copy of any article you publish to Sarah Bauwens, head of Press & Communications, Musea Brugge, Dijver 12, B-8000 Bruges.

You can also send the files digitally (stating ftp or url) to [sarah.bauwens@brugge.be](mailto:sarah.bauwens@brugge.be). We thank you for your cooperation and interest.

## THE FRIENDS OF MUSEA BRUGGE THANK THEIR SPECIAL BENEFACTORS



