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## Museum Watch: Musée Condé at the Chateau de Chantilly

Posted By *Sylvia Edwards Davis* On May 20, 2016 @ 8:59 am In Art & Design, Museums & Galleries, Parks & Gardens | [1 Comment](#)

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What to do if you find yourself marooned in Twickenham at the age of 26, in exile from the home you had inherited when you were eight, and you are the son of a king during a republican revolution? If your name is Henri d'Orléans, duc d'Aumale, you build an art collection. Between 1848 and 1870 he recruited the most competent art experts to enrich his ancestral Château de Chantilly upon his return to France. The result: the second finest collection of paintings in France after the Louvre.

Without direct heirs, Henri bequeathed Chantilly to the Institut de France in 1884, with the condition that the new museum would be open to the public, the placement of the works would be respected, and the collection would not be loaned out. The Condé Museum opened in 1898 and still operates under the Institut de France.

The visit to the Domaine de Chantilly offers an impressive array of interests: gardens designed by Le Nôtre, world-class stables, the Journées des Plantes garden festival in the spring, and excellent temporary exhibitions. It would therefore be easy to underestimate the magnitude of the permanent collection of the museum that glows at its heart; and the treasures to be found here take many visitors by surprise.



The Condé museum. © Sophie Lloyd – Vestibule d'honneur

"Just one example of what you find at the Condé Museum is Raphaël's *La Vierge de Lorette*," says museum curator Nicole Garnier. "We are the only museum in France besides the Louvre to own three paintings by Raphael." This painting was so exceptional, in fact, that the custodians broke Henri's last wishes when it was moved from its original placement – for a good reason. The canvas had been part of a bulk purchase of a collection of the heirs of the King of Naples. It was only recently, in 1979, that it was identified as an original Raphaël, thanks to the painted inventory number on the board. Previously, on account of the state of the work before restoration, it had been thought to be a copy.

"Chantilly is perhaps not as well known as Versailles outside France," says Garnier. "International visitors tell me they are so amazed when they come to the Musée Condé by the diversity and quality, maintained in all aspects of the visit. There was always a rivalry between Chantilly and Versailles, meaning that they would often employ the same artists and designers, trying to outshine each other, and people are delighted to find this priceless art, in the largest domain in France set in a vast forest, with the equestrian centre, Le Notre gardens, and of course the royal castle."

Tip: Stay right within the domaine in the 5-star Auberge du Jeu de Paume.

Musée Condé <sup>[1]</sup>, Domaine De Chantilly <sup>[2]</sup>: Open daily 10am to 6pm (until 5pm, November to March). Train station: Chantilly-Gouvieux (25 minutes from Paris). Tel: +33 3 4427 3180. Ticket price €17, includes access to the chateau, park, and horse museum.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Musée Condé: <http://www.musee-conde.fr>

[2] Domaine De Chantilly: <http://www.domainedechantilly.com>

[3] Image: [https://www.francetoday.comjavascript:void\(0\)](https://www.francetoday.comjavascript:void(0))

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