

# DUELS THE ART OF FIGHTING

EXHIBITION FROM 24 APRIL TO 18 AUGUST 2024 - EAST WING 3RD FLOOR

**David against Goliath, Athos against d'Artagnan, Chirac against Mitterrand, Federer against Nadal and Harry Potter against Voldemort, etc. from ancient Egyptian times to the present day, from East to West, men have fought in duels throughout history and in fiction: so to resolve a dispute, seek redress or simply for the sake of their honour, two adversaries met in single combat, staged according to very precise rules. A duel is a form of scheduled, ritualised, even choreographed and legitimised violence: it complies with a protocol which, depending upon the era and the country, has been more or less authorised.**

Practiced, tolerated or condemned, but always appreciated, the duel is a genuine social phenomenon which has crossed borders and travelled down the ages. Ferocious, flamboyant, serious or spectacular, this mode of confrontation is ever present, in various forms, in the world of politics, sports, arts and video games.



Alexandre-Auguste Robineau, *The Fencing-Match between the Chevalier de Saint-George and the Chevalier d'Eon*, 1787-1789 Londres, Royal collection Trust ; *Pair of twin swords*, 1600th c., Paris, musée de l'Armée ; Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), *King Arthur*, 1993, Royaume-Uni, Paris, BnF, Literature and Art Department

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## At the Sources of the Duel

Through the *Duels. The Art of Fighting* exhibition, the Musée de l'Armée returns to the duel's historical sources to explore its main principles and developments, including the fantasies of our collective imagination.

## From Fight to the Olympics

Staged to coincide with the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, notably whilst fencing events are taking place at the Grand Palais, the *Duels. The Art of Fighting* exhibition allows the origins of this Olympic discipline to be retraced: although duellists no longer fight each other to death, they observe rules based on various forms of duels that the Musée de l'Armée is keen to analyse. Swords, rapiers, pistols, sabres, *navaja* blades, daggers and even tennis racquets are on display, in a theatrical setting that plunges visitors into the world of the duel.

## To each his own Duel

The duel's greatest historical figures are portrayed throughout the itinerary: Mademoiselle de Maupin piercing the Duke de Luynes's shoulder with her sword before taking him as a lover; the swordsmen Musashi and Kojiro fight on the island of Ganryu; the knight Jean de Carrouges confronting Jacques le Gris in 1386, in what is considered to be the last trial by combat in France; and also the Baron de Jarnac and François de Vivonne, Lord of La Châtaigneraie, fighting a duel in front of King Henry II and the court at Saint-Germain-en-Laye castle in 1547.

## Between reality and fiction

The protagonists of colourful stories illustrate how, over the centuries, reality and fiction (novels, films, etc.) have influenced each other and helped rooting the “spectacle” of the duel within popular culture and collective imagination.

### CURATORS, MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE- INVALIDES

**Hélène Boudou-Reuzé**, Print Collection Manager, Fine Arts and Heritage Department

**Julia Bovet**, Project Manager, Museography Department

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**Vincent Mouraret**, assistant to the Curator, Ancien Régime Department

This project was labeled by Paris 2024 as part of the Cultural Olympiad



### PARTENAIRES

Exhibition produced with the exceptional participation of the Bibliothèque nationale de France



This exhibition is organised with the support of CIC, major patron of the Musée de l'Armée



It has also benefited from the participation of Nettec, Pathé and Lepape



Its cultural programming was sponsored by the Société des membres de la Légion d'Honneur, Loisiralp-Meindl and Uneo



### PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

**Musée de l'Armée**  
Hôtel national des Invalides  
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#Duels



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### The exhibition in some numbers

**213** works exhibited whose  
**106** from the collections of the Musée de l'Armée  
**29** institutional lenders  
**2** dedicated sensory spaces to young public  
**5** staged duels  
**10** stage costumes and  
**2** movies costumes



## MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE - INVALIDES

Located in the heart of the Hôtel National des Invalides, the Musée de l'Armée invites visitors to explore the history of France across some 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>, from the angle of military life and war. A museum of history, fine arts and science and technology all in one, the institution was created in 1905 and conserves one of the world's finest military history collections, containing almost 500,000 items (uniforms, weapons, armour, drawings, paintings, photographs, etc.) from the Bronze Age to the 21st century. It also invites the public to discover the famous Les Invalides Dôme, which houses Napoleon I's tomb. With some 1.2 million visitors a year, the Musée de l'Armée is one of Paris' most popular museums.

Fundamentally human, history made incarnate, sometimes glorified and often harrowing, these days military history is considered in terms of its political, social, cultural, geographic and economic realities, opening up new avenues for reflection. With this very much in mind, the Musée de l'Armée has undertaken a large-scale extension and transformation programme: by 2030, the MINERVE project will have led to the opening of 4 new permanent tours: “The Hôtel des Invalides: between history and memories”; “France's armed forces and military engagements”; “Colonisation, decolonisation, a shared history”; “After 1945: from the Cold War to the present day”. Through the project, the Museum aims to become France's museum of world history from the angle of military life and war, taking a resilient, comprehensive approach, paying close attention to our country's interactions with the world and giving otherness its rightful place and voice. True to its civic vocation, the Musée de l'Armée asserts its determination to provide all sectors of the public with the keys to understanding the state of the world and its evolution, making the connection between past, present and future.