



ROYAL MONASTERY OF BROU

*The masterpiece
of an emperor's daughter*

The Royal Monastery of Brou, an exceptional monument, is the result of the determination at the dawn of the Renaissance of a European Princess: Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), daughter of an emperor, Duchess of Savoy and Regent of the Netherlands. Its church, built to commemorate her love for her deceased husband Philibert the Handsome, is famous for its elegant tombs carved in marble and alabaster. The unity of its construction, its lavish decoration and its polychrome, glazed tiles make it a masterpiece of the Flamboyant Gothic style. The three two-storey cloisters, which reveal both the skill of the builders and the life of the monks, contain the Princess's apartments and the rich collections of the Museum of Fine Art.

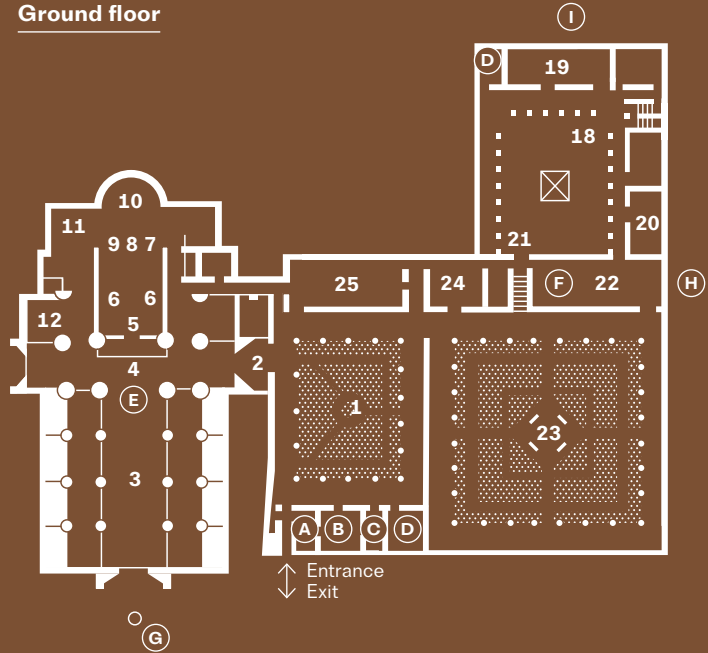
The monastery

- A** Reception-ticket desk
- B** Gift and book shop
- C** Lift
- D** Toilets
- E** Church
- F** Convent buildings and museum
- G** Parvis and sundial
- H** Gardens
- I** Surrounding areas

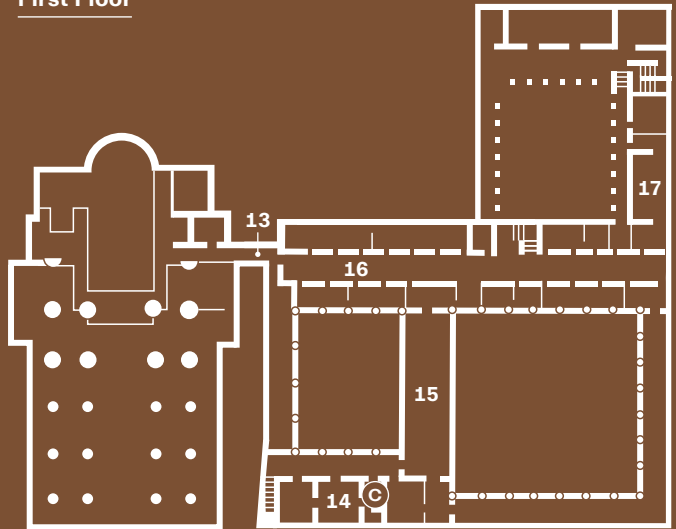
Key features

- 7-9** The tombs
- 14** The Princess's apartments
- 15** The great hall
- 16** The monks' sleeping quarters Museum
- 19** What a Project!

Ground floor



First Floor



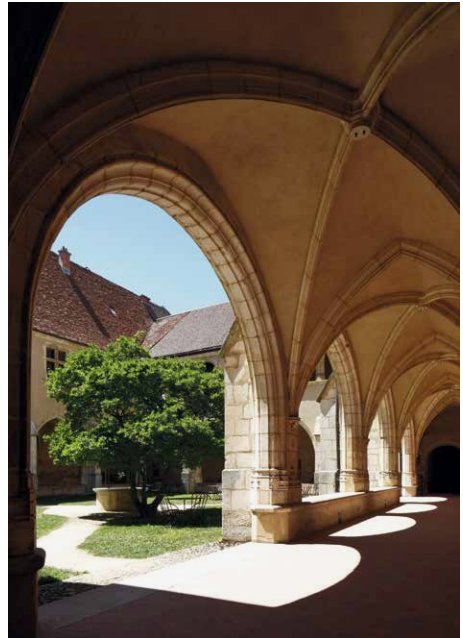
The Royal Monastery of Brou consists of three cloisters on two levels and over 4,000 m² of buildings for a community of between twelve and thirty monks. It was at the time when the Augustinian monks of Lombardy were replaced by the Discalced Augustinians of France in 1659, that the monastery, then under the protection of Louis XIV, adopted the description "royal".

Ground floor

The guests' cloister

01

The building on the porch side was intended to house Margaret of Austria and her entourage. This first cloister is surrounded on the ground floor by rib-vaulted galleries, and on the first floor by covered galleries. A "transition zone" between the outside world and the monks' community, it accommodated visiting guests.



Guests' Cloister

The church (1513-1532)

It is reached through the Sainte-Monique doorway.

02

The church is a High Flemish Gothic masterpiece built by Louis van Boghem, the master builder from Brussels, chosen by Margaret of Austria. The south transept is adorned with a stained glass window that tells the story of the biblical heroine, Susanna. The chapel of Antoine de Montecuto, the Princess's chaplain, opens off to the right. He is represented in the stained glass window of the Emmaüs Pilgrims.

03

The rib-vaulted nave, lined with side aisles and chapels, with bare walls, imposing pillars and plain glass windows, is intentionally sober to contrast with the sumptuousness of the choir. It was only opened to the faithful for a few major festivals during the year.



Rood Screen, detail

04

The rood screen is one of the few preserved in France. It separates the choir from the nave, and supports a passage linking the Princess's chapel to her apartments.

05

The huge, richly decorated choir is lavishly furnished. The presence of colour here contrasts with the nave. Pink and white render on the vaults gives a stone effect. The floor was originally paved with coloured tiles, of which a few traces remain at the base of the tombs.

06

The oak stalls, on either side of the choir, are ornately worked. The scenes and the characters from the Old Testament on the south side, and from the New Testament on the north, with their lively forms, are from a Flemish workshop, whereas the misericords, ledges fixed on the underside of the stalls and decorated with secular scenes, are of a more traditional style, and are probably the work of Bresse artists.

07

The tomb of Margaret of Bourbon, mother of Philibert. Set in a recess – a funerary alcove – in the south wall, it is surrounded by a rich Flamboyant decoration. The weeping statues are reminiscent of those on the tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy in Dijon. The architecture and small statues on the three tombs are from a Flemish workshop. These were probably produced by Brussels sculptor Jan Borman, and the recumbent figures by the German sculptor Conrad Meit.



The Sibyl Agrippa, tomb of Philibert the Handsome



Tombs of Margaret of Austria and Philibert the Handsome

08

The tomb of Philibert the Handsome

occupies the middle of the choir. The deceased is represented twice: alive, eyes open, in ceremonial dress on the upper level, and dead, with eyes closed, almost naked, waiting for resurrection, on the lower level. The niches surrounding it house ten elegant Sibyls, the prophetesses of Antiquity, whom, it is believed, announced the coming of Christ.

09

The tomb of Margaret of Austria, with its monumental stone canopy and statuettes of saints, recalls the imposing catafalques of princely funerals. On the cornice is the princess's motto: *Fortune Infortune Fort Une* (Fortune demands much of a Woman).

1480

Birth of Margaret of Austria in Brussels

1501

Marriage of Margaret to Philibert the Handsome, Duke of Savoy

1504

Death of Philibert the Handsome at the Château de Pont-d'Ain

1506

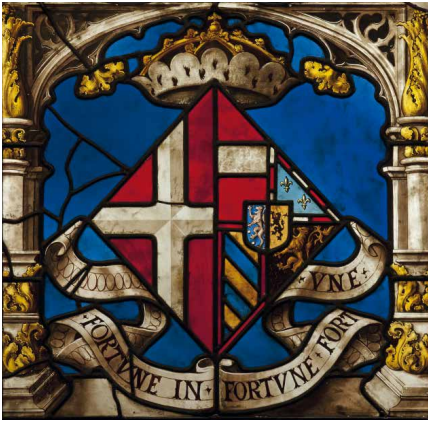
Construction work begins, Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands

Charles VIII
King of France
1483–1498

Wars in Italy
1494–1559
Louis XII King of France
1499–1515

Death of Isabelle of Castile
1504
Charles II Duke of Savoy
1504–1558

Death of her brother Philip the Handsome, Regent of the Netherlands
1506



Margaret of Austria's Coat of Arms

10

The five stained glass windows of the choir were produced between 1525 and 1531 from drawings made in Brussels. The central window shows the apparitions of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary. On one side window Philibert the Handsome is presented by Saint Philibert of Tournus, and on the other, Margaret of Austria by Saint Margaret. The rich heraldry of their ancestors glorifies the power of their families. The apse houses five alabaster statues originally intended for the main altar and chapels.

11

Margaret of Austria's chapel, with its white alabaster and black marble bench, has a particularly finely worked decoration. The great stained glass window of the Assumption has a grisaille frieze above depicting the "Triumph of Faith". The huge alabaster reredos by the artists of Brussels, is dedicated to the "Seven Joys of the Virgin", seven happy episodes in Mary's life.

1509

Margaret decides to be interred next to her husband

1513

Installation of the Augustinian monks and construction of the church begins.

Maximilian I
Holy Roman Emperor
1508-1519

François I, King of France
1515-1547
Charles V, King of Spain
1516-1555



Philibert the Handsome

12

The Gorrevod chapel has a stained glass window depicting Saint Thomas' disbelief, and also representing Laurent de Gorrevod, Governor of Bresse, and his wife Claude de Rivoire. On the site of their tomb (now disappeared) is the former high altar of the church and its reredos, moved here in the 19th century.

First floor

The upper galleries

13

Margaret's corridor. From the oratory, take the stairs up to the top of the rood screen, and cross to reach Margaret's corridor and the upper gallery of the Guests' Cloister. This corridor enabled the Princess to return in complete privacy to her apartments from her private chapel.

1530

Death of Margaret of Austria at Mechelen, in Brabant

Charles V,
Holy Roman Emperor
1519-1556

1532

Consecration of the church and burial of Margaret

Occupation of Savoy by the French
1536-1559

Margaret of Austria's apartments



Margaret of Austria, Bernard van Orley, Royal Monastery of Brou Museum.

14

Margaret of Austria's apartments consisted of three interconnecting rooms designed to accommodate the Princess and her entourage, but which she never occupied. They now form an area dedicated to her life and her work: love, power and art. In the first room, Margaret welcomes you. The second recalls her dynastic and political role, and the third, her role as a patron and collector.

1790-1791

Departure of the monks,
Thomas Riboud saves
Brou from destruction

French Revolution
1789

1823

Building of the great
seminary at Brou

Restoration of Louis XVIII
and Charles X
1815-1830
Kingdom of Belgium
1830

The great hall

15

The Great Hall (known, since the 20th century, as the "States room") is the formal gallery in the Princess's private apartments. This vast gallery, 28 metres long, exhibits Renaissance artworks, and serves as an introduction to the museum.

The monks' sleeping quarters - museum

16

The sleeping quarters and cells were on the first floor of the main building. There were around twenty cells along a wide corridor known as the dormitory, with a stone lantern on the corner of the landing. These spaces now accommodate the main part of the museum's collection of paintings, sculpture and decorative arts. On the south side, near the windows overlooking the garden, is a reconstruction of a monk's cell through which the upper floors of the monks' cloister can be reached.

17

The Prior's apartments, embellished with large windows, fireplaces, wooden flooring and panelling, show the prior's more comfortable living environment on the eve of the Revolution. They house collections from the 18th century. Access to the upper galleries of the domestic cloister is through the room displaying the earthenware collection. Take the stairs at the far end of the gallery to return to the ground floor.

1862

Classification
of the church as a historic
monument

Second Empire
1852-1870
Annexation of Savoy
by France
1860

1907

Departure of the religious
community from Brou

Third Republic
1871-1940
Law of the Separation
of Church and State
1905

Ground floor

The domestic cloister

18

It consists of three upper and lower covered galleries in the style of Bresse, abutting the main building. Situated next to the refectory, it led on the south side to the kitchen and the warming house, and on the east side to the ovens, the procurator's office (supplies store), the servants' quarters and a prison. Paved with pebbles, it consisted of a covered well. A 1990 work by the German sculptor Ulrich Rückriem has been placed along the north gallery. These four steles commemorate the Priors of Brou buried in the church.

19

The Procurator's office now accommodates "What a Project!" highlighting the various skills of the builders and restorers: master builder, joiners, roofers, stonemasons, sculptors and master glassworkers.



"What a Project!"

20-21

The kitchen and cellar, the only vaulted rooms in the domestic cloister, testify to the role of the monastery's agricultural lands in providing food for the religious community (opening soon).

22

The refectory is the largest rib-vaulted room in the monastery. It houses ancient sculptures from the church, and from several abbeys and convents in the town and the local area.

The monks' cloister

23

The great cloister was designed for the monks to walk in. Two steel elements of a 1985 sculpture by the American Richard Serra, echoing the tombs of Philibert and Margaret, invite the visitor to walk around this cloister.

24

The chapter house, looking directly out onto the monks' cloister, is in the main building, near the staircase leading to the sleeping quarters. This room was where the monks met to read a chapter of their rules and to discuss important matters.

25

With access to both the chapter house and the guests' cloister, the sacristy and the parlour became one room in the 19th century to form the Saint Gerard Chapel of the seminary, which used to be in the monastery. These rooms now house the temporary exhibition spaces.

1922

Sale of the cloisters to the Municipality and opening of the museum

1995-1999

Restoration of the church's original roof in glazed tiles

2014

Restoration and opening to the public of the Prior's apartments

The French public voted the Royal Monastery of Brou their favourite monument

2017-2018

Creation of the "What a Project!" space

Restoration and opening to the public of Margaret of Austria's apartments

Restoration of the princely tombs

First World War
1914-1918

Museum

A museum with rich collections

The museum, installed in Brou in 1922 and considerably enriched since then, presents a broad overview of the fine arts and decorative arts from the 12th century to the present day. The painting collection contains works by renowned artists: Bernard van Orley, Jan I Bruegel de Velours, Jean-François Millet, Gustave Doré, Gustave Moreau, Maurice Utrillo and Pierre Soulages.

The former monastic cells accommodate works from the late 16th to 21st century. The “great hall” displays Renaissance paintings, sculpture, furniture and objets d’art. The Prior’s apartment invites you to immerse yourself in an 18th century interior.

Among the museum’s key works are 15th-17th century Dutch paintings, “troubadour” art, the Gustave Doré collection, regional paintings and contemporary and abstract art that reflects the vocation of this monument.



Woman with a Hookah, Jules Migonny



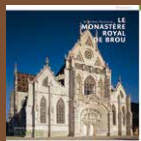
Untitled, Joan Mitchell, triptych, 1969

History of Art library

Open by appointment, with free access on Wednesday afternoons.

Gift and Book shop

The gift and book shop offers a wide range of publications on the Royal Monastery, including that from the “Regards ...” collection available in French and German.



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Cover : Margaret of Austria, detail from a stained glass window in the apse. Photographs:

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