



"Pasteur would have liked that...."

coordinated by Pascale Cossart

A new museum in the Institut Pasteur, Paris: an ambitious project to present microbiology and its society impact from past to present

Summary

The Pasteur Museum, created in 1936, is housed in the apartment where Louis Pasteur spent the last seven years of his life, from 1888 to 1895. It features the daily life of the Pasteur couple, while the scientific memorabilia room recounts the many discoveries made by the illustrious scientist. The museum is currently closed. For its reopening at the end of 2028, it is developing a project that will go beyond the figure of the illustrious scientist to retrace the discoveries made since the creation of the Institut Pasteur, while showing how these have changed society. Current issues and challenges in biomedical research will also be addressed.

The Pasteur Institute

Institut Pasteur employs nearly 3 000 people on a five-hectar campus in the heart of Paris. Yasmine Belkaïd was appointed Head of the Institute on January 1st, 2024. She is in fact, the second woman to hold this position since the establishment's creation in 1887.



View of Institut Pasteur's historic building, 2017

© Institut Pasteur/François Gardy

Louis Pasteur, then aged 65, founded the Institute that bears his name to extend the development of the rabies vaccination, develop the study of infectious diseases and teach microbiology. The establishment was inaugurated on November 14, 1888. Louis and Marie Pasteur had been living previously on the Ecole Normale for more thirty years before moving into the vast apartment designed especially for them within the Institute. Louis Pasteur lived there until 1895, Marie until 1910. Then it became uninhabited, but fortunately was preserved in its original state for many years. Then the apartment was refurbished and transformed into a Museum in 1936. As a Museum of Remembrance, it was awarded the “Maisons des Illustres” label by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012. Then, in May 2022, the Institut Pasteur foundation decided to restore and refurbish the historic building housing the apartment-museum. The aim now is to open a new exhibition area and mediation space in 2028, the aim being to raise more awareness of the Institut Pasteur's research areas in its service to human health.



Pasteur in his laboratory, Albert Edelfelt and H  l  ne Schjerfberck, oil on canvas, 1885

The Louis Pasteur Apartment

Housed in the apartment where Louis Pasteur spent the last seven years of his life, the Museum, which opened in May 1936, reflects both the international fame of the scientist who became the benefactor of Humanity with the discovery of the rabies vaccine, but also the day-to-day daily life of the Pasteur couple.

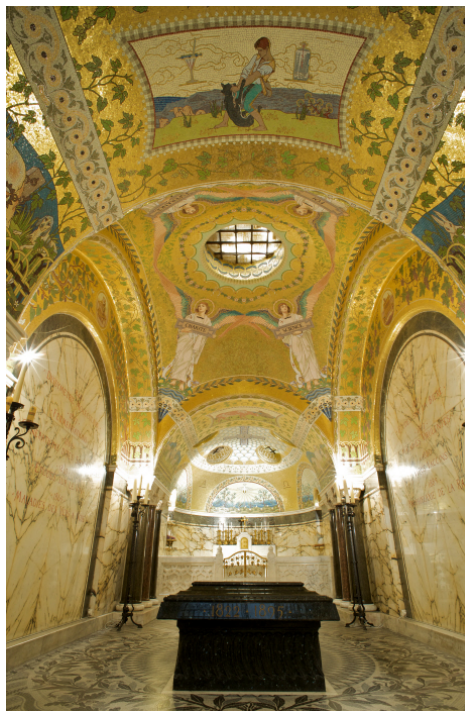
The layout of the premises is typical of the decorative art of the 19th-century upper middle-class interiors. The second floor serves as reception rooms. These include a large and small dining room, a large living or sitting room containing numerous works of art, gifts and medals celebrating Pasteur's illustrious scientific work, and his study. On the second floor are the couple's private apartments, including Monsieur and Madame's bedrooms, also a small sitting room and a bathroom.



Grand salon of the Pasteur apartment © Olivier Panier des Touches

Scientific memorabilia room © Institut Pasteur/Musée Pasteur

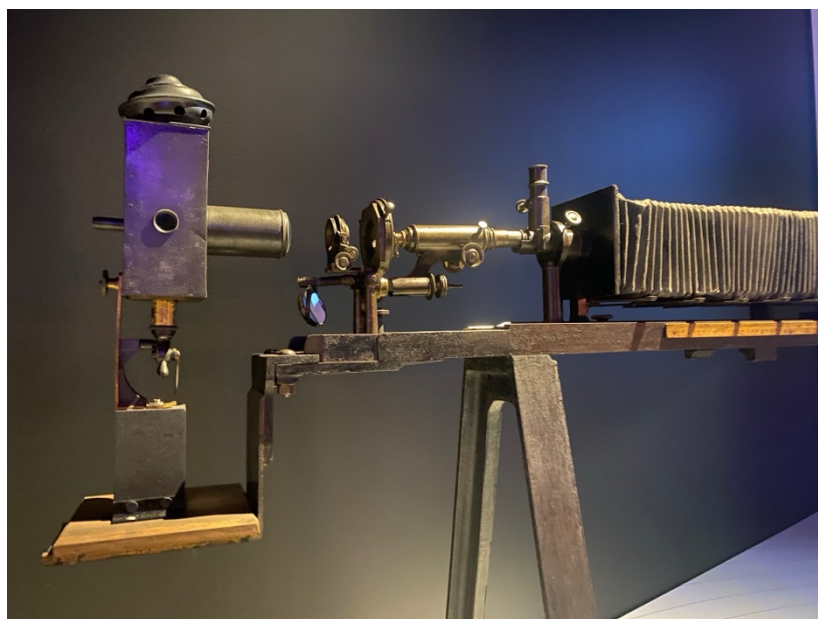
Louis Pasteur's laboratory instruments and artefacts, such as the crystallographic models of tartrate and paratartrate, and the swan-necked balloons, have been assembled together in the Scientific Memorabilia Room to illustrate Pasteur's many discoveries. This room, created in 1938, was inaugurated by Albert Lebrun, President of the French Republic. It mirrors the microbiology room that Louis Pasteur Valéry-Radot designed for the 1937 International Exhibition, that precise exhibition that led to the creation of the science Museum called "the Palais de la Découverte". The "Salle des Actes", a former library and prestigious venue dedicated to ceremonies such as the inauguration of the Institut Pasteur in 1888, and the neo-Byzantine crypt with its magnificent polychrome mosaics, where Louis and Marie Pasteur are laid to rest, complete the visit to the Museum.



The crypt where Louis and Marie Pasteur are buried © Olivier Panier des Touches

The collections

Our collections are extremely diversified. They cover a rich artistic and scientific spectrum: the fine arts, decorative arts, photographic collections and scientific instruments dedicated to Life Sciences from the 19th century to the present day, and more particularly to the study of microbes, such as the microphotographic apparatus, also known as an optical bench, created in 1887 by Emile Roux, a doctor and close collaborator of Louis Pasteur, who was Head of the Institut Pasteur from 1904 to 1933.



Microphotography apparatus, 1887, Emile Roux © Institut Pasteur/musée Pasteur

The Pasteur Museum restoration and extension project

In May 2022, the Institut Pasteur's Board of Directors decided to restore and refurbish the historic building (6230m²) housing the museum apartment. One of the major challenges of the Scientific and Cultural project currently being defined concerns the heritage of the building as a whole, which lost its legibility over the course of the 20th century due to successive partitioning therein.

This historic building, designed by the architects Eugène Petit and Félicien Breban in 1888, is a landmark in the history of both Science and Architecture. It comprises two parallel rectangular buildings, connected at the center by a wide longitudinal gallery. The first building houses the apartment-museum, the Salle des Actes and Pasteur's laboratory on the first floor. The second building houses the Rabies Department, laboratories and lecture and teaching rooms - in other words, the three founding activities of the Institute, as set out in Louis Pasteur's inaugural address: "*Our Institute will be a dispensary for the treatment of rabies, a research center for infectious diseases and a teaching center for microbial studies*". This project to restore and rehabilitate the Institut Pasteur's historic building has been in operation since January 2023 conducted by Lagneau architectes and the AFE architecture firm. The aim of this new phase is to integrate the apartment-museum into a visitor itinerary that has been rethought along the scale of the building, with new areas dedicated to exhibitions and

mediation. The aim is to reopen the Museum on November 14, 2028, to mark the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Institut Pasteur.



Pasteur museum under renovation and extension © Laurence Isnard

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Closed during restoration

Website : <https://www.pasteur.fr/en/institut-pasteur/museum>