

# THE DECOR IN THE REMARKABLE ROOMS

REMARKABLE ELEMENTS

ROOMS 22-24-25-26



## At that time...

### First half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.: the work of the Pierrevive Brothers

When the Pierrevive family, the major builders of Gadagne, began their work, the north-west part of the land on the slopes was occupied by the outbuildings belonging to the mediaeval Boyssette House. The building which houses the rooms in which we find ourselves now was therefore reconstructed and given a more **harmonious interior decor**.

## All the remarkable rooms

### First 16<sup>th</sup> c. decors

The decor in the rooms, which was originally done as frescos\*, was extremely simple: frames with coloured borders, using natural burnt umber, on which thin horizontal white lines were painted to give the effect of cut stones; smooth plaster, close to stucco, probably made using marble powder.

Restored in 1527-1539 in the same spirit but less carefully, the décor has a brighter pigment, yellow ochre.

### 17<sup>th</sup> c. ambience

The decor which visitors can admire today dates back to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. It was also made using the fresco technique\*. A wide **light grey baseboard** is added to the bottom of the light coloured, sometimes yellowish walls. A **double frieze** consisting of a dark red upper band and a lower brown band, situated beneath the ceiling, is the highlight of the decor.

**Thin red lines**, made using burnt umber, are used to bring out the mouldings of these lintels, the baseboard and all the openings. It was this decor that archaeologists discovered in 1998 when the renovation project began. These rooms had remained unoccupied by the museum since they had been purchased by the municipality. Paradoxically, the fact that they had been more or less abandoned preserved the ancient plaster, which was thus easier to restore: these rooms therefore show us what the living environment of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. inhabitants would have been like. Their level of preservation is truly exceptional: very few 17<sup>th</sup> c. decors of this type can still be seen today.

### A black trace? Illuminate me...

During the archaeological work in 1998, a **black trace** was found on the south wall of room 24. Its shape and presence were intriguing. It was likely caused by numerous successive candle snuffing\*, which go back to a period when candles were used for light. One of them was probably set on a table nearby.

### glossary

**snuffing**: operation which involves removing the charred tip or wick of a candle in order to improve the light it gives off.

**fresco**: mural which is painted quickly on plaster before it dries. This technique allows the pigments to penetrate into the coating which, by chemical reaction, calcifies. It produces coatings and colours that are extremely durable.

**Portrait:****The fortune of the Guadagni**

It was this part of the building that the Gadagnes, one of the most illustrious families of bankers and merchants in Tuscany, bought from the Pierrevives in 1545.

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> c., **Thomas I of Gadagne** (1454-1533) was the first real Lyonnais of the family. Known as "the Rich", he was the prime mover in Lyon of the family's commercial and banking company. He learnt finance in the Pazzi and Capponi banks, both located nearby. In 1522, he was part of the company which commissioned an expedition by the Florentine Giovanni da Verrazano, who crossed the Atlantic from east to west and landed in the future New York! Some historians speculate that the famous navigator, who gave his name to a bridge in the American metropolis, was the nephew of Thomas I of Gadagne.

**Thomas II of Gadagne** moved to Lyon in 1525 and was hosted by his uncle, Thomas I de Gadagne, whose prestige and success he did not take long to overshadow. His property holdings were innumerable... He became an alderman of the city and his wealth was such that he provided a considerable portion of the ransom unnecessary for releasing the eldest sons of François I, held prisoner by Charles V in 1530! Known as "the Magnificent", he was one of the rich Lyon families that contributed to decorating the city for royal visits. It was he who introduced to the consuls two Piedmontese men, Bartolomeo Naris and Guillaume Turquet who, in accordance with the edict issued by François I in 1536, were granted permission to set up silk looms.

His two sons, **Guillaume I and Thomas III of Gadagne**, further increased the family's property holdings and

bought Gadagne House, hitherto rented by their father, in 1545. They lived an opulent adolescence, in the company of their mother Péronette their mother and their two sisters Jeanne and Hélène. Dressed in their rich costumes, a fabulous destiny awaited them...

**Guillaume I de Gadagne** soon left banking and turned to royal administration and a military career. Appointed seneschal of Lyon by Henri II in 1554, he joined the king's army for the first three wars of religion. When Henri III appointed the Duke of Nemours as Governor of Lyon, it was he who, as lieutenant general, took charge of the first period of government. In 1589, faced with the uprisings of Protestants and of the League against the king's authority, he fell into disgrace for five years... before in January 1597 receiving the highest distinction of the kingdom, the Cross of the Holy Spirit, granted by Henri IV!

**Thomas III de Gadagne** distinguished himself, like his brother, in the wars of religion. It was also he who sold the property in 1581 to expand the estate around Saint-Genis-Laval. His house, Beauregard, became an opulent country house, where he played host in 1564 to Catherine de Medici, the young Charles IX, Henri of Navarre, the future Henri IV, and the Court!

The Gadagnes left Lyon in 1693 after the death of Guillaume III de Gadagne, but they had left their mark indelibly on the city, and their name lived on in history. For example, Rabelais relates in his Fourth Book (circa 1548) that in Lyon, people greet by wishing "the money of Gadagne" on one another.

Over the centuries, the Gadagne family continued to shine in France, Italy and across the Atlantic. But the call of Lyon is so strong that in recent years, the American and Italian branches this famous family have returned to visit the museum!

*Origin of the manufacture of silk in Lyon, Thomas II de Gadagne presenting Naris and Thomas to the Consulate of Lyon for the proposed development of silk, oil on canvas by Pierre Bonirote (1811-1891), 1536, Lyon Museum of Fine Arts*



grey words: items that can be seen in this room

**FURTHER READING**

*All the remarkable rooms sheet*