

# THE PAINTED CEILING

REMARKABLE ELEMENTS

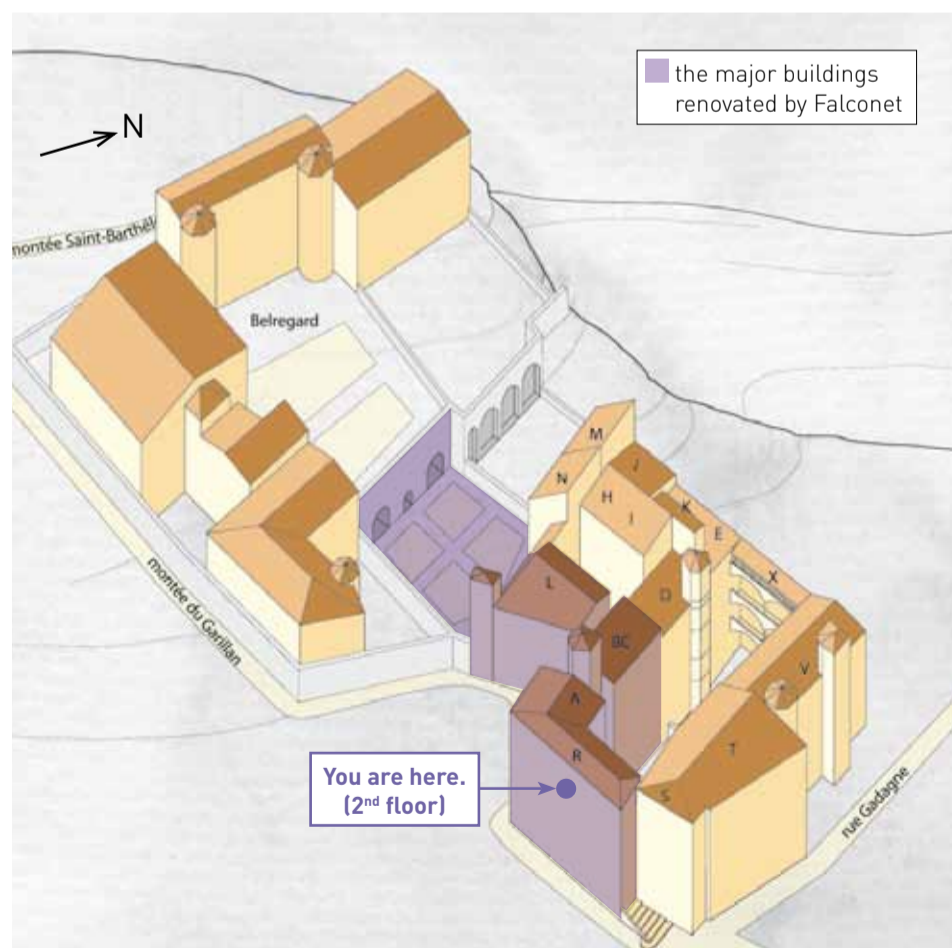
## ROOM 19



### At that time...

#### The great transformations of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. by Falconet: stables... on the ceiling!

Among the illustrious owners who lived in the building, André Falconet has gone down as the most important redeveloper. He acquired the southern part of the building on 7 August 1654, for the sum of 30,000 livres, and quickly undertook a number of major changes. To build a home that was worthy of his social standing, he elevated the building by one floor and an attic on the western and southern wings of the grand courtyard, and in particular



Gadagne House, a volume reconstitution of the buildings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> c., figure 138, DARA No. 29, Lyon Series No. 10, edited by C. Becker, I. Parron-Kontis, S. Savay-Guerraz, 2006

grey words: items that can be seen in this room

created six new bedrooms. Their windows, with sharp edged mullions and transoms, but without moulding, are typical of the period, a contrast to the prismatic mullions of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. He introduced some basic amenities (latrines), vaulted a stable and created a straight stair tower to link the montée du Garillan to the pleasure gardens created at the time.

It was during this same period of enthusiastic building, at the start of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> c., that he undertook this gallery and lavishly adorned it with a painted ceiling. A number of documents, particularly estimates, exist as proof of this work, except between 1656 and 1661, a period during which the notarial records are lacking: this suggests that the painted ceiling, for which no estimate has ever been found, dates from this period. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> c., under the impetus of Falconet, the buildings of the current museum, as we know them today, were completed.



Fanciful view of Gadagne House in a Renaissance fête in the street created in 1650, etching, Jean-Baptiste (known as Joannes) Drevet, 1901, Inv. (9) 96.32

### The painted ceiling

#### Luxury, gilt and polychrome

Made of wood panelling and paper mâché, the painted ceiling is based on the plan of a flower bed. It consists of three parts, from the centre of which painted canvases were hung, framed with flourishes\*. In the corners, the letters F and Q, circled by crowns and sometimes intertwined, represent the initials of André Falconet and his wife, Catherine Quinson.

The ceiling has now been restored, and in 1851 was the object of detailed study by Pierre Martin, a member of the Academic Society of Architecture of Lyon. It is his priceless work that enables us to imagine what it must have been like in the 17<sup>th</sup> c., in a room which we can picture as being decorated with paintings and rich wood panelling.

*"The carton ornaments were gold on a scarlet background and the ornamental woodwork was painted grey or blue."*

Pierre Martin

This high ceiling with its rich wood panelling is not however an isolated piece of décor in this building. We know from the inventory drawn up after the death of François Falconet in 1704 that the

.../...

bedrooms had paintings embedded in the woodwork. Many items of furniture, tables and chairs covered with upholstery filled rooms in this building so emblematic of Lyon high society.

### Portrait:

#### The purchaser, André Falconet

Born in Roanne, André Falconet moved to Lyon as a doctor in 1636. He became famous thanks to a treatise on the treatment of scurvy in 1642. After becoming consultant physician to the King, he was called in 1663 to the court of Turin to treat Queen Christine of France, for whom he was the chief physician. It was on his advice that King Charles-Emmanuel restored the spas in Aix-les-Bains, in Savoy, which had fallen into disrepair. He was a very popular man and was made Alderman of Lyon in 1667.

Like him, his son Noël and his grandson Camille studied medicine in Montpellier and settled in Lyon. Camille Falconet, one of the founding members of the Lyon Academy of Arts, Science and Letters in 1700, collected a famous library of some fifty thousand volumes, part of which entered the King's library when he died!



André Falconet (1612-1691), physician and alderman of Lyon, portrait from the *Memoirs of the Academy of Lyon*, print, Inv. N 4045.14

grey words: items that can be seen in this room

### The montée du Garillan, a real death trap!

The montée du Garillan has something of a reputation. Until 1650, it was a dangerous cul-de-sac where passers-by and local residents would dump their waste. Right from the moment it was created in 1502, the city alderman insisted on the necessity of opening it up to everybody and warned that “we must not [...] allow said road to be closed over from above”, in order to avoid the “great ills and dangers that might occur [...] by night, both murders and other misdemeanours, and the awful smells and infections caused by people who withdraw therein in order to perform their **natural necessities**”!

Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the fight against covered alleys and narrow streets was a battle that the municipality undertook with tenacity, with the general interest in mind.

It would seem that things have not changed very much because when video surveillance was introduced in Vieux Lyon in April 2004, a number of cameras were quite naturally set up in this alleyway!

### Choice of restoration

#### A ceiling repeatedly restored

In 2008, as part of the renovation of the museum, the ceiling was restored back to its pre-existing state. This was no easy task, because during its history, it had already been changed on a number of occasions. It is particularly well known thanks to the thorough studies undertaken by Pierre Martin in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> c. At the time, Martin expressed dismay at its “*state of ruin*”, regretting that it would not allow him to “*use lithochromic techniques to reproduce the dazzle that it must once have had.*” Martin notes that the canvas and paint have almost entirely disappeared. The mystery as to what they could have represented in this setting therefore remains.

### glossary

**flourish:** a painted or carved pattern, used in painting or architecture, composed of leaves and plant stems, usually used in a frieze or in successive coils.