



De Puydt Museum street
(rue du Musée)
before the war



The museum in July 1914
Mr. Antony, photographer in Ypres

The museum and its history

When the museum opened in 1861, Charles Allo, a friend of the defunct, became responsible for the museum's management; he was replaced in 1881 by Edouard Swynghedauw, director and professor of Benoît De Puydt's Drawing Academy.

The income from the properties managed by the De Puydt Foundation, the State's deposits and the many donors' generosity (Louis-Henri Hans, Camille Debert, Ignace de Coussemaker, Major Klémer ...) allowed the museum to increase the initial fund and to open new sections: numismatics, archeology, natural history. The collections were then described in detailed inventory listings by Edouard Swynghedauw who then put a lot of effort in his work as a curator.

The First World War

In 1912, Emile Théodore, who was curator at the Beaux-Arts's museum in Lille, became responsible for the collections.

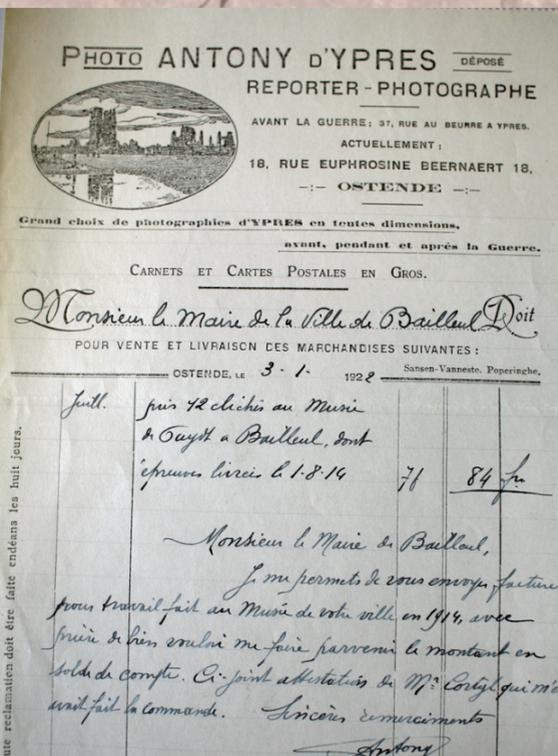
In order to cope with the disconcerting political situation, the city decided to commission Mister Antony, a Belgian photographer, to take pictures of the different rooms in the museum.

From October 1914 to April 1918, British and Commonwealth garrisons settled in Bailleul; the museum was called "Petit Cluny du Nord" by the soldiers who visited it.

On 6th March 1918, under the leadership of lieutenant Sabatté, two military trucks evacuated a small part of the museum's collections towards Normandy (Eu and Martainville). They were brought back after the war to be at first exhibited in Hazebrouck, then in Bailleul. In 1927, a temporary museum was opened in the premises of the Caisse d'Épargne bank where the Emile Hié factory used to be.

The remaining artworks in Bailleul were unfortunately stolen or destroyed between April and August 1918, during the enemies' and allies' bombardments, which devastated the city.

One of the rare elements of the house, which was found in the ruins, was a stone lion decorating a jamb of the kitchen chimney (see a picture from 1914). It is strange to observe that the second lion of the chimney is sealed on the community hall's bar, which is located on rue de Lille.



Mr. Antony's letter, in 1922



Façade of the rebuilt museum

The reconstruction

Bailleul's reconstruction plan, which was adopted by the State in 1920, intended to reconstruct the museum at its former place, but in a neo-Flemish style. The architect Louis Roussel was in charge of it. The new museum was inaugurated on 15th July 1934. The collections were reconstituted thanks to war compensations and new donations.

Five years later, in 1939, the museum had to pack its objects again and was evacuated : 40 crates were stored in the French Département Ille-et-Vilaine at the Bourbansais Castle in Pleugueneuc. They would return to Bailleul at the end of the war, having endured some damage.

In 1947, Léon Lotthé was made responsible for the museum.

In 1954, a new showroom dedicated to folklore was inaugurated at the second floor.



Burglary at the museum
Voix du Nord, 14-15 April 1974

Today, towards the museum

In 1974, the Mayor, Mister Legrand, called up a few citizens from Bailleul to bring back life into the museum. In order to restore the building, the artworks were put into crates. But during the night from 10th to 11th April 1974, some keen burglars stole a loot of several millions of Francs: statuettes, wooden sculptures, medals, coins, porcelain and earthenware plates. On the other hand, they completely ignored the paintings and tried in vain to take down the famous 16m² tapestry of States of Flanders by Guillaume Werniers.

Less than forty-eight hours later, the museum's treasure was recovered in a garage in the suburbs of Brussels, thanks to the French and Belgian cooperation. This event turned out to be a quite good unexpected advertising for Bailleul's museum. The municipality then undertook works aiming at better safety for the museum, which reopened in 1975.

The Association of the Museum's Friends was created with the mission of supporting the municipal project. It was highly involved in the restoration and acquisition of artworks, exhibitions, guided visits and animations. From 1991 to 1999, Laurent Guillaut, a regional curator for Bailleul and Cassel, was appointed. He gave new impetus to the museum's life and a new team was formed.

The Association of the Museum's Friends, which is still very active today, tries to support the museum's team and enrich the collections.



Poster of the exhibition
*Ceramics stories :
artists perceptions/visions
from the 16th century
to the 21st century*
19th May- 30th September 2012