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Musée Bourdelle, Paris

Report

# Musée Bourdelle, Paris

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- Project: Musée Bourdelle, Paris / France  
Architect: DBLH Architectes, Paris / France  
Lighting designer: Julia Kravtsova, Vyara Stefanova, Paris / France  
Photographer: Edgar Zippel, Berlin / Germany  
[www.bourdelle.paris.fr](http://www.bourdelle.paris.fr)
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- Architecture: DBLH Architectes, Paris / France  
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• Photography: Edgar Zippel, Berlin / Germany  
• Place: Paris / France  
• Country: France  
• 12.04.2016
- 

Antoine Bourdelle – along with Auguste Rodin – is one of the pioneers of 20th century monumental sculpture. The Musée Bourdelle in Paris has recently been given a lighting update with LED technology using ERCO’s photometric precision to enhance the dynamic style of Bourdelle’s sculptures for optimised three-dimensionality.

His powerful body strains with the resistance of the bow in his hands. Positioned atop a huge boulder, he braces himself with legs spread wide, his feet anchored against the rocks. Flexing every bulging muscle, his gaze is fixed on the target, the arrow poised to shoot. Inspired by Greek mythology, the bronze sculpture “Hercules the Archer” by Antoine Bourdelle depicts the hero set to kill a flock of monstrous birds with his poison-tipped arrows. Today, there are many versions of the virile sculpture in prestigious collections across the world, including of course at the Musée Bourdelle in Paris.

## Ancient themes with a modern interpretation



Born in 1861, Antoine Bourdelle lived in France until his death in 1929. An influential and prolific sculptor, he became one of the pioneers of 20th century monumental sculpture. After his studies at the Schools of Fine Art in Toulouse and Paris, he became an assistant to Auguste Rodin in his early years. His first creation in 1910, considered his most famous work, is “Hercules the Archer”. Bourdelle frequently found great inspiration from mythological subjects, which he executed using materials such as plaster, bronze or marble, creating powerful and dynamic sculptures. Bourdelle taught at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris influencing artists such as Alberto Giacometti or Henri Matisse.

## Tranquil place in the heart of Paris



Tucked away on a quiet street near, and yet so far from, the bustling Gare Montparnasse, the Musée Antoine Bourdelle is an unexpected oasis of tranquillity and meditation that is reminiscent of a modern ancient temple. This is where Antoine Bourdelle lived and worked from 1884 until 1929. Faithfully preserved, the workshop gives the impression as if the sculptor just left. The structures on the premises are from a number of different periods. Once the home and studio of Bourdelle, the buildings originating from the 19th century were turned into a museum. The “Great Hall” was built by architect Henri Gautruche to mark the 100th anniversary of Bourdelle’s birth, whilst the extension to the museum was added in 1992, designed by architect and Pritzker Prize winner Christian de Portzamparc.



## Great Hall bathed in soft light

Recent renovations of the Musée Bourdelle included an upgrade of the lighting system with LED technology. “The quality of LED light has evolved a lot during the years, including a large selection of hues and constantly improving colour rendering properties,” explains lighting designer Julia Kravtsova. As a result, the lighting inside the museum was optimised for maximum visual comfort with lighting tools from the ERCO [Light Board](#), [Logotec](#), [Parscan](#) and [Pollux](#) ranges. Designed to overcome great distances, the luminaires bathe the Great Hall in superbly uniform and glare-free light across an impressive height of 10m, allowing visitors to look at the monumental sculptures from different angles. Using various lenses and different beam characteristics as well as two light colours with 3,000K and 4,000K, the sculptures are illuminated with photometric precision, accentuating their surfaces in varying nuances depending on the texture. The museum website gives mention to “the immensity of the Great Hall full of plaster casts bathed in soft light”.



## Illuminating monumental sculptures with LED light

The Musée Bourdelle has several landscaped gardens with lawns, bushes and trees that provide a natural setting for Bourdelle’s bronze sculptures. Embellished with a green patina, the sculptures blend effortlessly with the lush vegetation. “Many students come to draw in the gardens and the lighting had to be welcoming and predisposing to contemplation and observation of the sculptures,” Kravtsova explains. The artwork as well as selected garden features are illuminated effectively from different angles using outdoor luminaires of the ERCO Grasshopper range with neutral and warm white light. Designed with a compact housing, the lighting tools remain virtually invisible, whilst precise light distributions eliminate glare for the visitors and neighbours, so as not to detract from the enjoyment of the sculptures as well as the gardens and night sky.

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