

ICOM Kyoto 2019

NATHIST

« Between nature and culture, le musée des Confluences de Lyon, a narrative museum »

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1. Abstract

The *musée des Confluences*, which opened in Lyon on December 2014, tells the story of mankind and the history of life. The permanent exhibition begins with great universal questions and then goes on to explore the origin and destiny of humanity, the diversity of cultures and civilizations as well as the place of humans within the web of life.

With more than 2 million artefacts in its collection (mixing ethnographic and natural history collections), the *musée des Confluences* is committed to exploring long term issues as the only way to understand the world's complexities.

Since its opening with a 3 million audience, the *musée des Confluences* is now the first museum in France after those of Paris. 30 % of its visitors acknowledge that they never have visited a cultural institution before. They are certainly attracted by the way the museum addresses global issues with a narrative ambition thru interdisciplinary and immersive scenography.

2. Objectives and main contents

The purpose of this presentation is to give an overview of the *musée des Confluences*, from the point of view of its spectacular architecture, natural history collections and ethnography as well as its original approach.

In a first step, we will show the architecture of the museum imagined by Coop Himmelblau, in order to explain the very term of “confluences” and its geographical implantation; and beyond the ambition of the architect to offer the visitor a real experience. The building alone is an invitation to look at the heritage of the museum otherwise, as a real instrument of observation, a real machine to see.

In a second step, we will discuss about the question of the confluence taken in the sense of the diversity and interdisciplinarity. The *musée des Confluences* has the distinction of being the heir to the natural history museum of Lyon and the museum of religions imagined by Emile Guimet in the second half of the 19th century. In contrast to a large number of French museums, the museum considered that this diversity is a chance and not a weakness to answer the universal questions that everyone asks about its origins or its relationship to death but also to the big ones, contemporary issues, ecology in the first place.

This characteristic required to think the museum and its offer for the public, so that audience could understand the meaning of presenting collections together while they are separated elsewhere. The central element of this museographic device, which will be analyzed at the last moment, is in one word: the narrative. This "once upon a time" irrigates all the proposals that are offered to the public. In exhibitions as a strong narrative thread, but also in editions or in the devices of mediations.

Photos selection



Global view of the *musée des Confluences* from the side of the Crystal (entrance)



Global view of the museum and its garden from the Confluence.

In the background on the left, Fourvière's Cathedral and the Old Town (Vieux Lyon).
In the back ground on the right, the Business District.



View of the hall entrance of the museum, the Crystal.



Views from the permanent exhibition, *Origines*



Views from the permanent exhibition, *Espèces*



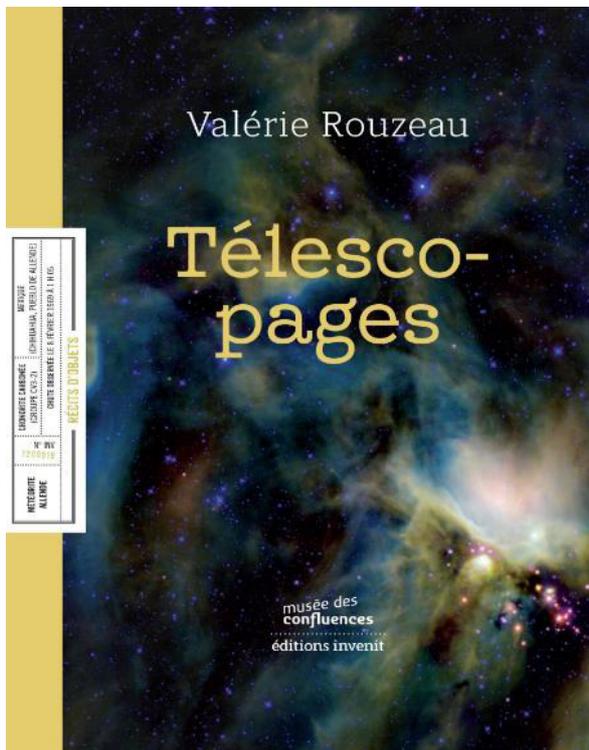
View from the permanent exhibition, *Sociétés*



Views from the permanent exhibition, *Éternités*



Photo of a guiding visit in the context of the project : « un temps pour vous ».



First cover of one of the museum's books « récit d'objets ».