



LOUISE D'ORLÉANS, FIRST QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS: A ROMANTIC DESTINY

Exhibition at the Condé Museum, Château de Chantilly, from 19 October 2024 to 16 February 2025, then at TreM.a, the Museum of Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Art in Namur, from 14 March to 16 June 2025.

Bracelet romantique de la famille royale de Belgique, musée Condé
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Princess Louise (1812-1850), eldest daughter of Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orléans and later King of the French, was a leading figure of Romantic Europe. Great care was taken over her education, which encompassed the arts, history, languages, and the sciences, to prepare her for life as a princess and, after her father succeeded to the throne, one of the crowned heads of Europe.

As Princess of France and then Queen of the Belgians, Louise of Orléans was a Romantic actor in a Romantic epic — the creation of an improbable kingdom whose voice would nevertheless join the concert of European nations.

Louise, the eldest daughter of a close-knit family, shared the modern tastes of her brothers and sisters. Princes and princesses, but also pupils and patrons of a new generation of Romantic artists, her elder brother, Ferdinand-Philippe of Orléans, her sister, the sculptor Marie, and her younger brother, Henri of Orléans, Duke of Aumale, heir to the Château de Chantilly, shared her strong artistic and aesthetic leanings.

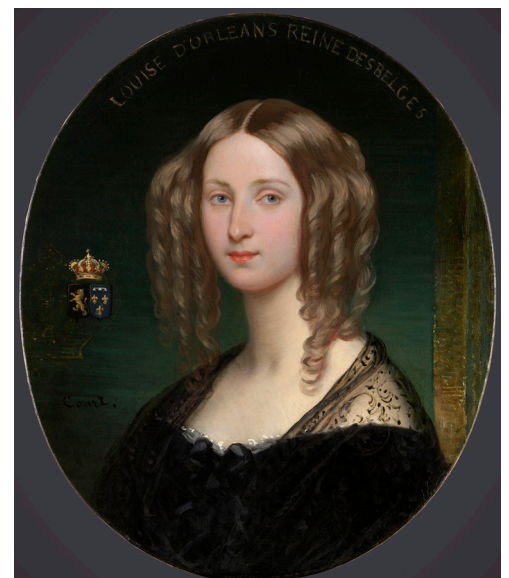
Betrothed to a much older royal husband, Queen Louise-Marie became the discreet — perhaps even too discreet — heroine of the new Kingdom of Belgium, the centrepiece of a family chessboard whose destiny was tied to the politics of the European regimes that emerged everywhere from Paris to Brussels after the revolutions of 1830.

Trained in the arts, passionate about politics, a prolific letter writer, loyal daughter and attentive mother, Queen Louise, with her husband Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, established the country's core institutions, including its royal court and political, diplomatic and cultural structures, while raising a family in Belgium's new royal residences.

A rapid rise is sometimes followed by an equally rapid fall, even for royalty. As her body weakened and her health failed, Louise of Orléans, who died in Ostend at a tragically young age, became the first icon of Belgian royalty, and her death made an indelible mark on a state that was still in the making. She left behind children whose fates were sometimes more tragic than her own — her only daughter, Charlotte, was briefly Empress of Mexico — or whose lives sometimes obscured their mother's memory while building on her legacy and that of the Orléans family through their love of travel and collecting.

Based on recent research, this exhibition sheds fresh light on the story of Louise of Orléans, a French princess whose romantic life ended in the Low Countries, and reclaims the legacy of a forgotten queen.

This exhibition, the result of a unique cross-border partnership, allows visitors in France and Belgium to learn more about this little-known figure through masterpieces from prestigious collections, including the Royal Collection of Belgium.



Joseph Désiré Court, *Portrait of Princess Louise of Orléans, Queen of the Belgians*, Condé Museum
© RMN Grand Palais, Domaine de Chantilly, Mathieu Rabeau

VENUE

The exhibition is produced in collaboration with the Namur Provincial Museums and Cultural Heritage Service in Belgium and supported by the Belgian federal and regional authorities. A version of the exhibition will be presented in Namur from March to June 2025.

Condé Museum, Château de Chantilly

An outstanding French heritage site, the Condé Museum is the legacy of one man — Henri d'Orléans, Duke of Aumale, son of the last King of the French, Louis-Philippe — and his extraordinary life. The leading collector of his age, the prince inherited the Château de Chantilly and turned it into a showcase for his many masterpieces and priceless manuscripts. Its collection of artworks from the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance period is the second largest in France after the Louvre Museum. The château, its museum and collections were bequeathed to the Institut de France, its current owner, in 1886. Some 525,000 people visited the Domaine de Chantilly in 2022.

Namur Provincial Museums and Cultural Heritage Service

The Provincial Museums and Cultural Heritage Service preserves, develops and facilitates access to the cultural heritage of the Province of Namur, encompassing both tangible and intangible, movable and immovable assets. The department consists of a unit tasked with promoting this cultural heritage across the province and through its local heritage, and two internationally renowned museums: the TreM.a musée des Arts anciens, which presents and promotes access to collections of works dating from the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, including the famous Treasure of Oignies, and the Félicien Rops Museum, a museum that explores the life and work of Rops and other 19th-century Belgian artists.



Joseph Désiré Court, *Bust of Louise of Orléans, Queen of the Belgians*, Condé Museum
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CURATORS

Julien De Vos, Head Curator, Director, Namur Provincial Museums and Cultural Heritage Service

Mathieu Deldicque, Lead Heritage Conservator, Director of the Condé Museum and the Living Museum of the Horse, Château de Chantilly

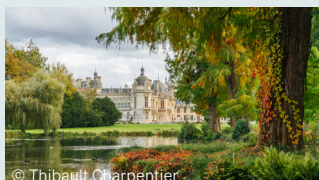
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ARTCURIAL



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L'OBJET D'ART