

Castle history from the Renaissance to the present

THE GREAT HALL



Wall painting on the left side of the fireplace ; A. Huguet.

Settings for power...

The decoration of the great hall dates mainly from two different periods. In the 16th century, the lords of Suze took advantage of work on the courtyard to rearrange the hall by incorporating a monumental fireplace featuring the La Baume family arms and framed with Corinthian pilasters of the Renaissance epoch. The composite columns bearing an entablature sculpted with flower-decorated coffers can be linked to court architecture.

On both sides, wall paintings dating originally from the 16th century represent battle scenes that glorify the family's military prowess. Badly damaged, these paintings were almost entirely redone in the 19th century by Adrien Huguet and restored in 2004. The panel on the left presents an overview of rows of soldiers bearing the Savoy cross flag. In the foreground, a richly outfitted knight occupies most of the scene. The panel on the right shows a clash between two armies. In the foreground, a knight and his horse fall to the ground, wounded by another knight's lance.

A multipurpose room

Traditionally found on the first floor, the great hall (or aula) of the Château de Suze-la-Rousse evokes the lord's civil power in addition to his military power. It probably dates from the 15th century and replaces a precedent hall located in the old medieval donjon. A large open space, it was the setting for judicial decisions, banquets, meetings of the counselors and, sometimes, as a bedroom for guests. The appropriate furniture was installed for each use, such as a platform for judgments, trestles and boards for banquets and straw mattresses or cots for sleeping.

...and for pleasure

By the 18th century, the castle was no longer used for military purposes, and the great hall was no longer the official site it once was. A search for wellbeing and comfort led to the addition of three French doors on the south side, which opened on the surrounding countryside rather than on a French-style garden.

Plasterwork* ornamental decorations complete the setting. The panels offer a rhythmic evocation of country pleasures. On either side of the large portrait, elaborate frames hold allegories of fishing (fish, anchor, trident used for fishing in the Mediterranean) and hunting (bore snout, spear and deer head). In the center, the petasos (broad-brimmed hat), quiver and arrows symbolize Mercury and Venus. The north and south walls are decorated with flower-filled baskets and musical instruments, including a lute, musette de cour (the forerunner of bagpipes), tambourine and shawm (type of oboe) that evoke country festivals.



East wall representing, from left to right, fishing, Mercury and Venus, and hunting.

Decorations are repainted and then restored

In the 19th century, the Isnards family made numerous rearrangements inside the castle. The plasterwork was repainted in shades of brown to recall the color of wood, which was popular at the time (see photo below).

From 2011 to 2013, the castle decorations were cleaned, and successive layers of paint were removed to reveal the original shades and sculpted details.



For more old photos of the castle, see terminal 2 located in this room (in front of the scale model).



Great hall of the Château de Suze-la-Rousse, old postcard, 19th century (Drôme Department Archives).

A portrait

François de La Baume (1526-1587)

The standing portrait of François de La Baume painted in the 19th century follows the codes established in the 17th century for formal portraits. The family's central figure appears wearing the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit; the sword and headdress evoke his function and noble origin.

This painting, which has been set into the plasterwork decoration, is undoubtedly the last remaining evidence of a portrait gallery that no longer exists.



Portrait of François de La Baume, 19th century (detail).

Glossary

Plasterwork : handmade ornamentations in plaster that were copied directly from natural objects. This type of decoration was very popular during the reign of Louis XV for castles and private mansions in Paris and in the provinces.



To learn more about François de La Baume, see Terminal 1 located in the guard room.