

# press release



## **Mary Stuart**

The French Destiny of  
a Scottish Queen

15 October 2008 -  
2 February 2009

### **Musée National de la Renaissance**

Château d'Ecouen

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Exhibition organised by the  
Réunion des Musées Nationaux,  
the Musée National de la  
Renaissance - Château d'Ecouen

Exhibition in parallel with the  
Musée Condé in Chantilly

This exhibition has been organised for the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the marriage of the very young queen of Scotland, Mary Stuart, to the Dauphin François, son of Henri II and Catherine de Medici in 1558. It retraces the forgotten fate of this foreign princess who was brought up in the French court, and became queen there.

A romantic heroine with a tragic fate, imprisoned and executed on the orders of her cousin Elisabeth 1<sup>st</sup> for her claims to the English throne, Mary Stuart (1542-1587) also owes her popularity to her image, created in France, as a woman of culture, beauty and taste. She was born to James V of Scotland and Marie de Guise, a French princess. Both were fervent admirers of the new artistic techniques of the Renaissance, which they helped introduce into Scotland. Promised in marriage to the Dauphin, François, she arrived in France at the age of five, and was brought up with the royal children. Under the direction of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici, she became immersed in the splendour and refinement of the Valois court. Almost immediately after her marriage, the accidental death of Henri II the following year hastened her destiny. François II and Mary Stuart became sovereigns of France and Scotland in 1559 for a brief reign of sixteen months, which ended with the premature death of François II. Accounts of her activities and education reveal a complex personality, inspired by the political struggles of which she was the subject. In fact, history reveals her to have been a pawn in the ambitions of the maternal family, the Guise.

The exhibition is laid out in several rooms of the château, and is divided into six sections: the Renaissance in Scotland, Mary Stuart's childhood in France, Mary Stuart's marriage to the Dauphin François on 24 April 1558, Mary Stuart, Queen of France, the death of François II and her departure for Scotland in 1561, and it finishes with an evocation of the 19th century myth of Mary Queen of Scots. About 100 works situate Mary Stuart in the political and artistic environment into which she was born, grew up and reigned. François Clouet, an important painter at the time is exceptionally represented with about ten paintings and drawings.

These works show the Valois court; there are portraits of the royal children François II and Elisabeth de France, a portrait of Catherine de Medici, from the Pitti Palace, portraits of Mary Stuart, one of which is a miniature from the royal collections in England, exhibited in France for the first time, and there are drawings showing her at different ages. The *Bain de Diane [Bath of Diana]*, a masterpiece from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, is a poetic and mythological image reflecting her court.

Also on display are portraits of the queen wearing the white mourning clothes that she chose to wear after the death of her father in law, Henri II, and then after the successive deaths of her mother and her husband, unlike Catherine de Medici who chose to wear black and white.

Objets d'art, including painted enamels by Léonard Limosin, jewellery and personal items, complete our view of this person, extolled by the Renaissance poets Ronsard, du Bellay, the chronicler Brantôme, and his contemporaries.

The Musée Condé at the Château de Chantilly presents a complementary show to the exhibition at Ecoeu. There is a large collection of court portraits on show there; in particular, portraits of the children of Catherine de Medici and Henri II, and portraits of Mary Stuart, by François Clouet and his school. As these works cannot leave the museum under the terms of the will of the Duke of Aumale, it was important to be in partnership with this museum for this exhibition, and to remember the historic link between the two institutions - two museums and two châteaux with a shared history going back to the times of the Montmorency.

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**Exhibition Curator**

Thierry Crépin-Leblond, director of the Musée de la Renaissance - Château d'Ecoeu

**Curators**

Michèle Bimbenet-Privat, curator in chief at the Musée de la Renaissance - Château d'Ecoeu

Nicole Garnier, curator in chief at the Musée Condé - Château de Chantilly

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**Musée National de la Renaissance**

**Château d'Ecoeu / [www.musee-renaissance.fr](http://www.musee-renaissance.fr)**

**Opening times:** Daily except Tuesday, from 9.30am to 12.45pm and from 2pm to 5.15pm

**Tickets:** full rate: €6.50, concessions: €5, free for under 18s

**Guided tours:** For individuals every Saturday and Sunday at 11am, duration 90 mins (€6.50 supplement). For group bookings (schools or adults) tel +33 (0)1 34 38 38 52

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**Musée Condé - Château de Chantilly**

**[www.domainedechantilly.com](http://www.domainedechantilly.com)**

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**Opening times:** Daily except Tuesday. Until 2 November 2008: 10am to 6pm; from 3 November 2008: 10.30am to 5pm. Closed from 5 to 9 January 2009 inclusive

**press contacts**

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