

A display of success

A man of war...

Originally from the lower nobility of Quercy, Galiot owes his ascent to fame to his military skills. His success brought him a considerable fortune. A man of taste who loved literature, he was a close friend of Guillaume Budé*. He favoured themes that were popular during the Renaissance in the decoration of his château, especially those based on Antiquity.

... rewarded by Fortune

Galiot was fond of the theme of Fortune, symbolised by a wheel, the symbol of destiny that never ceases to turn. Fortune was also represented as a woman standing on a sphere, holding a sail that is billowing in the wind. The idea that destiny – happy or sad – was linked to being virtuous developed at the end of the Middle Ages. At the beginning of the Renaissance, Fortune became commonplace in iconography, serving as a model to both kings and princes. It was a famous literary theme, used as a lesson in the exercise of virtue. Galiot was blessed with a very successful life. Heroic on the battlefield and famous in society at the time, he was rewarded by the king and given important responsibilities. He chose the motto “I love Fortune”, revealing the high opinion he had of himself: that of a deserving man who owed his success to his integrity and that of a good Christian blessed by grace.

Glossary

Budé Guillaume (1467-1540): humanist who persuaded François I to create the National Library and the Collège de France. He was an advocate of the study of ancient Greek.

Culverin: cannon with a long, slender bore.

Grisaille: monochrome painting in grey or brown.

Hercules: Roman name for the Greek hero Heracles; he personified strength. To atone for the murder of his wife and children, he had to perform twelve seemingly impossible tasks, the first of which was to kill the Nemean lion.

Machicolations: an overhanging stone gallery with openings allowing missiles to be fired towards the ground from above.

Pilaster: a flat vertical ornament of an appearance and function similar to a column.

Visitor information

Average length of visit: 45 mins

Guided tours.

The Centre des monuments nationaux publishes a collection of guidebooks about French monuments translated into several languages. Éditions du patrimoine publications are on sale in the bookshop-giftshop.

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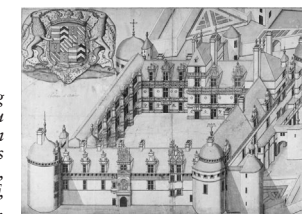
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château d'Assier

A château in the image of its creator

A military triumph

At the beginning of the 16th century, Jacques Ricard Gourdon de Genouillac, known as “Galiot” (1465-1546), commissioned a new



A drawing of the château in 1692, from the Gaignières collection, BnF, Estampes.

château on the site of the manor where he was born. The new building was finished in 1535.

Experienced in bearing arms from

an early age, he was made Master of Artillery by Louis XII (1462-1515), a position that was renewed by François I (1494-1547). His château testifies to the prestige of his numerous titles, such as Grand Squire, received in 1526.

Galiot then rebuilt the village church, which would one day house his memorial monument and commemorate his military achievements. After his death, the building was completed by his only child, Jeanne, the wife of Charles de Crussol, Viscount of Uzès. The seigniorship and the château d'Assier thus became the property of the house of Uzès until the middle of the 18th century.

Saved from ruin

In 1768, the château was handed over to demolition contractors who bought the remains. The Murat de Montai family acquired the remaining wing in 1786. The building, listed as a historic monument in 1901, was bought by the State in 1934 and restored extensively.

* Explanations overleaf.

Only one wing remains of the château, which was formerly in the shape of a huge quadrangle flanked by round towers capped with domes at each corner. Three walls and their ruined towers map out the extent of the original building.

1 The exterior façade

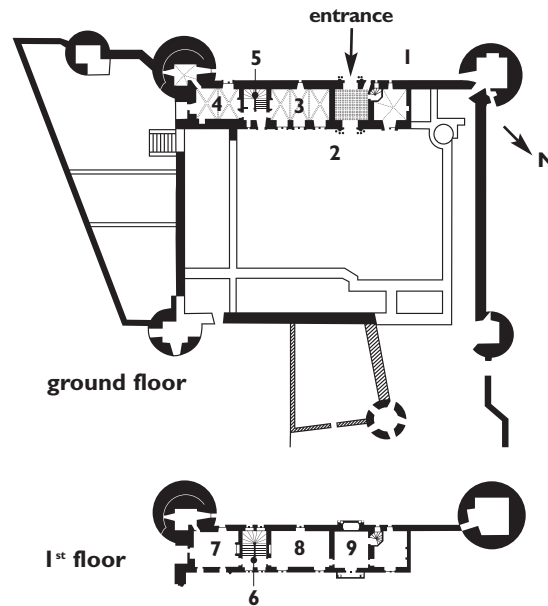
The entrance is the centre point of the façade, built as a triumphant archway. The old doors, which were decorated with the sword emblem of the Grand Squire, were restored and refitted in 1996. Above, the niche originally held an equestrian statue of Galiot de Genouillac topped by the salamander of François I. High ornate windows embellish the roof, highlighted by a line of false machicolations*.

2 The courtyard façade

The layout is typical of early French Renaissance. The pilasters* form vertical spans, originally topped with windows on the roof to increase the impression of height. Each level is highlighted by sculpted friezes offering an allegorical and symbolic storyboard: the myth of Hercules*, culverins* and allusions to Fortune. This iconography is repeated in the sculpted decorations in the two churches that were built in Lonzac in Charente-Maritime and in Assier itself. Profiles of emperors from Antiquity can be seen on the panels between the windows.

3 Ground floor

The great hall contains pieces of stone remaining from the demolition of the château: vestiges of sculpted decoration from the façades featuring the emblems of Galiot de Genouillac: the sword of the Grand Squire and its sheath. The State



bought the effigy of “Galiote” Anne de Vaillac, a second cousin twice removed to the Lord of Assier, Prior of the Beaulieu Hospital, part of the Order of Malta.

4 The small adjoining room also houses several original sculptures.

Displayed on the walls are mouldings of the church frieze, made from 1954 onwards. Among others, there is a scene of a military camp with a culverin* on its carriage, cannonballs, powder caskets and all the necessary artillery equipment: a ram to push down the cannonball, a brush to clean the inside of the bore, a loader for putting the powder in the canon and a gabion, a sort of cloth bag filled with earth placed in front of the canon. It is surprising to see such designs on a church façade, but they are all linked to Galiot de Genouillac’s personality.

5 The staircase displays cross-ribbed vaults curving around a central Gothic pillar, but with Italian-style straight flights.

6 On the first-floor landing, a beautifully made sculpted pillar is lit by two large bay windows. On the lateral walls, candelabras combine with emblems of a vase and garlands, and scenes from the legend of Hercules*: Hercules strangling the giant Antaeus, Hercules fighting the Nemean lion, alongside the allegory of Fortune surrounded by Galiot’s motto “J’aime Fortune” (I love Fortune).

First floor

7 The loggia opens to the south, overlooking the old gardens. As there is no ceiling, it is possible to see the second floor and the woodwork, which was redone in 1901.

8 In the great hall on the left, there is a huge chimney breast whose sculpted decoration has disappeared. Here, portraits of Galiot, the list of his titles and the kings under whom he served can be found, together with his income. The wooden inlaid door is a rare example of the splendour and opulence of the interior fittings: the right-hand panel is dated 1524. Other plaster mouldings feature the Italian campaigns led by François I from 1515, notably the difficult crossing of the Alps by the French artillery. The painted canvasses from the 17th century come from the ruined château of Saint-Sulpice in the Célé valley.

9 The grisailles* room takes its name from the painted canvasses that come from the guardhouse of the same defunct château.

The visit finishes at the old foundations in the interior courtyard, which can be seen from the loggia above the entrance.

* Explanations overleaf.