

## Glossary

**Archivolt:** an ornament that frames or emphasises a bay.  
**Commendatory abbot:** a clergyman or layman appointed by the King and enjoying the benefits of the abbey without the religious office or monastic activity.

**Corbel** (or *cul-de-lampe*): a weight-bearing piece supporting a double arch or cross-arches.

**Coupled columns:** columns of the same diameter grouped together in pairs, sometimes side by side.

**Eremitic community:** a religious community of hermit monks.

**Gypser:** decorative architectural covering made of plaster or stucco.

**Lay brothers:** those responsible for the material life of the community.

**Rood screen:** partition separating the choir from the nave.

**Semi-engaged columns:** columns that are partially sunken into the wall behind them.

**Warming room:** the room where the monks went to warm up.

## Information

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### Gift and book shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the "Itinéraires" collection in the gift and book shop.

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## Perre Brache and Geneviève Bonnefoi: a life for art

### The first contemporary art centre in the Midi-Pyrénées



Pierre Brache, Claude Viseux and Geneviève Bonnefoi in 1981.

In 1953, Geneviève Bonnefoi and Pierre Brache discovered Beaulieu Abbey and decided, six years later, to buy it in order to save it from ruin, the aim being to make it the first contemporary art centre in the Midi-Pyrénées. The couple sold two sculptures by Constantin Brâncuși to fund part of the purchase and the work.

The art centre was inaugurated in 1970, following ten years of extensive restoration and development work on account of the monument being very run down at the time of purchase.



Geneviève Bonnefoi in 1987, with works by Claude Viseux and Claude Georges

In 1974, the couple donated the monument and half of their art collection to the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, which would later become the Centre des Monuments Nationaux. The other part of the collection would be bequeathed to it following the deaths of Pierre Brache in 1999 and Geneviève Bonnefoi in 2018.

Comprising over 1,300 works, it is now one of the largest collections of art from the post-war boom period (1945-1975) in France.

## Roses

### The rose: from the medieval garden to the principles of André Eve

The *Gallica officinalis* rose (Apothecary's rose) has been cultivated for its (anti-inflammatory) medicinal properties since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, Bernard de Clairvaux, a great figure of the Cistercian order, made the rose a symbol of the Virgin Mary and of loyalty to the Church, meaning that it played an important role in the Cistercian world.

The keystone of the Marian chapel, in the south transept, is carved with a rose.

Beaulieu Abbey had an orchard to the west, a vegetable garden to the south or east, and a garden of simple plants where species that the monks could use in day-to-day-life, medicinal plants and rose bushes were cultivated.

### A contemporary garden with a thousand roses

The garden of Beaulieu Abbey, now home to 1,000 rose bushes, was created in 2022 in keeping with the work of gardener and rosarian André Eve (1931-2015).

As a great promoter of the garden revolution from the 1970s onwards, André Eve reinvented the image of the rose garden by creating free-form beds combining roses with a wide variety of perennials.

The Abbaye de Beaulieu® rose, created in 2019 by Jérôme Rateau, André Eve's successor, pays tribute to Geneviève Bonnefoi and her passion for her Beaulieu garden and its roses.

# Beaulieu-en-Rouergue Abbey

From Gothic art to the art of the post-war boom

### An age-old foundation



Belloc Abbey (Beaulieu-en-Rouergue Abbey as of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) appears to have started out as an eremitical\* community before being affiliated to the Cistercian order in the 1180s. It experienced a major boom in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, driven notably by the Counts of Toulouse, the Viscounts of Saint Antonin and the Bishops of Rodez.

### The golden age

The abbey received a number of major donations in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, including land, farms and mills, along with the churches of Cornusson, Ginals and Verfeil, all of which provided the community with a comfortable income and enabled various monastic buildings and the abbey church to be built.

### Troubled times

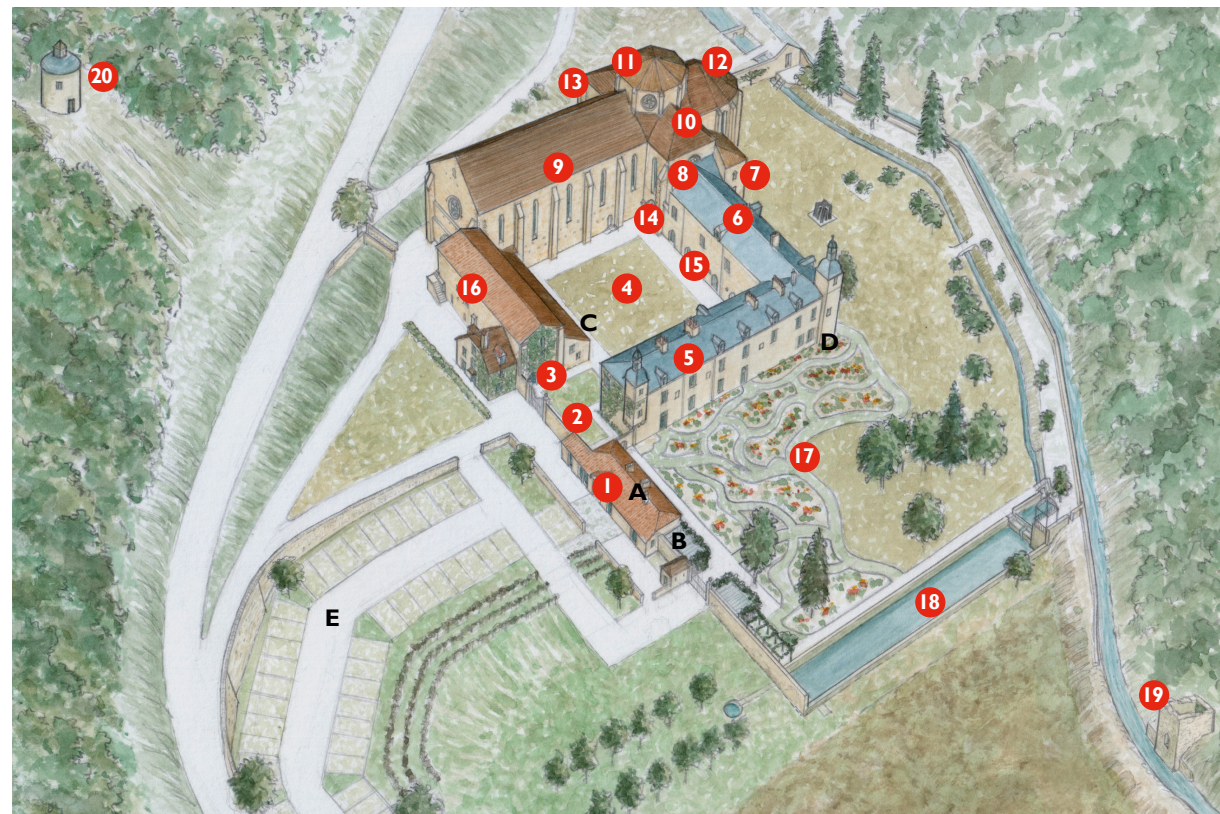
In 1562, during the Wars of Religion, the abbey was looted by the Protestants and the cloister was destroyed. Restoration and modernisation work was carried out in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries under the aegis of the commendatory abbots\*. The French Revolution dissolved monastic orders and the monument was sold and its contents dispersed. The abbey became a private agricultural and wine-growing estate until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was saved from ruin as of 1960 by heritage lovers and collectors of contemporary art Geneviève Bonnefoi and Pierre Brache.

\* Explanations overleaf



- 1 **The old communal areas**, which occupy the presumed site of the lay brothers' refectory, are now open to visitors. They notably included a bakery and a pigsty.
- 2 **The gatehouse** was destroyed when the abbey was looted by the Protestants in 1562. Two semi-engaged columns that supported the 13<sup>th</sup>-century vault can be seen on either side of the cellar door.
- 3 **The cellar** consists of two five-bay aisles, each topped with a cross-ribbed vault. This served as the abbey's pantry, where provisions from the abbey's estate (fields, vegetable gardens, mills, fishponds, etc.) were stored together.
- 4 **The cloister**, completed in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was destroyed by the Protestants in 1562. The spatial and symbolic heart of the monastery, it comprised four galleries with coupled columns topped with a framed roof.
- 5 **The southern wing**, known as 'the refectory wing', originally housed the warming room, the monks' refectory and the kitchen. This wing was extensively transformed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and built up by one floor in order to provide comfortable apartments for the abbot and prior. It housed the following:
  - **The two lounges**, decorated with 17<sup>th</sup>-century gypserie ornamental plasterwork, were used by the abbots as reception rooms and occupy the presumed location of the medieval kitchen.
  - The monks' **refectory** boasts a large painted fireplace dating from 1675.
  - **The main staircase**, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, occupies the site of the former warming room.
  - **The monks' hall** was used for various daily tasks, particularly writing, and was shortened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it became the kitchen.
  - **The right-angled corridor** links the east (so-called monks') and south wings and provides access to the monks' cells and the apartments of the abbot and the prior.

- A reception-ticket desk
- B toilets
- C cloakroom
- D tearoom (open during the summer)
- E car park



- **The apartments of the prior and the abbot**, located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the south wing, consisted of four rooms, each containing a cabinet (wardrobe).
- 6 **The monks' dormitory**, located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the east wing, was replaced by individual cells in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the layout of which was later modified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **The library**, created in 2022, houses part of the collection of books and archives belonging to Geneviève Bonnefoi and Pierre Brache.
  - 7 **The abbot's tower**, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, comprises two upper floors that housed the abbot's cell and study, along with some latrines.

- 8 **The Matins door and staircase** were used by the monks to get to services from their dormitory. The door was bricked up and destroyed after the Revolution but was reopened and the staircase recreated in 2022.
- 9 The very architecturally pure **abbey church** (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) was originally reserved exclusively for the monks and lay brothers. They were separated by a rood screen that has since disappeared. **The nave** consists of a single aisle of five bays with cross-vaults and double arches resting on small columns, which in turn rest upon corbels featuring a foliage design.

- 10 **The chapel of the south transept** was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as evidenced by the rose on the keystone and the star of David shape of the rose window (Mary was from the house of King David).
- 11 The octagonal lantern tower of **the bell tower** sits atop the transept on four squinches.
- 12 **The chancel** ends in a simple seven-sided apse lit by seven lancet windows that were once higher than they are today.
- 13 **The door of the dead**, adorned with an archivolt, led to the monks' cemetery.
- 14 **The vestry** was where priests would come to prepare themselves for services and keep items of worship. **The abbot's chapel** was a special oratory for the abbot and prior. It still bears the remains of painted decoration from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 15 **The chapterhouse** hosted monks' gatherings known as chapters, where decisions concerning the community were made.
- 16 **The lay brothers' dormitory**, above the cellar, was transformed into a barn in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 17 **The rose garden** was created in 2022 in tribute to Geneviève Bonnefoi and gardener and rosarian André Eve.
- 18 **The fishpond**, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is fed by the river Seye and an ingenious underground and aerial hydraulic system.
- 19 **The so-called Sainte-Marguerite chapel**, likely dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, could have been a place of prayer for travellers and pilgrims who were unable to access the church.
- 20 **The dovecote** was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the western hillside.