

**DÉPARTEMENT DE L'ÉCONOMIE,  
DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA CULTURE**

LATÉNIUM, PARC ET MUSÉE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE  
ESPACE PAUL-VOUGA 7  
CH-2068 HAUTERIVE

# COLLECTION CONCEPT

## Introduction

Laténium is a regional archaeological museum with a European vocation in terms of its scientific ambitions, due to the referential nature of numerous archaeological sets of objects included in its collections. Laténium was heavily involved in the preparation of the application for registering "Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps" as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It has established itself as a major centre for the interpretation of this wide-scale heritage, liaising closely with responsible bodies in the six countries concerned in promoting this heritage (Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Slovenia and fifteen Swiss cantons).

Although the museum's primary mission is the showcasing of regional archaeology for the general public, Laténium envisages this mission in broader terms, pursuing the core goals of making visitors more familiar with archaeological approaches and teaching whilst also raising awareness concerning heritage issues more generally.

## Legal status and public mission

Laténium is the archaeological museum of the Canton of Neuchâtel. On this basis, and under the terms of Article 724 of the Swiss Civil Code, it holds all of the Canton of Neuchâtel's moveable archaeological heritage, acting in accordance with the mission set out in the Neuchâtel Cantonal Act on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage (LSPC) of 4 September 2018. Laténium is thus charged with championing this heritage and contributing to the promotion of archaeological research in Neuchâtel in all of its forms.

In institutional terms, Laténium is incorporated into the Culture Service, through which the Canton presents its heritage initiatives to the public at large. It engages closely with other heritage bodies in the Canton of Neuchâtel, such as the Cantonal Archaeological Office (OARC) and the Cantonal Office for Built and Intangible Heritage OCPI). In addition, as it hosts the Chair in Prehistory it has privileged institutional relations with the University of Neuchâtel, with which it shares various resources, documentation and scientific equipment.

## **COLLECTION CONCEPT**

Laténium's "Collection Concept" adopted in 2017 results from its legal status and its public mission, which place its collection activities on a firm legal and administrative footing. It operates along two axes, which embrace both the inherent archaeological nature of the objects concerned as well as the scientific context in which they were excavated. The core pillars of the Collection Concept are regional representativeness, heuristic potential, heritage resonance and the scientific impact of the materials considered.

Specifically, Laténium's collections fall schematically under two distinct themes, each of which covers not only archaeological finds but also scientific archives and historic documents relating to archaeological research:

### **1) Archaeological heritage of Neuchâtel**

Materials that bear direct witness to or that contribute to illustrating the history of human occupation of the territories currently administered by the Canton of Neuchâtel, right since the area was occupied by humans for the first time – without any thematic or material restriction of any type whatsoever.

### **2) Archaeological research carried out in Neuchâtel**

This focuses on materials that bear direct witness to or that contribute to illustrating the history and topicality of archaeological research carried out by researchers from Neuchâtel or who are officially affiliated with scientific institutions established in the Canton of Neuchâtel, without any disciplinary, geographical, chronological or cultural restriction whatsoever.

In the latter area, conservation is managed in consultation with the institutions concerned, acting in accordance with the standards of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and also with the international conventions and treaties in force, as well as the relevant legislation of the states involved. In order to guarantee the coherence and representativeness of the sets of objects concerned, the management of Laténium follows an acquisition policy that is clearly understood as being subsidiary to the policies of other Swiss or foreign public institutions.

## **Acquisition policy - arrangements for expanding collections**

For reasons related to the scientific and professional ethics of the archaeological profession, Laténium does not have an acquisition budget and does not act on the market for antiquities.

Its collections are thus expanded essentially by archaeological excavations carried out or coordinated by the responsible services of the Canton of Neuchâtel (OARC and OCPI, under the terms of the Neuchâtel Cantonal Act on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage (LSPC)). The programming of archaeological surveys, diagnoses and excavations is managed by responsible staff from these two offices, acting in concert with museum management although according to criteria informed by requirements relating to scientific research and safeguarding heritage.

On a complementary basis, Laténium's collections are expanded, in accordance with the criteria set out above, by donations of scientific documents, individual objects or archaeological sets made by private individuals, entities governed by public or private law, associations, institutions or public bodies. With the support of the Fondation La Tène (public law foundation established in order to support the activities of Laténium and to promote archaeology in Neuchâtel), the management of the museum may solicit such donations. It is also important to mention the regular donations from old private collections of pile dwelling material, which are encouraged by the museum's proactive engagement in researching the biographies of objects as well as the history of archaeological research. Finally, Laténium may exceptionally consider loans of items from private individuals, although only on a long-term basis.