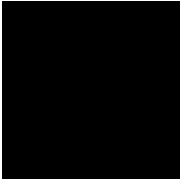
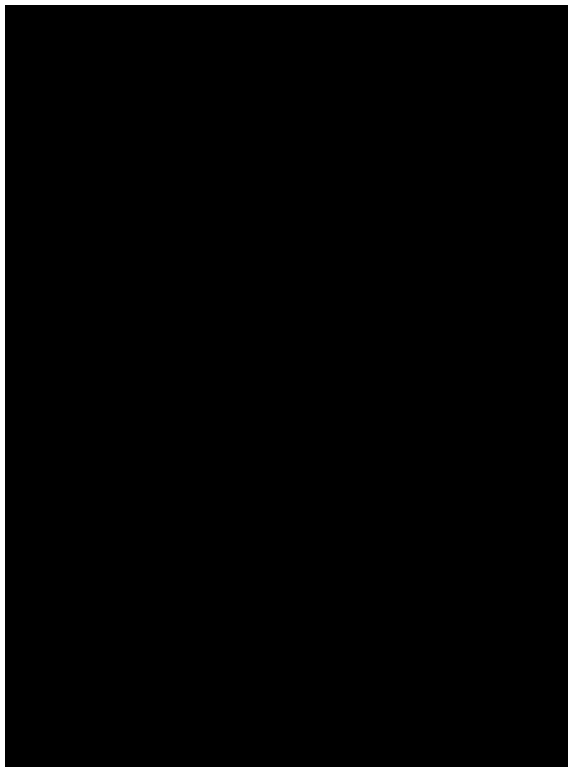
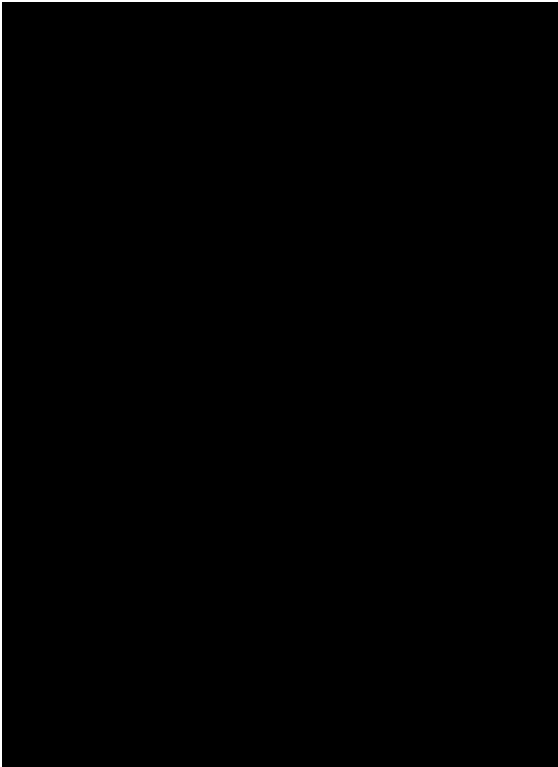
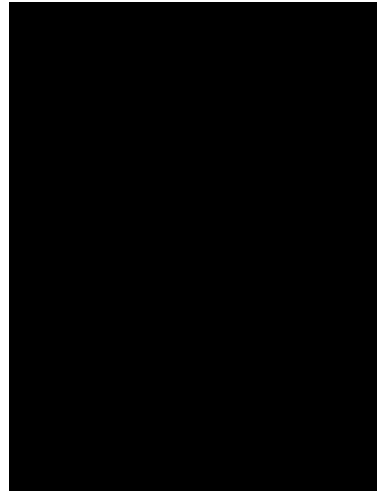
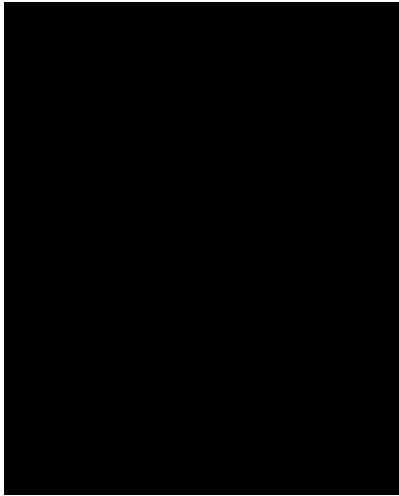
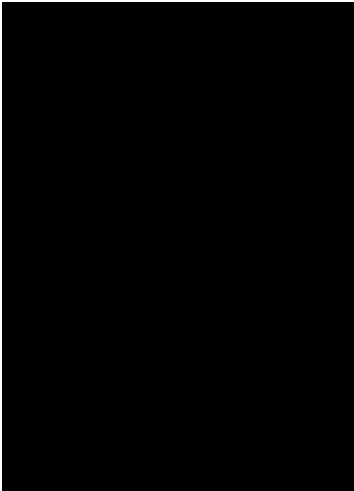


MUSEE GUSTAVE MOREAU



March 19, 2006



When Gustave Moreau died in 1898, his final will was as grandiose as one of his watercolors. The symbolist artist bequeathed his entire three-story house, containing over 1200 paintings and 12800 drawings, to the French state. His only wish was that the collection be kept together forever. “Taken as a whole,” he stated, “they give an idea of what kind of an artist I was, and in what kind of surroundings I chose to live my dreams.”

More than a century later, Moreau’s donation remains one of the most unusual attractions in Paris. Tucked away on a lonesome cobblestone street in the 9eme arrondissement, the Musée Gustave Moreau is still the same otherworldly, dusty place that artists visited in awe decades ago.

Frequent guest Marcel Proust noted that Moreau’s “house had already taken on the appearance of a museum” even before his death. Matisse, Dali, and countless others climbed up the spiral staircase leading to masterpieces such as *The Life of Mankind*, or *Jupiter and Semele*. “My way of loving was eternally conditioned by my discovering the Musée Gustave Moreau when I was seventeen,” wrote André Breton. “That museum! I dreamed of breaking into it at night with a lantern.”

In addition to the art, the building also shelters a dizzying array of personal effects. The rooms are like cabinets of curiosities, teeming with miniature sphinxes, alabaster camels, and taxidermized tortoises. On a shelf in the artist's tiny bedroom is a bell jar filled with multi-colored stuffed birds.

Even those who weren’t charmed with the place made it sound fascinating. As Edgar Degas put it: “How truly sinister... It might be a family vault. All those pictures crammed together look to me like a *thesaurus*.” Touché – it’s certainly overwhelming. But for Moreau, maximalism was a portal to mysticism. “I only believe what I do not see,” was his motto. His paintings are a hallucinatory mix of mythology and eroticism, meant to transport the viewer to “unknown and distant worlds, where all is mystery and holiness.”

Stepping into this townhouse is like entering a parallel universe. In his words: “Come, says the imagination, let us depart, let us run, let us fly away, without restraint, and discover enchanted lands.”

Gustave-Moreau Museum

14, rue de La Rochefoucauld, F-75009 PARIS

Phone : + 0033 1 48 74 38 50 Website : www.musee-moreau.fr

Open daily 10:00 am to 12:45 pm and 2:00 pm to 5:15 pm. Closed on Tuesdays.