

**PRESS KIT**

LA GENEVOISE

OPEN INVITATION TO CAROL BOVE

JANUARY 31 – JUNE 22, 2025



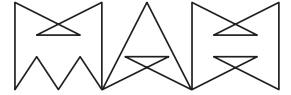
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*Geneva, November 2024* – The Musée d'art et d'histoire de Geneva (MAH) presents its fifth XL Exhibition, titled *La Genevoise*, as an open invitation to Carol Bove (born 1971). This Genevan-born New York artist explores the museum's collection and traces a 15,000-year timeline of Genevan history, highlighting the evolution of the use of objects and questioning the notion of museum spaces.

The MAH's director has invited Carol Bove to curate the fifth XL Exhibition, which will take place from January 31 to June 22, 2025. Limiting her choices to objects from the Geneva area, Carol Bove worked with scholars from each department at MAH to select artifacts that bear traces of the individuals who once used them, spanning 15'000 years of history.

In a chronological presentation, works from the MAH's collection are displayed through creative, anthropological, interactive, and educational approaches.

In this exhibition, primarily devoted to works from the MAH's collection, American artist Carol Bove focuses on identifying objects with haptic quality. The guiding forces behind our experience of museum spaces and the works they hold are questioned, challenging our established means of perceiving art.

By playing with formal conventions and challenging these typical expectations, she encourages viewers to rethink not only the physical presentation of the art object but also one's interaction with it. In this way, her bold approach redefines the museum experience leading one to gain confidence in their own specific reflection on art's relationship to space, perception, and life.

Carefully selected for their haptic qualities and their use in daily life, the objects are displayed along a visual timeline, allowing visitors to discover the development of material culture in the Genevan region. For example, the last object in the exhibition, by contemporary Swiss artist Sylvie Fleury, is a sculpture of a car painted in bright colours, which represents the present. This chronology is an invitation to a unique journey, where the viewer travels and experiences the timeline. The density of objects on the timeline is a rough index of the museum's holdings, with some crowded time periods and other empty ones.

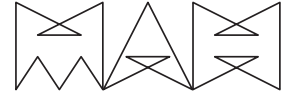
Carol Bove has produced replicas of the artifacts on the timeline using contemporary 3D-printing technology. Visitors are invited to touch and gently handle these "shadows". She has also included several replicas of the museum's original benches throughout the exhibition. This sensory experience offers an important role to museum visitors, overtly acknowledging their existence within this architectural environment.

#### **1. Research Rooms Offer Unique Perspectives on the Swiss Artistic Past**

The interior rooms and galleries of the MAH are separate from Carol Bove's chronological approach. Called "research rooms," they are devoted to specific themes, such as paintings of lakeside scenes, which were very much in fashion in nineteenth-century Geneva. Like archaeological excavations, these spaces probe cultural history to explore regional mythologies, human industries, and recreation.

#### **2. Reflecting on the Object in Space and Art**

The last room returns to raising awareness of the mechanisms at work in the museum. Walking through the exhibition, visitors will notice several benches made available to them. These are reproductions of the original benches specially designed by Marc



Camoletti for the MAH. Using the gallery walls and floors as reference, the benches have been painted in order to blend seamlessly into their environments.

In this way, the exhibition invites viewers to think more broadly about how objects are represented and displayed, as well as the delicate – or even non-existent – limits between the art object and an everyday object. These considerations on the relationship between art and space also resonate with the MAH's ambitions for the *Musée de demain* (Museum of Tomorrow). Through this immersive and meaningful exhibition, Carol Bove makes a case for the liberation of the creative act, encouraging viewers to become aware of the mechanisms at work in the museum and their constant evolution.

### 3. Carol Bove

Born in Geneva in 1971, Carol Bove grew up in Berkeley, California, and studied at New York University (NYU). From 2009 to 2013, she was an associate professor in the Department of Art and Art Professions at NYU's Steinhardt School.

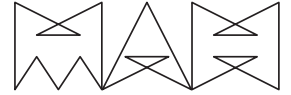
Based in New York, she is renowned for creating art that plays with notions of modernism, abstraction, and art history, reinterpreting classical forms and questioning their place in the contemporary world.

Pedestals play an essential role in Carol Bove's work. They are not simply bases for supporting her sculptures but an integral part of her artworks. She often designs bases that interact with the sculptures, altering the viewer's perception and blurring the boundary between the work and its stand. By integrating the stands into her compositions, she creates a dynamic in which the base becomes an independent sculptural element, emphasizing the object's relationship to its environment and the viewer's eye.

Carol Bove has been featured in many significant solo exhibitions, including at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Façade Commission (2021); Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (2021), Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria, The Contemporary, Austin, TX (2017); the High Line at the Rail Yards, New York (2013); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2010); Tate St Ives, England (2009); Kunsthalle Zürich (2004). She took part in major group exhibitions hosted at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, (2019); the 58th Venice Biennale, Italy (2019); the 57th Venice Biennale: Swiss Pavilion, Italy (2017); the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2008); the 54th Venice Biennale, Italy (2011); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany (2012).

*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY was curated by Carol Bove; Rani Singh, Elisabeth Sussman and designed by Carol Bove (2023).

The artist's work is held in many institutions around the world, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), the FRAC Grand Large–Hauts-de-France (Dunkerque), the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Princeton University Art Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Hartford, Connecticut), the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), and the Yale University Art Gallery. Carol Bove lives and works in New York.





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**Audioguide**



**General information** Musée d'art et d'histoire  
2, rue Charles-Galland – 1206 Geneva  
Open Tuesday–Sunday, 11 am–6 pm,  
Thursday 12 pm–9 pm  
Admission: Pay what you wish

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Ticketing: [billetterie.mahmah.ch](http://billetterie.mahmah.ch)  
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1. Selection of texts on objects by MAH scholars

a. **Monumental Statue**  
by Nathalie Wüthrich, Scientific associate – Archaeology (MAH)

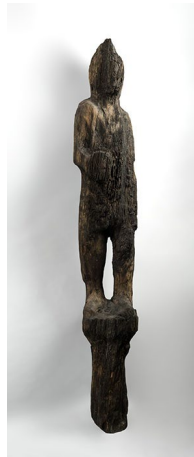


Figure standing on a stake (Allobroge aristocrat), La Tène circa 80 B.C.  
Roughly carved oak wood, 305 cm  
Donation, 1898  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo: F. Bevilacqua

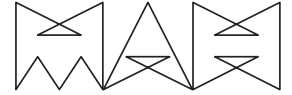
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On July 10, 1898, during the demolition of the former Grain Warehouse in Rive (where the FNAC building currently stands), this impressive and enigmatic oak wood statue, measuring over 3 meters tall, was unearthed. It was found lying among the piles that once supported the structures of the Gallic port of Geneva.

From the moment of its discovery, archaeologists recognized the invaluable nature of this colossal yet fragile organic relic. Its exceptional preservation was due to the wet environment in which it had remained sealed for nearly two millennia. Therefore, all necessary steps were taken — with the relatively limited means available at the end of the 19th century — to ensure its conservation so it could be displayed in the Archaeological Museum, the predecessor of the MAH. To ensure the statue's longevity, this initial treatment was revisited at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich in the 1970s, complemented by a dendrochronological analysis that established its creation date around 80 BCE.

This dating finally allowed experts to identify the figure: it was not, as initially believed, a Germanic Roland from the medieval period, nor a Gallo-Roman *genius loci* (guardian spirit of the place) as was later suggested. Instead, it represents a witness to a much earlier and until then unknown period. The sword discernible along the right leg, the circular shield in the right hand, and the crested helmet with cheek guards (visible on the left side) identify the figure as an Allobrogian aristocrat, dressed in a short tunic. Like the tutelary deities or *patroni* (magistrates and benefactors) of Roman cities, he was placed on an honorary column that marked the entrance to the Celtic port of Geneva. Despite these Mediterranean influences, he represents Allobrogian sovereignty over the city and its port, which, via the Rhône, connected it to the Roman world it was just beginning to belong to.

The extraordinary nature of this first known example of Celtic wooden statuary — and the largest known to date — as well as its paradoxical fragility, led to



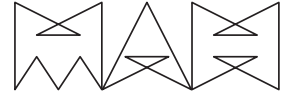
its inclusion in the Swiss Inventory of Cultural Property of National Importance (PBC A), in compliance with the Federal Act on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, Catastrophe, or Emergency (LPBC; RS 520.3) adopted in 2014. To allow various audiences to discover it in different exhibitions without jeopardizing its preservation for future generations, a resin replica of the monumental statue was created in 1991 for the traveling exhibition L'or des Helvètes at the Swiss National Museum, where it is still kept today.

**b. Prison Cell Door**  
by Alexandre Fiette, Curator responsible for Applied Arts and Maison Tavel (MAH)



Prison cell door, ca. 1866  
H. 186.5 x W. 73.5 x D. 5 cm  
Painted wood, horizontally placed panels, painted iron, armoured panel and graffiti  
Donation, 1996 ; inv. AA 1996-0064  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo: B. Jacot-Descombes

A symbol of a possible or condemned passage between two worlds, two spaces, doors do not exist without the walls and barriers that give them purpose. They lose all evocative power when they cannot be closed, and their opening is barred with a turn of a key. A human invention with multiple purposes: they provide access, protect, but also imprison. Often included in museum collections for their demonstration of craftsmanship and aesthetics, it is rare for these criteria to be overlooked to justify their presence as an exhibit. We must commend the foresight of those who advocated in 1996 for the acquisition of this armored door from the former Saint Antoine prison in Geneva, thus reviving the idea of preserving elements whose significance may not be immediately apparent to contemporaries. Its only decoration consists of a few ambiguous graffiti, inscribed on its indeterminate-colored armor by those deprived of their freedom behind it. Detached from its frame and, by extension, from the building's masonry, it takes on the status of a sculptural work with powerful significance that transcends its primary function as an instrument of judicial power. Today, it is one of the emblematic objects of what is generally understood under the ambiguous term "applied art," raising questions about the evolution of collections within institutions like the Museum of Art and History. What recent human creations will resonate with the visitors of tomorrow?



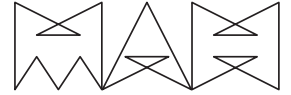
- c. **Gourd**  
by Corinne Borel, Scientific assistant in charge of the collection of armor  
and ancient weapons (MAH)



Gourd, ca. 1770-1870 (Switzerland)  
H. 145 x W. 160 mm, weight 120 g  
Purchase, 1888 ; inv. K 0331  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo: B. Jacot-Descombes

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Inventories of the collection of ancient weapons can reveal surprises. We thus find, registered among various firearms, a cucurbit. As in other civilizations, where squash and calabashes are sometimes used to transport water, Europe also made use of such gourds. This one has the particularity of presenting an engraved decoration which justifies its presence in the collection: we see, in front of a trophy of weapons and flags, a gunner preparing to fire and a soldier in uniform. Above the scene, two oval shields housed under the same crown juxtapose the coats of arms of the city of Bern and the kingdom of France. The object therefore belonged to some mercenary from a Bernese company in the service of France. As early as the 13th century, "Swiss" mercenaries rented their services to foreign powers. In the 15th century, after their victories over the powerful Duke of Burgundy Charles the Bold, the Confederates were at the height of their warlike glory and enlistments multiplied. If the Pontifical Swiss Guard, established in 1506, has been maintained until today, it is the service of the crown of France which largely predominated until the Revolution, constituting an important source of income for the cantons.



d. **Profit and Economic War**  
by Gilles Perret- Curator in charge of coins and medals (MAH)



(24)  
**Soldo, 1586**  
Comté de Cocconato, issuing authority. Republic of Geneva, model issuing authority  
Billon, weight 1.543 g  
Purchase, 1924; inv. CdN 016970  
© Musée d'art d'histoire de Genève  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes



(22)  
**Coin, 1584**  
Republic of Geneva, issuing authority. Domaine Maillet, master of the mint.  
Inv. CdN 000690  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua



(23)  
**Parpaillolle, 1585**  
Charles Emmanuel I of Savoy (1562–1630), issuing authority. Duchy of Savoy, issuing authority  
Billon, weight 1.754 g  
Purchase, 1924; inv. CdN 029951  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes

The Savoyard mint in Cornavin was closed in 1533 when the last bishop left Geneva. However, as soon as Duke Charles Emmanuel I resumed hostilities with the city of Calvin, he opened a mint in Gex. This time, it was not to profit from the fairs, but to weaken the Republic by flooding it with poor-quality coins, like the parpaillolle (23). These coins, until their devaluation in 1596, drove the good three-quarters Geneva coins out of circulation. In this economic war, Geneva sought not only new military allies (the 1584 treaty with Bern and Zurich) but also economic allies. As a result, the city joined the conferences in 1592 that were already unifying the currencies of Bern, Fribourg, Solothurn, Neuchâtel, and Valais.

At the same time, the young Republic faced another economic threat. Small Italian lordships, like the County of Cocconato, used their right to mint coins to produce poor-quality imitations that also entered circulation, impoverishing the city. For the population, which often could not read, the difference in legends between the coins (see 22 and 24) was not obvious, but the difference in quality and silver content was easily noticeable!





- e. **Young lake girl**  
by Alaina Maillard, Scientific associate in the Fine Arts Department (MAH)



Barthélemy Bodmer (1848-1904)  
*Young lake girl*, ca. 1896  
Oil on canvas  
144 x 122.5 cm  
Legacy, 1912; inv. 1912-3691/bis  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo: B. Jacot-Descombes

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The strangeness of this scene is quite intriguing. Perched on her rock, in her simplest attire, the young girl seems to be on watch, waiting. But waiting for what? And for how long? Her features, marked by boredom, suggest she is observing something happening in her peripheral vision, momentarily diverting her attention from her vigil.

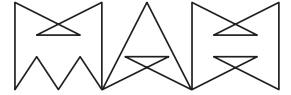
This scene is part of the "lake fever" experienced by 19th-century archaeologists, who sought to recreate the setting and atmosphere of prehistoric Switzerland. Far from being an archaeological study, the artist's imagination contributes to the success and permanence of the myth of a life where humanity evolves in harmony with nature. This life is characterized by a natural, almost childlike attraction to water and a lifestyle dictated by the lake's whims throughout the seasons.

Particularly fond of the Petit Lac, the people of Geneva have a special affection for its waters and, in good spirit, claim Lake Geneva as their own when speaking to the other cantons. One thing is certain: summer would not feel the same without a swim in the lake or a descent of the Rhône, essential rituals of Geneva's life.

## 2. Short edited texts for research rooms

### a. LEGOs

LEGO has its origins in 1932, when Danish carpenter, Ole Kristiansen developed the wooden antecedent to the now ubiquitous plastic toys. The standardized blocks with their interlocking contact points have changed very little over the last 70 years. Their simple design offers children a logical system for open-ended play. With the recent introduction of LEGO's Braille brick set in 2020, tactility and language are compressed into a novel union. The connective studs on LEGO bricks neatly map onto the raised dots that compose the characters of the braille alphabet.



**b. CERN bubble chamber drawings**

These drawings record the results of experiments designed to detect subatomic particles called neutrinos. They were produced by “scanners,” technicians who interpreted the results of bubble chamber experiments done with Gargamelle, the 1000 ton bubble chamber used in the 1970s to conduct particle experiments at CERN. Computers are now equal to the task of mapping these microscopic trails.

**c. Lake-Dwellers**

1854: the winter was so dry that the level of the Swiss lakes sank, revealing numerous wooden piles driven into the mud and numerous artefacts. Zurich scientist Ferdinand Keller interpreted these remains as prehistoric villages built above the water. The Lake-Dwellers' Myth was born and aroused enthusiasm: the age of the remains meant that Switzerland's history could be traced back to ancient times, and provided a welcome legitimacy for the young federal state (1848).

Since the 19th century, the interpretation of these remains found in Swiss lakes has changed radically. The theory that settlements were built above the water has been abandoned. It has now been established that lake levels have risen and that these prehistoric buildings were constructed on the banks. The Lake-Dwellers' Myth inspired 19th-century artists to paint an idyllic picture of the lives of our ancestors, who were portrayed as peaceful, hard-working and happy. Some of these works were shown at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1867. The 1980/81 sculpture by Fischli and Weiss playfully pokes fun at the old interpretation.

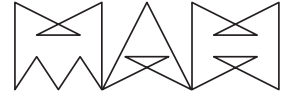
**d. Armory Studies**

For artists, a finished painting is one that has been definitively abandoned. However, the troubling array of formal and technical problems that compel the painter to persist are not always perceptible to the viewer as such — instead, they are the magnetic points that pull on the viewer and invite imaginative participation. Studies, that were never intended to stand independently as artistic offerings, are generous with these invitations.

**e. Ceramics**

Alix Fiasson, who leads the mediation department? at MAH commissioned tactile representations of key paintings from the collection starting in 2010. Over the course of several years, Quitterie Ithurbide (1967-2020), a Geneva-based ceramicist, gave close attention to the task of rendering these translations.

As with translations of literary works, Ithurbide's tactile ceramics include minor adjustments to the originals- such as exaggerated depth and variable texture – to make the unique character of the artworks legible to different audience. Hodler's painting, *Le lac, le mer et Mont Blanc avec cygnes*, is an example of Ithurbide's translations. One of Hodler's last paintings, it captures the view from the artist's department, the space this furniture once occupied.



**Carol Bove**

© Studio Carol Bove / Annik Wetter



**Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842)**  
*Portrait of Germaine de Staël as Corinne at Cape Misenum, 1808-1809*

Oil on canvas; 140 x 118 cm  
Donation, 1841; inv. 1841-0003  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes



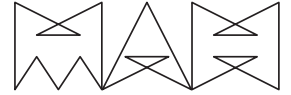
**Pendeloque on bear's tooth**  
Neolithic Middle or Late Stone Age  
(between 3900 and 2450 B.C.)

Eaux-Vives, Lake Geneva  
Brown bear's canine tooth  
Purchased, 1904; inv. 002105 bis  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes



**Flat tile, fragment**  
Gallo-Roman, 2nd century (?), Geneva

Geneva  
Hand-moulded terracotta with dog paw prints  
26,5 x 23,5 x 5 cm  
Old funds, before 1926; inv. 012367 bis  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes



**Figure standing on a stake (Allobroge aristocrat), final La Tène, circa 80 B.C.**

Geneva  
Roughly carved oak wood; 305 cm  
Donation, 1898; inv. 004261  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua



**Large stick decorated with an animal, Upper Paleolithic (Late Upper Magdalenian and Final Magdalenian, between 13400 and 12900 B.C.)**

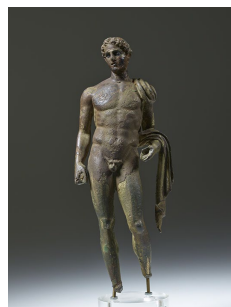
Pas-de-l'Echelle (Haut-Savoie)  
Perforated reindeer antler; 24.5 x 2.1 cm  
Gift of the Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève and Dr François-Isaac Mayor to the Musée académique de Genève, 1848; inv. A-2222  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: B. Jacot-Descombes

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**Antefix, Theater mask, Gallo-Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century**

Geneva  
Carved marble, semi-round relief; 11.6 x 14.3 x 6 cm  
Donation, 1892; inv. C 1232  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua



**Mercury figurine, Gallo-Roman**

Ain (France)  
Bronze; 13.6 cm  
Purchased, 1891; inv. C 1223  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua



**Genevoise, ou Dix-décimes, 1794**  
République de Genève, Théodore Bonneton  
(1762-1805), engraver

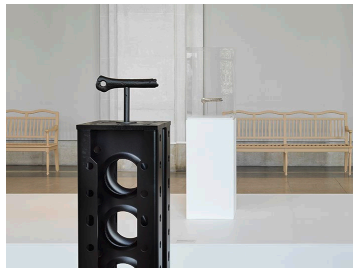
Silver; D. 40 mm, weight 30.53 gr.  
Purchased, 1986; inv. CdN 060165  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua



**Marc Camoletti (1857-1940)**  
Four-seater bench, ca.1910

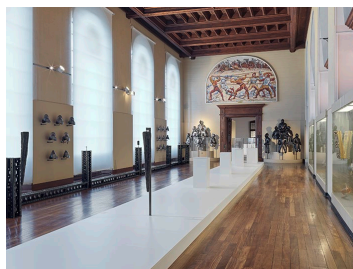
Beechwood; 94.5 x 200 x 45 cm  
Inv. AA 2021-0079  
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photo: F. Bevilacqua

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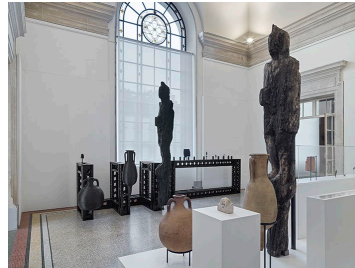
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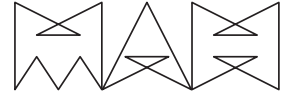
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