

# Madame de Sévigné Parisian letters

15 April - 23 August 2026



Claude Lefèvre, *Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné*,  
c. 1665  
Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris Collections  
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The Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris is presenting an exhibition devoted to Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, the Marquise de Sévigné (1626-1696) on the four hundredth anniversary of her birth. Organized in collaboration with a panel of experts comprising specialists on her work and the period, the exhibition is based on a fresh critical approach dedicated to the epistolary work of this renowned figure. It brings together over two hundred pieces: paintings, objects, and drawings, both from Carnavalet's collections and large French public and private collections alike.

Marie de Rabutin-Chantal was born in Paris, at the Place Royale (current-day Place des Vosges) on 5 February 1626. She came from an old Burgundian noble family on her father's side and was raised in Paris by her maternal grandparents, the Coulanges, who provided her with an excellent education, a rare privilege for a young girl at the time. In 1644, she married Henri de Sévigné, a Breton nobleman, with whom she had two children: Françoise Marguerite and Charles. When her husband was killed in a duel in 1651, she was left a widow at the young age of twenty-five.

## PRESS RELEASE

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### GENERAL CURATOR

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the Musée Carnavalet - Histoire  
de Paris

### SCIENTIFIC CURATORS

**Anne-Laure Sol**, Head Curator  
of the Paintings and Stained-  
Glass Department at the Musée  
Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris

Associate Curator :

**David Simonneau**, Head of  
Drawings at the Graphic Arts  
Department of the Musée  
Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris

In collaboration with:

**Nathalie Freidel**, specialized  
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Department of Languages  
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### SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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**Thierry Sarmant**, Archivist-  
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**Mélanie Traversier**, Professor  
of Modern History, Université de  
Lille, actress

Dividing her time between the Marais district in Paris and her estate at Les Rochers in Brittany, Madame de Sévigné participated in some of the most refined literary circles of the capital, including those hosted by the Marquise de Rambouillet and Mademoiselle de Scudéry. She played a role in the development of *galant* culture which flourished at the time into a veritable art de vivre, with an influence on literature and the arts. The majority of Madame de Sévigné's surviving correspondence consists of letters sent to her daughter who moved to Provence when she married the Comte de Grignan in 1669. Today, this published correspondence is considered both a classic of French literature and an essential work for understanding the history of ideas, customs, and events of the period.

Held at the Hôtel Carnavalet, where the famous Parisian lived from 1677 until her death in 1696, this exhibition explores Madame de Sévigné's life in Paris at a time when the capital was undergoing significant change. The writer's life and work serve as a starting point for discovering the city in all its urban, social, political, and artistic dimensions. The exhibition begins by examining the letter writer's impact on the collective imagination and her literary legacy, before highlighting the role of women in seventeenth-century Paris within the context of the rise of the so-called *galant* culture. As a member of an elite who observed the pomp and circumstance of Louis XIV's court from a distance, Madame de Sévigné was a keen observer of the Parisian political climate and grasped the intensity of the tensions traversing the history of her epoch. Finally, a presentation of the writer's daily life at the Hôtel Carnavalet, when she lived there with her family, completes this journey into the past.

Beginning with the creation of Madame de Sévigné's work and legacy, the exhibition transports visitors into seventeenth-century Paris through the life of a woman and the unique perspective she had on the world around her. It culminates in an evocation of her everyday life at the Hôtel Carnavalet.

A book featuring essays by the curators, members of the expert advisory panel, and numerous curators and academics has been published by Éditions Paris Musées.

Two study days on the theme of women in seventeenth-century Paris will be held at the Musée Carnavalet on 4 and 5 June 2026.

The exhibition has been created with the exceptional participation of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Musée du Louvre.

## PRESS CONTACTS

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