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Monumental Roman Sculpture at Clermont-Ferrand

A magnificent Roman statuary element has been found in Clermont-Ferrand. It could be the work of the famous sculptor Zenodorus (1st century AD). The discovery was made during an evaluation ordered by the Regional Archaeology Service (DRAC Auvergne) and conducted by a team from the Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (Inrap).

A residential zone of the Gallo-Roman period

The sector tested in advance of the construction of the community and interuniversity library is at the southern limit of the Antique agglomeration *Augustonemetum*, capital of the Arverni. Remains from the Roman period were found over the entire excavated area (4,000 m²).

A major building with concrete floors and wall paintings was discovered in the northern part of the excavation. This structure probably corresponds to a *domus* (a rich man's house), which would confirm the residential function of the sector. There are open spaces (courtyards and gardens) as well as other constructions to the south of this building.

The work of Zenodorus?

In one of the courtyards, in a layer formed during a period after the site had been abandoned, an exceptional Antique statuary element was discovered. It is the right foot (60 cm long) wearing a richly decorated sandal (acanthus leaves, scrolls, palmettes, etc, of a copper alloy statue nearly 4 m tall

The famous Greek sculptor Zenodorus spent 10 years in the region of the Arverni. Sestertii richer, Zenodorus later made the famous colossus of Nero in Rome (Pliny the Elder, Natural History, XXXIV).

A four metre high statue is not particularly big, but the technical and stylistic characteristics of the sculpture are of a very high quality. It is possible that other fragments of the statue remain in the ground: the preventive archaeological excavations likely to be undertaken before the library is built will perhaps find them.

Inrap

With 1,800 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. This national public research institution undertakes the majority of archaeological evaluations and excavations in partnership with private and public developers, a total of nearly 2,500 sites per year in mainland France and its overseas territories.



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