



UNIVERSITÉ
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PRESS RELEASE

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University centre dedicated to the science of sexuality

The University of Geneva has set up the Maurice Chalumeau Centre for the Science of Sexuality not only to promote excellence in research and teaching but also to respond to society's growing curiosity in the field.

The Geneva philanthropist Maurice Chalumeau bequeathed his fortune to the University of Geneva (UNIGE) in 1970 with the aim of encouraging academic research in the field of human sexuality. An eponymous fund was created in the following year – and for half a century, this pioneering fund has played a key role in furthering our knowledge about sexuality. Recent social, cultural and scientific shifts now demand a holistic, transdisciplinary approach to research into sexuality. UNIGE has created the Maurice Chalumeau Centre for the Science of Sexuality as a way of finally bringing together research, teaching and scientific information to stimulate synergies between the disciplines and deepen dialogue with the wider community. The centre's inauguration on November 17, 2020 will commemorate 50 years since Maurice Chalumeau's bequest was accepted by UNIGE.

The various faculties at UNIGE address a wide range of research, teaching and scientific information activities on sexuality thanks in part to the financial support of the Maurice Chalumeau University Fund (FUMC). UNIGE is devoting a centre to these activities, named the Maurice Chalumeau Centre for the Science of Sexuality (CMCSS), so the subjects can be brought closer together to stimulate interaction and benefit from a common visibility.

A pioneering and visionary fund

The FUMC was created in 1971 in line with the wishes in the will of the philanthropist [Maurice Chalumeau](#). The Chalumeau Fund made a decisive contribution to the foundation of a Geneva School of Sexology, which – based on the American model – focuses on sexual functions and dysfunctions, sources of pleasure and the dynamics of the heterosexual couple. In 1974 the FUMC and UNIGE also contributed to the first definition of «sexual health» (within the framework of the WHO), which was rooted in a «positive approach to human sexuality» and was founded on the idea of «sexual well-being».

However, over these last 50 years –and the past decade in particular– society's approach to and views on sexuality have undergone a fundamental change. Today, the field of sexuality studies at UNIGE is spread across multiple disciplines: biomedical, cultural, political, legal and social. Interdisciplinary approaches and projects are on the rise, such as the first pamphlet produced in Switzerland –and published by UNIGE– devoted to LGBT rights (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) which will be the subject of an [online conference](#) on the UNIGE



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Maurice Chalumeau (1902-1970): «Beyond the diversity of the moral ends proposed to man, one issue can be distinguished on which general agreement cannot be refused by common sense. It is about the common good, which, as we know, is the algebraic sum of individual happiness».

High resolution pictures

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website, this Thursday 19 November at 6.30 pm, as part of the series of conferences «sexualités en temps de crise»; the design of 3D genitals models, which was the theme of an article in the prestigious Journal of Sexual Medicine; and research (one example among many) into how penal institutions manage the offences of sexual coercion and rape.

«This is a magnificent opportunity for our university to share and strengthen its scientific approach to the question of sexuality with the creation of a dedicated university centre», begins Yves Flückiger, rector of UNIGE. «It's an important step that boosts our ability to respond to questions posed by society and to place this knowledge at the forefront of present-day concerns. It's also a way of recognising the pioneering spirit of Maurice Chalumeau».

Holism and scientific independence

The manifold dimensions – scientific, cultural and social – encompassed by sexuality demand a holistic approach. Important and rapid changes are taking place regarding not just sexual and reproductive practices but also the way in which sexual identities are represented. These developments raise ethical, legal and political questions that must be rigorously addressed with the assistance of all the relevant disciplines.

In founding the CMCSS, UNIGE is proposing independent governance in the service of interdisciplinarity. The CMCSS will not be attached to the faculties and interfaculty centres with which it will enjoy close collaboration; instead, it will be directly attached to UNIGE's central administration. It will be scientifically independent from any other body and will have the support of a scientific committee made up of UNIGE professors appointed by the rectorate. The following disciplines will be represented on the committee: law, cultural studies, history, medicine, psychology, sociology and political science.

Dialogue with the wider community

The birth of the CMCSS, in addition to being a sign of academic innovation, is also the result of an evolution marked by the times and the social and cultural movements that have had an impact on sexual life and transformed knowledge about sexuality over the past 50 years. As Professor Flückiger continues: «The centre's mission will be to contribute to the development of public opinion towards a more liberal conception of sexuality, based on the firm conviction that approaching sexualities in a scientific manner will increase the sum of individual happiness, as Maurice Chalumeau put it in 1970».

The health crisis that the world is currently going through also affects the ways in which sexuality is experienced, even if it is still difficult to assess the impact precisely. Nevertheless, one of the principal goals

of the Maurice Chalumeau Centre for the Science of Sexuality is to further our understanding of the nature and scope of crises in our private lives. This is why the University of Geneva is particularly keen to inaugurate the CMCSS symbolically on November 17, 2020, following a year of due process and to mark the 50th anniversary of the acceptance of Chalumeau's bequest. This will be a fitting tribute to the exceptional generosity and unwavering pioneering spirit of the Geneva philanthropist. Due to current circumstances, no event is planned beyond this announcement and the launch of the CMCSS site.

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