

Press release

Exhibition

January 22 – April 13, 2009

Sully Wing, mezzanine,
salle de la Maquette



© Eric Liberge



© Marc-Antoine Mathieu

This exhibition is made possible thanks to the sponsorship of Konica Minolta



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Subsequent venues (to be confirmed)

September 2009 : International Comics Festival of Lausanne, Switzerland

October 2009 : International Comics Festival in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Novembre 2009 : Montreuil Book Fair for Young People, France

Janvier 2010 : Angoulême international Comics Festival, France

Mars 2010 : Brussels book Fair

2010 : Tokyo

LE PETIT DESSEIN The Louvre invites the comics

Whoever would have expected the Louvre to mount an exhibition of original plates by comic book artists? Museums and comic strips seem to be two universes quite distinct from one another. And yet both value creativity and observe specific aesthetic criteria, each in its own manner, taking the visitor or the reader on a journey through imagination, an exploration of perception and sensation.

A comic album series published by the Louvre and Futuropolis

A project proposed by Fabrice Douar, this comic album series is one among many manifestations of the museum's policy of openness to contemporary art. From French bandes dessinées (BDs) to Japanese mangas and American comic books, from science fiction to social commentary, from caricatures and cartoons to illustrated diaries, the comic strip universe continues to push back its boundaries and has become a key realm of contemporary cultural practice. Its vitality and importance is amply demonstrated by the increasing interest for this medium within the art market, from an artistic as well as a mercantile perspective.

This exhibition celebrating the collaboration between the Louvre and the comic book publisher Futuropolis is conceived not as a commission extended by a cultural institution to "emerging artists", but rather takes the form of a carte blanche, an open invitation intended to give free rein to very personal and original graphic explorations. This event is therefore not limited to a single medium or style but seeks to pay tribute to the diversity and richness of contemporary comic strip art, mirroring the multifaceted, multiformed nature of the Louvre's collections.

In the time it takes to read a comic strip, a bridge is created, offering a new and contemporary vision of the museum. Each comic album engages with the Louvre in its own way, interrogating the museum's mission as a place of preservation, memory and transmission. The series thus expands, in a completely novel fashion, the traditional paradigm of museum collections.

Taking up residence at the Louvre, comic strips help to shake off the institution's fusty image among their enthusiasts while introducing the traditional museum-going public to a more contemporary form of artistic expression. All participants in the process are rejuvenated by the freshness of these intersecting gazes, that of the Louvre and its visitors on comics and that of creators and readers of comics on the Louvre. The bridge thus created represents a significant step forward for both universes—museums and comics—demonstrated by the success of the three albums already published.

Exhibition curators: Fabrice Douar, Deputy Director, Department of Publications, Musée du Louvre, and Sébastien Gnaedig, Editorial Director, Futuropolis. **Scenography** by M.-A. Mathieu

Communications

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© Nicolas de Crécy



© Bernard Yslaire

Publications

Période glaciaire by Nicolas de Crécy, hardcover album, 22 x 31.5 cm, 80 pp., full color (October 2005), €16

Les Sous-sols du Révolu by Marc-Antoine Mathieu, hardcover album, 25 x 25.5 cm, 60 pp., two-color (October 2006), €16

Aux heures impaires by Éric Liberge, hardcover album, 23 x 31.5 cm, 72 pp., full color (September 2008), €16

Le Ciel au-dessus du Louvre by Bernard Yslaire and Jean-Claude Carrière, hardcover album, 26.5 x 28 cm, 80 pp., full color (to be published in May 2009), €16

All these works are co-published by Musée du Louvre Editions and Futuropolis.

Visitor Information

Open daily except Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and until 10 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Admission fees: Access to the exhibition is included in the purchase of an admission to the museum's permanent collections: €9; €6 after 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. Free admission for youths under 18, the unemployed, and holders of the "Louvre Jeunes", "Louvre Professionnels", "Louvre Enseignants", "Louvre Etudiants Partenaires" or "Amis du Louvre" cards.

Further Information

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Comic strip exhibited at the Louvre

With three titles in this collaborative series already published and the fourth due to be released in May 2009, it seemed fitting to devote a retrospective exhibition to the work accomplished thus far, providing a window into this unprecedented adventure. This exhibition is not intended simply as presentation of original plates, nor merely to provide a reflection of the museum in comics, and still less as a guided tour of the Louvre annotated with speech bubbles. Instead, it is conceived as a staged dialogue, a journey proposed by the Louvre and the publisher Futuropolis, written and illustrated by the comic book artists who responded to the invitation to set their universe against that of the Louvre.

Presenting the original comic strip plates, taking them out of their usual context, the horizontal and consecutive logical conception proper to the album, is to make plain, beyond the entertainment value of these works, their expressive power and their specific graphic qualities. Hanging these plates in an exhibition space in the manner of traditional drawings detaches them from their narrative and allows us to better grasp their purely aesthetic qualities, showcasing each artist's singular vision from the first to the last plate. This exhibition will thus underscore comics as the quintessential meeting point of pure graphic art in the service of narrative, of expression through drawing.

However, comic strips are also published works of art, an art resulting from a subtle balance between content and form, the aesthetics of comics corresponding to a unique atmosphere and story line. It is for this reason that the design of the exhibition also retains the narrative link between the plates by placing full sequences within the same frame. One or several pages, taken out of the context of the album, become a work of art in its or their own right. In this way, visitors have an opportunity to genuinely plumb the depths of the artist's universe, discovering the various working methods, techniques and materials used by each artist. For Nicolas de Crécy's *Période glaciaire*, nineteen A4-sized plates painted directly in watercolors will be divided for the presentation among three frames. Similarly, the fourteen India ink plates for Marc-Antoine Mathieu's *Sous-sols du Révolu* are shown in three frames. Visitors will be able to contemplate the full creative process behind Eric Liberge's *Aux heures impaires*, as the exhibition includes five A3-sized composition sketches alongside the high-definition prints of the corresponding pages.

The last album in this first series, *Le Ciel au-dessus du Louvre* by Bernard Yslaire and Jean-Claude Carrière, illustrated entirely using a computer, will be presented as a video projection. This film will show the preparation of several plates, from the layout to the application of colors. Finally, the next series of four albums to be published by Musée du Louvre Editions and Futuropolis will open with a manga by Hirohiko Araki, who will be providing an exclusive sneak preview of this work at the exhibition in the form of two A2-sized plates.

Visitors will be able to view and gain an understanding of the sheer creativity as well as the artistic and literary endeavors required for the production of a comic strip or album.

Related events

Temporary graphic installation by Bernard Yslaire within the exhibition, Friday, April 6, 2009 from 6 to 8 pm.

Signing of the albums already published, Friday, March 6, 2009.