Inauguration of the Louvre Conservation Center

Tuesday, October 8, 2019, Liévin
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Inauguration of the Louvre Conservation Center

Designed by the British architectural firm Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, the Louvre Conservation Center, inaugurated on October 8, 2019, will be home to some 250,000 works of art by 2024, making it one of Europe’s largest study and research centers. The sober and elegant building blends seamlessly into the landscape and boasts optimal conservation performance.

The genesis of the project
The Musée de Louvre, located on the banks of the river Seine, is particularly vulnerable to the risk of centennial flooding. Some of its permanent exhibition galleries and storage spaces are, indeed, situated in flood zones. Since 2002, the Paris Police Prefecture has issued warnings about the risks of flooding. The Louvre does have a flood-risk prevention plan (PPCI), but in the event of centennial flooding, there would not be enough time to remove and protect all the art works, especially those in underground storage spaces spanning nearly 10,000 m².

The museum therefore had to look elsewhere to find a permanent solution for guaranteeing the safekeeping of its collections.

Moreover, some of the Louvre storage spaces no longer meet the conservation and operational requirements of a museum. The move is therefore an opportunity to improve conservation conditions and offer a more suitable space for study and research.

It is also an opportunity to gather stored works in a single space, whereas up to now, they have been scattered in over 60 different locations, both inside and outside the former palace. Indeed, since 2003 the museum has taken steps to safeguard works of art, moving some reserves into temporary external storage spaces that do not belong to the Louvre, while waiting to find a more sustainable solution.

The site chosen for building the Louvre Conservation Center is located in the commune of Liévin (northern France), near the Musée du Louvre-Lens.

The site, located 1 hour and 10 minutes from Paris by TGV, is perfectly in line with local authorities’ ongoing efforts to develop...
and revitalize this former mining basin. The museum in Lens and new conservation center is the Louvre’s way of contributing to those efforts.

**A place for research**
The center is dedicated to the preservation and conservation treatment of art works, research and study, with dedicated spaces indispensable to each (packing/unpacking, photo studio, conservation treatment workshops, consultation rooms). It is not simply a storage space, but a work space for museum experts who meet regularly with counterparts (e.g. museum professionals, conservators, photographers), researchers and academics to consult art works, conduct research or participate in training. The center will contribute to the widespread renown of the Louvre and forge scientific and cultural partnerships both at national and regional level.

Moreover, the center may house, in accordance with international law, works of art from countries engaged in armed conflict, upon the request of those States that are its rightful owners. This would be a temporary measure until the works can be returned, once the armed conflict ceases.

**A great architectural project**
The building consists of approximately 18,500 m² of floor space, of which 9,600 m² will be reserved for storing works, and 1,700 m² for study and conservation treatment. It was built by the British contracted architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners in association with landscape architects from Français Mutabilis Paysage, the technical consultancy Egis Bâtiment Nord, the environmental consultancy Indigo SAS, and economists from VPEAS SAS. Together, the team designed a building that fits perfectly into the landscape, with a garden on the slightly-sloping roof. It combines light-filled spaces for people to work and art to circulate, and cutting-edge technology to guarantee stable climatic conditions for the proper conservation of the Louvre’s collections. Blending seamlessly into the surrounding landscape, partially beneath the ground and all on one level, the building has a very high thermal mass, making it energy-efficient and eco-friendly. It is also equipped with all the necessary facilities and tools for moving and conserving works of art.

**Financing thanks to a mobilized team**
The overall operating budget for the project mounts to €60 million, excluding property costs, of which €42 million is for construction. Many players have mobilized their resources to participate in the financing of the building. The breakdown of funding is as follows: Musée du Louvre: €34.5 million (in large part from the brand licence given to the Louvre Abu Dhabi), European Union + ERDF: €18 million, with Hauts-de-France region as acting manager, Hauts-de-France region: €5 million Ministry of Culture: €2.5 million.

The Lens-Liévin urban area also contributed up to €2.66 million to the project, which takes into account property costs, preliminary studies, and site servicing. It also provided the land to the State, for use by the Louvre, for a symbolic cost of €1.

Operating costs of the center will be entirely covered by the Louvre, thanks to a portion of the interest earned from the Louvre Endowment Fund, which provides steady and sustainable revenues.
THREE QUESTIONS TO JEAN-LUC MARTINEZ

Why have you decided to move the Louvre’s stored art outside of the museum?
First and foremost, because it’s what we need to do to protect cultural heritage. The works stored underground at the Louvre palace risk exposure in case of centennial flooding and are also vulnerable to flooding that tends to happen every ten years. Let’s not forget the flood of 1910, or, to a lesser degree, that of 2016. The DNA of the museum, it’s beating heart, is the art it houses. The Musée du Louvre is fortunate enough to have one of the world’s most impressive collections of ancient art and archaeology. It’s a tremendous honor. And it’s also a tremendous responsibility: it is our duty to preserve this heritage for future generations.

Building a conservation center is therefore first and foremost about ensuring the safekeeping of art works. It’s also about modernizing conservation conditions and offering experts the most up-to-date facilities and tools: improved control of climatic conditions; accurate inventorying of each work; dedicated spaces for packing, unpacking and examining works; conservation treatment spaces dedicated to big size works, etc. It’s really a site that will lend more structure to the museum. For the first time, all of the museum reserves will be gathered into one and the same space. Until now, they have been scattered in 68 sites, both inside and outside the Louvre palace. This could be the perfect opportunity for new and exciting comparisons between art works. Preparing to move the art works gave us the opportunity to carry out an unprecedented inventory of the collections. All of this helps us get to know the collections we are entrusted with better.

Why Liévin?
Louvre staff realized how urgent it was to find a permanent solution for ensuring the safekeeping of our stored art. The search was on for a site that fulfilled all our requirements in terms of safety, conservation, accessibility, cost, etc. Several options were considered in the greater Paris region, but none were the right fit.

When the Louvre-Lens was inaugurated in 2012, the choice of a site within its immediate vicinity became self-evident. The Lens-Liévin urban area poses no risk of climatic alteration. The local community was willing to cede, for the symbolic cost of one euro, a considerable portion of land that met all our technical requirements. And of course, it only seemed natural to stay close to the Louvre-Lens, a place our curators know well, where they come regularly to work, the second most important place for presenting our collections outside of the Louvre palace. We’ve been moving works regularly from Paris to this region over the past seven years. Experience has shown that it’s a huge success. This Louvre-Lens/Conservation Center combo has become one of Europe’s most important cultural hubs.

What will the first few years of the new center be like?
It’s going to be a hive of activity! Imagine: in the space of five years, nearly 250,000 works will be transferred there. It’s the biggest move in the entire history of the Louvre, and perhaps that of museums everywhere.

I am proud of the Louvre and its staff for having the audacity to take on such a big adventure! I have also noticed that the world’s biggest museums are paying attention to what we are doing here. For example, the British Museum is currently building future storage spaces in Shinfield, about 80 km west of London. And the Netherlands is acquiring a new Collection Center in Amersfoort, some 50 km from Amsterdam.
**The Architectural Project**

**Storing the artworks**
Thanks to the Louvre Conservation Center, all of the works stored in the museum reserves will be grouped together in a single, functional space. Little by little, some 250,000 works will be moved there. The building, ergonomic and endowed with high thermal mass, offers the best possible conditions for storing art works in constant temperatures adapted to different types of objects. 9,600 m² dedicated to storing art are divided into eight distinct spaces, where works are grouped according to their format and specific needs of the materials they are made of: large-format organic works, works in stone, paintings and frames, small- and medium-format works from the antiquity departments. These storage spaces are located at the back of the building.
Two rooms close to the delivery bay are used for anoxic storage and quarantining artworks.

**Work and study conditions**
Along the western façade of the building, 1,300 m² of space are dedicated to conservation treatment, study, and consulting the collections. It will consist primarily of a photo studio, workshops for conservation projects, a space dedicated to preparing works for transfer, as well as rooms for researchers to conduct studies and consult the artworks. Offices for 16 staff members are located at mezzanine level.
Large windows will bring in natural light and offer views onto the landscaped garden slightly below floor level. The interior ceilings extend into an outdoor overhang that runs all along the western façade. It is equipped with aluminum strips which act as a shield, protecting the western façade from the rays of the sun.

**Logistics and layout of spaces**
With the exception of office spaces, located at mezzanine level, the center is constructed entirely on the ground floor in order to avoid intermediate handling and make moving artworks easy.
Building materials were chosen for their simplicity, resilience, and sobriety. The simple and elegant concrete frame, at once slender and strong, provides a highly efficient structure and stable environmental conditions.
The center is equipped with a 400 m² delivery bay. Spaces dedicated to packaging artworks (packing and unpacking, space for storing packaging material and reusable crates) are located immediately next to the delivery bay. A broad corridor lit from above will serve as the backbone of the building. Dubbed the “boulevard of artworks”, art passes through it from the delivery bay en route to areas dedicated to conservation and treatment.
Landscaped environment and integration into site

The center blends in seamlessly with its surroundings, in a prolongation of the landscaped grounds of the Louvre-Lens. The building was designed to be bio-climatic: power is generated by heat pumps, one third of which comes from geothermal energy, guaranteeing a high level of energy performance. 75% of construction waste was recycled. A large flowering meadow unfurls across the roof, sown with 27 plant species. Rain water is collected by a system of gutters on the roof, channeling the liquid into gullies around the building before returning to the soil. The network is large enough to easily handle centennial rains should they occur. A vegetal filter, consisting of about 100 planted trees, sets the building apart visually from its environment.

“It has been a great honour to be part of this incredible endeavour. Very few clients are as prestigious as the Louvre and even fewer briefs carry more weight than the relocation of one of humanity’s great treasures. The use of simple, elegant forms, marked by a solidity that resonates with the brief to create a powerful language of great French fortresses, that in this case retrain a large inclined park which protects the works of art below.”

Graham Stirk, Senior Design Partner, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners:

“I% artistique”

“Percent for art” programs, stipulates that the State, public bodies and regional authorities are required to dedicate 1% of the total project fee to hiring artists to create public works of art.

Angela DETANICO, Rafael LAIN
(Caxias do Sul, Brésil, 1974 / 1973),
From Vermeer to Veronese
Solid oak and gold leaf, 2019

For the new building that houses the Louvre Conservation Center, Angela Detanico and Rafael Lain designed a conceptual portrait of the Louvre’s collection of art. In a large frame the same size as that of the Louvre’s biggest painting, the Wedding at Cana by Veronese, they assembled images of different paintings from the collection, including the small Lacemaker by Vermeer. The exact dimensions of each painting were recreated by wooden frames, like the frames used to stretch canvases. Each frame is engraved with the name of the artist, the title of the work and the year the painting was made. In all, 109 works for the 109 years that elapsed between the creation of the Wedding at Cana (1562) and the Lacemaker (1670).
The Louvre Conservation Center

Location: Liévin (Hauts-de-France), in an extension of the Musée du Louvre-Lens grounds (main entrance of the site via the Jean-Jaurès parking lot)

Plot size: 40,000 m²

Building surface area: 18,500 m² (floor surface area) of which 9,600 m² for storage space.

Rooftop garden: 17,500 m², with 27 seed varieties.

Some 100 trees planted around the site

More than 5,000 plants were planted around the building

Layout of space:
- 6 large storage areas (between 1,400 and 2,400 m²), to meet conservation needs according to the type and size of works: organic/inorganic/small/large/very large
- 2 small dry storage spaces of 65 m² each, for works in metal (low humidity level)
- A photography studio, 140 m²
- 6 workshops for conservation treatment of artworks, of which one with an unencumbered surface area of 320 m²
- A 45 m² varnishing booth
- Rooms for study and conservation for researchers
- Two spaces dedicated to anoxia and quarantining
- A space dedicated to packaging works (packing and unpacking, space for storing materials)
- A 400 m² delivery bay

The Team:
- Brice Mathieu, associate director
- A team of 15 people dedicated to managing works of art, building maintenance and safety, and administrative affairs.

Moving the collections: 50,000 works to be moved over the next 4 years:
- First, 150,000 works currently stored in flood zones, between October 2019 and December 2020
- Followed by 100,000 works in external storage or museum spaces not located in flood zones, between 2021 and 2024

The collections of the Musée du Louvre

The Musée du Louvre boasts a collection of close to 620,000 works of art. Of these, about 35,000 are on display in the Louvre museum, and another 35,000 in regional museums. The Musée du Louvre lends between 2,000 and 3,000 works a year to partner institutions throughout the world. The Department of Prints and Drawings houses approximately 252,000 drawings, pastels, prints and manuscripts. These works are too fragile to be exposed to light, and are conserved in the Cabinet des Dessins, where they may be seen upon request. They will not be moved to the center. The departments of antiquities (Egyptian, Near Eastern, and Greek, Etruscan and Roman) have very many works in storage. They are, for the most part, fragmentary, retrieved from archaeological excavations. These works are of the utmost importance to researchers; only the best-preserved ones are on view for visitors.

In all, the Musée du Louvre houses 620,000 works of art, of which:
- 35,000 are on display in the museum
- 35,000 are housed in other institutions
- 3,000 are lent for temporary exhibitions
- 252,000 are conserved in the Cabinet des dessins
- 45,000 are in temporary storage spaces at the Louvre, in non-flood zones
- 250,000 are in storage, slated for transfer to the conservation center in Liévin
Le Fonds de dotation du Louvre

Afin de diversifier et de pérenniser ses sources de financement, le musée du Louvre est le premier musée français à avoir créé un fonds de dotation en 2009. Ce fonds, alimenté par un premier versement de 120 M€ au titre de l'utilisation du nom du Louvre par le Louvre Abu Dhabi, est constitué d'un capital non consomptible, qui génère chaque année des revenus, intégralement consacrés au financement des activités du musée.

Funding
Operating budget: 60 million euros, all expenses included
Budget of construction site: €42 million

Funding breakdown:
- Musée du Louvre: €34.5 million
- European Union, with ERDF, with Hauts-de-France region as acting manager: €18 million
- Hauts-de-France region: €5 million
- Ministry of Culture: €2.5 million

The Lens-Liévin urban area contributed €2.66 million to the project by selling land to the State, for use by the Louvre, for a symbolic sum of €1.

Operating cost of center: fully covered by a portion of interest from the Louvre Endowment Fund.

The Louvre Endowment Fund
In order to ensure diverse and sustainable revenues, the Musée du Louvre was the first French museum to create an endowment fund in 2009. This fund, launched by an initial investment of €120 million for the use of the Louvre name by the Louvre Abu Dhabi, consists of nonexpendable capital that generates revenues each year, used exclusively to cover the costs of museum operations.

Schedule
October 2, 2013: signature of an initial agreement for the creation of a conservation and storage facility for the Musée du Louvre in the Hauts-de-France region.

July 2, 2015: the winner is announced: the British contracted architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, in association with landscape architects from Mutabilis Paysage, the technical consultancy Egis Bâtiment Nord, the environmental consultancy Inddigo SAS, and VPEAS SAS, who provides contractor assistance in project management.

June 2-4, 2016: decennial flooding of the Seine, no water infiltration into underground spaces at the Musée du Louvre. As a precaution, the Musée du Louvre closed for four days (from June 3 to 7) to move works stored in flood zones to the upper levels of the museum. In 48 hours, 35,000 works (i.e. only 25% of the 152,000 works stored in flood zones) were moved to safety. Closing the museum for four days meant losing 120,000 visitors and approximately €1.5 million in revenues.

May 4, 2017: signature of an agreement between the Ministry of Culture, Musée du Louvre, Hauts-de-France, and Lens-Liévin urban area.

December 8, 2017: laying of the cornerstone
October 8, 2019: inauguration of the Louvre Conservation Center
As of October 28, 2019: transfer of reserve collections from Louvre storage sites in flood-risk zones
Early 2024: completion of transfers

The Louvre collections go online
In the coming months, the Louvre will launch a new website for its collections. It will feature more than 460,000 works with information and illustrations provided by the museum’s teams of experts. This new tool, intended for all audiences — from visitors, researchers, teachers and students — will present, for the first time, works of the Louvre including those not on display in museum galleries. Little by little, works will be added online, and the future site will become a key source of knowledge, making the Louvre collections accessible to all.
THE TEAM

Project management

Project management: The public establishment of the Musée du Louvre

Delegated project manager: Hauts-de-France region

The Musée du Louvre
Formerly a royal palace, the Louvre has been an inextricable part of French history for eight centuries. Since its inception as a universal museum in 1793, the Louvre has been home to collections that span 9 millennia of artistic creation from the Americas to Asia. Of the 620,000 works of art it houses, some are admired the world over, such as the Mona Lisa, the Winged Victory of Samothrace and the Venus de Milo. With 10.2 million visitors in 2018, the Louvre is the most visited museum in the world.

It is open every day except Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with late-night openings until 9:45 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. Late-night openings free of charge the first Saturday of the month, from 6 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.

www.louvre.fr

Hauts-de-France region
The Hauts-de-France region is committed to offering its population a rich cultural experience that reaches the entire region, thanks to new and improved cultural policies. Investing in the Louvre Conservation Center has contributed to this momentum. Indeed, the region wishes to prolong and promote the Louvre-Lens effect, by strengthening its territorial roots and extending its reach to the greatest possible number.

Along with the many other museums in the region, the Liévin site is part of a mutual commitment to enrich the local cultural landscape. It is the last and most prestigious addition to an exceptional museum offering in Hauts-de-France. More than a storage site, the region aims to become a resource for the universities and schools in Hauts-de-France, but also a place for training professionals in preventive conservation and art conservation in general.

Cultural outreach and accessibility, education and innovation, training and employment: the Louvre Conservation Center sums up in and of itself the ambitions of the Hauts-de-France region.

The Lens-Liévin urban area
To rise to the challenges of today and tomorrow, the 36 communes that make up the Lens-Liévin urban area have joined forces with public and private partners to imagine, propose and implement a brighter future. Their initiative brought a new vision to the region, inaugurating an indispensable cultural transformation. It is a state of mind, which paves the way to a future heralded by the Louvre-Lens and the Louvre Conservation Center.

Throughout the communes of Liévin and Lens, a coherent, grandiose and innovative movement dedicated to Art, knowledge, research and digital culture is taking shape. The Louvre-Lens has profoundly changed the image of the region and reached a population somewhat removed from the cultural offering. That is why the Lens-Liévin urban area has made financial contributions to the Louvre Conservation Center, a pole of excellence in a remarkable building that will boost the scientific and cultural renown of France and of the region in Europe and the world.

The city of Liévin
After the Louvre opened its doors in Lens, the Louvre Conservation Center made its home in Liévin. The choice was an opportunity that elected officials seized upon to give fresh impetus to a dynamic already underway these past few years. It bears witness to the faith they have in the future of this evolving region. It was also an opportunity to make significant changes to the Jean-Jaurès neighborhood: renovating a school, building collective and individual housing, welcoming new shops and local service providers, etc.

Proud of its past, Liévin is the very symbol of a new desirability. A project in the works over the past decade aims to do no less than transform the sooty image of carbon country into a sustainable model and an oasis of green.

Euralens connects the dots of these ambitious projects stamped with international approval, such as classification as a UNESCO world heritage site, the Chemins de la Mémoire to retrace the indelible steps of the First World War, the development of excellence clusters in the fields of IT, sports, culture, logistics, etc.

With a population of 31,300, the fourth-largest commune of Pas de Calais is taking on a new look as a modern and dynamic city.
Project design and construction supervision

Contracted Architects: Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners
Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners is an international award-winning architectural practice with over 40 years’ experience of designing a wide range of project types worldwide.
The practice has built many cultural buildings including the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre at the British Museum in London; the International Spy Museum in Washington in the USA; and the Macallan Distillery and Visitor Experience in Speyside in Scotland.
The firm was founded as the Richard Rogers Partnership in 1977 but over time evolved and in 2007 the decision was made to rename the firm Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners to reflect the vital contributions of Graham Stirk, designer of the iconic Leadenhall Building, and Ivan Harbour, designer of the Stirling prize winning West London Maggie’s Centre. The practice now has 13 partners, with several long-standing members of the practice being named partners in 2015. Together, they represent the inherent continuity and consistency of the philosophy which the practice applies to all its work.
www.rsh-p.com

Press Contact: Vicki Mcgregor, Strategic Communications & Marketing Manager: press@rsh-p.com or +44 20 7385 1235

Landscape Architects: Mutabilis Paysage & Urbanisme
The French landscape architecture firm Mutabilis Paysage created the gardens for the Musée du Quai Branly in 2006, in collaboration with Gilles Clément and Guillaume Geoffroy-Dechaume. In Lille, the firm designed the Garden of the Giants, inaugurated in 2009, and Place d’Oujda in Lille’s Wazemmes neighborhood (2014). The firm is also known for the Izadia Ecological Park in Anglet (Pyrénées-Atlantiques), created in 2007, and the redevelopment of the salt marshes of La Teste-de-Buch, in the Arcachon basin (2009).
www.mutabilis-paysage.com

Technical consultancy: Egis Bâtiment Nord
Egis is a technical consultancy based in Marcq-en Bareul (Hauts-de-France). Noteworthy projects include the Bouches-du-Rhône lending library and archives in Marseille (2005), the BNF’s Richelieu Library in Paris (2014), a multimedia library/archives in the city of Montpellier (2000), the diplomatic archives of La Courneuve (2008), and a hospital in Calais (2012).
www.egis.fr

Inddigo SAS
This environmental consultancy carried out a multi-energy study as part of renovations to the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Nantes (2008). In 2011, it participated in a competition for the construction of a departmental glass museum in Sars-Poterie (Northern France), and another in 2012 for the Musée du Boulingrin in Reims. Inddigo has also provided project management support to monitor services related to heating, ventilation, air conditioning and smoke extraction, and energy management assistance for the French national museum of natural history.
www.inddigo.com

Economists: VPEAS SAS
VPEAS provides assistance to public and private contractors in project management and construction economics with a view to optimizing and respecting costs and deadlines. Projects include the construction of the Regional Contemporary Art Fund in Dunkirk (2013), construction of the International Cave Painting Center in Montignac-Lascaux (2016), construction of the Regional Center for Culture and the Arts in Bordeaux (2016), and restructuring of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2012).
www.vpeas.com
Assistants maître d’ouvrage

Programming consultant: FL&Co
OPC : CICANORD
Synthesis: AROBAT
Technical consultant: COSB
Technical inspection agency and health and safety manager: Apave Nord Ouest

Main participating companies

Demathieu Bard Construction Nord  lot 1: structural work, waterproofing, rooftop garden, building equipment, lifting devices, screeds
PMN  lot 2: glazed façades, glass roofs and walls, solar protection
Loison  lot 3: high doors, locks
SDI plâtrerie  lot 4: interior joinery, partitions, insulation, dropped ceilings, carpentry equipment
Cabre and CRI  lot 5: floor and wall coverings, paint
Satelec and Eiffage Énergie  lot 7: électricité, équipements immobiliers électriques
Delannoy Dewailly and Engie Axima  lot 8: plumbing, HVAC, mechanical smoke extraction, built-in technical equipment
Bruynzeel rangements  lot 9: fixed and mobile storage equipment
Bruynzeel rangements  lot 10: fixed and sliding grid equipment
Eurovia et Euro-vert  lot 11: landscaping of outdoor spaces, road systems and various networks
Bruynzeel rangements  lot 12: heavy duty palette racks

Les coulisses du Louvre-Lens évoluent avec l’arrivée du Centre de conservation du Louvre à Liévin.
Dès son origine, le Louvre-Lens s’est démarqué par sa volonté de dévoiler ses coulisses au public. L’arrivée du Centre de conservation du Louvre à Liévin implique une redéfinition complète de la réserve visible du Louvre-Lens et de ses dispositifs de découverte.
En 2021, la mezzanine d’où les visiteurs peuvent observer les réserves sera entièrement réaménagée en un espace ludo-éducatif. De nouveaux dispositifs multimédia ainsi que des objets à manipuler raconteront la vie des réserves et des œuvres.