

Press release**Exhibition**

May 7–August 31, 2009

Sully Wing,
Salle de la Maquette

Exhibition curator:

Guillaume Fonkenell, curator, Department of Sculptures and museum historian, Musée du Louvre

This exhibition is sponsored by Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

**Exhibition catalogue:**

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Monday, June 8 at 12:30 p.m.

in the Auditorium du Louvre
Presentation of the exhibition by
Guillaume Fonkenell

Chambord During the Second World War,

October 9, 2009–May 10, 2010, at the Château de Chambord

Drawing upon primary documents from this period, the exhibition retraces events occurring at Chambord during these war years.

www.chambord.org

Venus de Milo roped for transport

Laure Albin-Guillot? [September 1939].
Original print. 18.2 cm x 13 cm.
Fonds Aulanier, Musée du Louvre.

The Louvre During the War

Photographs 1938–1947

Through a remarkable grouping of 56 photographs, this exhibition invites visitors to discover the life of the Louvre during the Second World War. Bringing together French and German images taken between 1938 and 1947, many of which have never before been on public display, it offers a new perspective on the evacuation and the later re-installation of works amid the upheavals of war.

Two major discoveries will be on view for the very first time: the collection of the photographer Pierre Jahan, acquired by the Louvre in 2005, and a series of photographs found in the Koblenz municipal archives documenting what became known as the “Louvre sequestration”: the requisitioning of rooms in the palace by the Nazis for the storage and sorting of works plundered from the collections of prominent Jewish families and art dealers in France. Other photographs, attributed to press agencies or independent professional or amateur photographers of the 1940s, help to put these images in perspective.

The exhibition also provides an opportunity to appreciate the talents of three photographers: Pierre Jahan shares with Laure Albin-Guillot and Marc Vaux a technique little used in the present day. Immersed in the artistic culture of the thirties and forties, their photographs offer today’s visitors a singular vision of the Louvre haunted by its collections.

**Communications**

Aggy Lerolle
aggy.lerolle@louvre.fr

Press relations

Laurence Roussel
+33 (0)1 40 20 84 98 / 84 52 (fax)
laurence.roussel@louvre.fr



The Grande Galerie deserted
 Marc Vaux [week of September 16, 1939?].
 16.1 cm x 11.3 cm.
 Fonds Aulanier, Musée du Louvre.



Ascent of the Winged Victory of Samothrace
 Pierre Jahan [June 21, 1945].
 Original print. 20.3 cm x 17.4 cm.
 Archives des musées nationaux.

Visitor information

Place
 Sully Wing, Salle de la Maquette

Hours
 Open every day except Tuesdays, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Evening hours on Wednesdays and Fridays until 10 p.m.

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 at all times for youths under 18.

Further information
 +33 (0)1 40 20 53 17 / www.louvre.fr

The Louvre between 1938 and 1940

Beginning in 1938, the threat of war prompted a large-scale evacuation of public collections. The storage sites chosen for works of art were châteaux, tranquil locations in the heart of the French countryside, far from strategic targets, thus escaping the imminent danger of bombing. The *Mona Lisa* left the Louvre on August 28, 1939 and on September 3, as war had been declared, a decision was taken to ensure that all of the most precious works would leave the premises by the end of the day.

Traveling works

Stowed away in several hundred crates, sculptures, decorative objects and 3,690 paintings took to the road. From one perspective, this journey was a logistical feat of packaging and truck loading, documented by the photographs displayed. The routes of France soon thronged with thirty-seven convoys joining the crowds already leaving the city. This event was also an opportunity to view, often with unprecedented closeness, the museum's iconic works suddenly brought down from their pedestals: the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* before it was sent to the Château de Valençay, the *Venus de Milo* or the *Mona Lisa*, which would be moved first to Chambord, then Louvigny, the Abbaye de Loc Dieu, the Musée de Montauban and finally to Montal, with the Louvre's other paintings. Jacques Jaujard, director of the Musées de France at the time, had the unenviable task of supervising the movements of these stored works, continually under threat from the hazards of an encroaching war.

Reopening of the Louvre under German occupation

But the Louvre during the Second World War was also a palace at the heart of a capital having experienced one of the longest and most dramatic occupations in its history. The German authorities, eager to return the city of Paris to a semblance of cultural life, ordered the reopening of the museum in September 1940. This partial opening was merely symbolic and the photographs shown in the exhibition reveal a labyrinth of abandoned galleries, with itineraries indicated in German. The signs of war were everywhere: ornamental gardens transformed to grow vegetables, damage caused by nearby bombings.

The Louvre witnesses Nazi art plundering

Five historical images recently found in the Koblenz municipal archives and never before displayed in public show works of art plundered from private collections belonging to prominent Jewish families or art dealers, meticulously wrapped and protected, in preparation for their departure to Germany. This scene takes place in the galleries devoted to Near Eastern antiquities, requisitioned by the Nazis and quickly rendered inaccessible to museum personnel. After the Nazis seized the Jeu de Paume, which would be used as a further repository for looted works of art, the "Louvre sequestration" nevertheless continued, occasioning a continual to-and-fro of art works between both museums, with the result being that Jacques Jaujard was unable to prevent the transfer to the Third Reich of the stolen paintings.

The Louvre after the War: A museum transformed

After the War, a new Louvre, transformed by major renovation work, gradually opened to the public between 1945 and 1947. And thanks to the skills and tenacity of those responsible for safeguarding cultural property, the museum's major masterpieces returned to the palace, virtually unscathed.