Birth of a Museum
Louvre Abu Dhabi

Louvre Abu Dhabi is unveiling the best of its new collection for the first time in France; more than one hundred and sixty of the finest masterpieces already acquired by the UAE museum will be presented in May in Paris, during a major exhibition entitled "Birth of a Museum".

Louvre Abu Dhabi, which will be opening in December 2015, will be the first universal museum created in the Middle East, a region at the crossroads of civilizations. Its collection of old and contemporary works from different countries has been gradually growing since 2009 with each new acquisition. The exhibition will enable the French public to get a preview of the cultural wealth of the collection of the future museum and also to grasp the architectural and cultural project.

A permanent collection unveiled in Paris

The "Birth of a Museum" exhibition is the first major presentation in Paris of the collection of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, associated with the evocation of the architecture of Jean Nouvel as well as the local context of its development. It will unveil a selection of more than one hundred and sixty works acquired since 2009 by the Emirate, which has benefited from the expertise of the teams from Abu Dhabi and Agence France-Museums. Among these exceptional works there is a statue called Bactrian "Princess", a gold bracelet with figures of lions made in Iran nearly 3,000 years ago, a rare Greek archaic sphinx, a large Bodhisattva from Pakistan, a fibula (brooch) in gold with garnets from Italy dating from the fifth century AD, a magnificent Virgin with Child by Bellini, paintings by Jordaens, Caillebotte, Manet, Gauguin, Magritte, a previously unseen papier-collé by Picasso and nine paintings by the recently deceased American painter Cy Twombly. The aim of the exhibition is built around a chronological thread and some major artistic and aesthetic issues that already emphasize the principles at the heart of the identity of the Louvre Abu Dhabi: universalism, the confrontation of artistic testimonies of the great civilizations, from ancient times to the contemporary scene, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of the fields of artistic creation.

A similar exhibition have already been presented to the public in Abu Dhabi from 22 April to 20 July 2013 at Manarat Al Saadiyat, the art and exhibition centre of Saadiyat Island Cultural District. The exhibition was inaugurated by His Excellency Sheikh Hazaa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice-President of the Executive Council of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in the presence of Aurélie Filippetti, French Minister of Culture and Communication.

Yves Klein, Anthropometry untitled (ANT 110), Paris, France, 1960
Pure pigment and synthetic resin on paper mounted on canvas
H. 201.3 cm; W. 147.3 cm
LAD 2011-006
© Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris 2014
Shot: ©Louvre Abu Dhabi, photographie APF
First Universal museum in the Arab world

By an intergovernmental agreement signed on 6 March 2007, the UAE and France decided to create a universal museum named Louvre Abu Dhabi which is scheduled to open in December 2015. This unprecedented move lays the foundations for a new type of cultural cooperation between the two countries around the birth of a national institution. As the first universal museum in the Arab world, Louvre Abu Dhabi is an ambitious project whose identity is underpinned by the notions of discovery, contact and, therefore, education. The future museum will not, in any way, be a copy of the French Louvre in Abu Dhabi; instead, it will be an original institution, with its own collection, offering its own interpretation of a universal museum, reflecting its own era and the local traditions of the host country.

Louvre Abu Dhabi aims to be a place of dialogue between civilizations and cultures. Its uniqueness will be based on an overarching vision of artistic creation and it will adopt an original way to present collections, combining loans from French collections and works from the Louvre Abu Dhabi's own currently developing collection, on a rotating basis over ten years.

The construction of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by Jean Nouvel, winner of the Pritzker Prize, has begun on Saadiyat Island. Designed as a “museum city”, protected from the sun by a large dome, the buildings extend out over the water. The Louvre Abu Dhabi will cover nearly 64,000 m², with 9,200 m² reserved for art galleries, 6,000 m² for the permanent gallery and 2,000 m² for temporary exhibitions of international importance.

Exhibition curators

Vincent Pomarède, Director of the Department of Paintings at the Musée du Louvre, General Curator of the exhibition
Associated with
Laurence des Cars, Director of the Musée de l'Orangerie
Khalid Abdulkhalig Abdulla, Assistant Curator for Birth of a Museum, TCA Abu Dhabi (Tourism & Culture Authority)

Agence France-Muséums, chaired by Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, reunites the partner institutions of the Louvre Abu Dhabi: the Louvre Museum, the Pompidou Centre, the public establishment of the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Musée du Quai Branly, the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Public Establishment of the Museum and National Estate of Versailles, the Musée Guimet, the École du Louvre, the Rodin Museum, the Domaine National de Chambord and the Établissement Public de Maitrise d'Ouvrage des Travaux Culturales.
Jean-Luc Martinez chairs the Scientific Council. Manuel Rabaté manages the Agency team as Chief Executive Officer.

Publications

Exhibition catalogue: Louvre Abu Dhabi. Birth of a Museum, edited by Laurence des Cars. Coed. Louvre Museum/Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA)/Skira Flammarion, 320 p., 300 ill. In French (£45), English (£49) and Arabic (£65).
Around the exhibition

Presentation lecture about the exhibition
Monday, 5 May 12:30 pm
by Khalid Abdulkhaliq Abdulla, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Laurence des Cars, Musée de l’Orangerie, Vincent Pomarède, Musée du Louvre

Setting the scene
Wednesday, 28 May 12:30 pm
Stūpa reliquary, South India, Andhra Pradesh, Amaravati region
by Vincent Lefèvre, Ministry of Culture and Communication Directorate General for heritage

International Symposium
Wednesday, 18 June from 9:30 am to 6 pm
Around the Louvre Abu Dhabi for a comprehensive history of art?
Programme to come

Filmed theatre
Sunday, 4 May, 2 pm to 8:30 pm
The Mahābhārata
Projection of 3 episodes of the cult film based on the show by Peter Brook and Jean-Claude Carrière featuring the founder of the book of Indian religion, history and thought.

Concerts
In the auditorium
Thursday, 22 May at 8 pm
Toufic Farroukh & the Absolute Orchestra
A concert celebrating the marriage of jazz and Arabic music

Free concert under the pyramid
Saturday, 21 June at 10 pm
Orchestre de Paris
Paavo Järvi, music director
Moussorgski, Pictures at an Exhibition

Osman Hamdi Bey (Istanbul, 1842–Galatasaray Islet, 1910)
A Young Emir Studying, Istanbul, 1878
Oil on canvas, H. 45.5 cm; W. 90 cm
LAD.2012.017
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