Press Kit

Exhibit

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Hall Napoléon

Louvre Abu Dhabi
Context, architectural design, and ambition

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Context: an innovative project

This project to create a major, universal art museum was born out a desire by the leaders of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to make their country a top cultural destination and become a gold standard for art, education, and culture. The aim of this challenge is to make up for the end of the oil era by developing tourism, education, and services. To succeed in creating the Arab world's first universal museum, Abu Dhabi wanted to take advantage of French expertise.

Intergovernmental agreement: a new partnership

Louvre Abu Dhabi is the result of an unprecedented initiative that laid the groundwork for a new type of cultural collaboration of unparalleled scope between two countries, centered on the creation of a national institution.

Born out of an intergovernmental agreement signed on March 6, 2007 between the United Arab Emirates and France, Louvre Abu Dhabi is the first universal museum in the Arab world. The museum will bring the Louvre name to Abu Dhabi and present works of historic, cultural, and sociological interest, both ancient and contemporary, from around the world. It is scheduled to open in December 2015.

The agreement involves twelve French public cultural establishments under the umbrella of Agence France-Muséums:

- The Louvre museum,
- The Pompidou Centre,
- The Établissement public of the Musée d’Orsay and the Musée de l’Orangerie,
- The National Library of France (BNF),
- The Quai Branly museum,
- The Réunion des Musées Nationaux – Grand Palais,
- The Museum and National Domain of Versailles,
- The Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts,
- The École du Louvre,
- The Rodin Museum,
- The National Domain of Chambord,
- The Opérateur du patrimoine et des projets immobiliers de la culture.

Overview of the collections: a different museum

The future museum shall not, in any way, be a copy of the French Louvre; instead, it will be an original institution offering its interpretation of a universal museum, reflecting its own era and the local traditions of the host country. 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.

Its uniqueness shall be based on an overarching vision of artistic creation. Museums traditionally organize their collections by school, technique, and materials, and while this approach does highlight the unique characteristics of a series, it does nothing to show the influences, exchanges, and circulation of ideas and know-how. The Louvre Abu Dhabi’s unique museography will explore the connections between civilizations and cultures that may at first appear to be far separated by time and geography. Visitors will be guided through a chronological and thematic tour, traversing different periods and civilizations. The displays will pick out universal themes and common influences to illustrate the similarities that grow out of a shared human experience, beyond any geographical, historical, or cultural effect. As a result, Louvre Abu Dhabi will be a truly universal museum.
Description: an ambitious project

Saadiyat Island and the Cultural District

Built on Saadiyat Island (the Island of Happiness), a natural, 27-km² island the size of a third of Paris, the Cultural District will house a number of renowned cultural establishments: Louvre Abu Dhabi universal museum, with an architectural design by Jean Nouvel; the Sheikh Zayed National Museum by Norman Foster and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi designed by Franck Gehry. The Cultural District will be integrated into a new urban complex just outside the historic Abu Dhabi city center, with housing for 150,000 residents. All of these projects are intended to feed the new artistic expression inherent to a rapidly growing region. Louvre Abu Dhabi aims to complement the other Emirati museums and help transform the art and cultural scene in the Middle East.

Louvre Abu Dhabi, a masterful architectural design

Jean Nouvel, a Pritzker Architecture Prize winner selected to design the museum, was inspired by the special features of the Saadiyat site: a virgin lagoon island, between sand and sea, shade and light. His design will offer future visitors a high-impact architectural and museum experience that fosters dialogue between cultures. Jean Nouvel wanted his building to have "a form that matches its function as a sanctuary for the most valuable works of art."

The Louvre museum city" will include nearly 64,000 m², with 6,000 m² devoted to the permanent collections and 2,000 m² for temporary exhibits.

A dome 180 meters in diameter (the same size as the Louvre's Cour Carrée) will cover two-thirds of the museum, providing shade and reducing energy consumption. Abu Dhabi "

Echoing the mosque, mausoleum, caravanserial and madrasa, its shape is not bound by any literal inspiration: resting on four points of contact and slightly low-slung, it is the embodiment of a completely contemporary style. Pierced with openings to look like interwoven palm leaves, a traditional roofing material in the Emirates, the dome resembles geometric lace. A recurring geometric template repeated in different sizes and at different
angles in a complex arrangement forms ten distinct layers, four external and four internal. Sun filters through the dome like a delicate, protective rain of light, similar to a claustra lattice or a mashrabiya, reflecting the constant tension between light and shadow in the country.

Below, Jean Nouvel has designed a complex of buildings with level and harmonious proportions embraced by the sea. Freely inspired by buried cities and a prototypical Oriental city, a large part of the museum complex is sheltered under the comfort of this shadow. This "medina" of rooms balances urban features and geometry like a city neighborhood, with some thirty buildings visible along a promenade. Rising up to heights of 4-12 m, they each feature a different façade decorated with a variety of piercings, combining unique transitions and passages. The museum city creates a space that plays with the multiple connections between indoor and outdoor, ever-changing and poetic, to kindle curiosity and invite visitors to explore new routes and pathways, guided by the light.

Inspired by the ancient falaj system of Arab engineering, a water channel runs through the museum, making the space into a refreshing oasis that encourages strolling along the water.

Passive design techniques take advantage of the natural shape of the buildings and the properties of the materials selected to improve outdoor conditions. The museum’s roof is perforated to capture daylight without
letting in too much sun; light-reflecting materials in pale colors are used in construction to send heat back rather than absorbing it; reduced-flow plumbing and water facilities were selected to reduce the building's demand for drinkable water.

Construction is already underway on Saadiyat Island on the emblematic building designed by Jean Nouvel, with a scheduled completion of March 2015. A one to one mockup of one of the museum’s galleries has been completed and the iconic dome continues to be assembled and placed into position on the construction site.

**A collection with broad coverage**

The Louvre Abu Dhabi's collection began with a blank slate and is growing gradually; currently, it holds ancient and contemporary works from different countries. The Louvre Abu Dhabi's ambition is to acquire high-quality works and build up a first-class collection worthy of international recognition. An Acquisitions Committee following the model of the Louvre Museum's own committee, has been formed. The teams within TCA Abu Dhabi and Agence France-Muséums study proposals and follow the acquisition practices. Works are chosen according to the strictest ethical considerations, and their origins are closely scrutinized. The Commission must endorse each acquisition.

These exceptional works include a gold bracelet with lion figures made in Iran nearly 3,000 years ago, an Italian gold and garnet fibula (brooch) from the 5th century AD; Édouard Manet, Le Bohémien, France, Paris, after 1867; Giovanni Bellini, Virgin and Child, Italy, Venice, circa 1480-1485; Bactrian princess, Central Asia, late 3rd-early 2nd century BC. © Louvre Abu Dhabi / Thierry Ollivier Osman Hamdi Bey, Jeune Émir à l’étude, Istanbul, 1878 © Louvre Abu Dhabi / Agence Photo F
A museum at the crossroads of civilizations

Louvre Abu Dhabi sets out to be the focal point of a dialogue between civilizations and cultures, symbolically continuing the age-old history of the Arabian Peninsula as a land of convergence and exchange. It must convey a spirit of openness and intercultural dialogue. Abu Dhabi's ambition is to lay an educational and cultural foundation. The museum will be located just an hour and a half from Indian, in the heart of the Middle East, in a capital of the modern world, the museum will be at a crossroads of civilizations. It will develop its own permanent collection targeting residents as well as regional and international visitors: a national art collection with something for everyone.

In the very first article of the intergovernmental agreement, Louvre Abu Dhabi states its ambition of becoming a place that "fosters dialogue between East and West." This dialogue, embodied by the relationships between works of art, sculptures, and objects, will invite visitors to explore shared influences and surprising connections between different cultures around the world.
Implementation: a global project

The Louvre Abu Dhabi's ambition is to create a new major museum with its own collections that will become an independent player on the world museum scene. It will draw on French expertise and be built on a true skill transfer approach.

Louvre Abu Dhabi staff training

The intergovernmental agreement calls for the French side, under the umbrella of Agence France-Muséums, to provide training and teaching support for staff with specific qualifications, including professionals who will be in direct contact with the works (curators, documentation managers, restoration and preventive conservation experts, artwork registrars, cultural mediation managers, and security and surveillance managers). The issues facing each field of expertise are discussed regularly between professionals. Multiple Emiratis have been hosted for internships at the various French museums and institutions involved in the project. In cooperation with the scientific team of the future Louvre Abu Dhabi museum, Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi and the École du Louvre offer a professional Master's degree in the History of Arts and Museum Studies. With Louvre Abu Dhabi as only one of several museum projects underway in the UAE, there will be a need in coming years for qualified staff trained in art history and museum professions in order to maintain the scientific and intellectual quality of these establishments. This unique context, with its specific requirements, was the reason the professional Master's was created.

The Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi campus is set on Al Reem Island, 15 minutes outside the city center; it is named Paris Sorbonne after the international partnership agreement signed in 2006 with one of the world's oldest and most prestigious universities, the Sorbonne, which has been active for more than 7 centuries. Its programs in the humanities and social sciences are identical to those offered by Paris Sorbonne University (Paris IV). In addition, the University works with Paris-Descartes to offer law and economics studies. Classes are taught by Paris-Sorbonne and Paris-Descartes professors, with the same high standards applied in Paris. The diplomas are delivered from Paris and are internationally recognized.

Knowledge transfer and mediation, the core of the Louvre Abu Dhabi project

Louvre Abu Dhabi is an ambitious project whose identity is rooted in exploration and encounters, and thus in education. Along with Louvre Abu Dhabi itself, a varied cultural offering will be created for audiences of all origins and ages, with a variety of interests. Louvre Abu Dhabi Talking Art Series, which has been ongoing for several years, explores the meaning of particular works of art within the context of art history and of the museum's growing collection. These talks, organized by TCA Abu Dhabi, Agence France-Muséums, and the École du Louvre, offer audiences a glimpse of the collection and the museum's approach before the official opening. Workshops for families make the museum more accessible to children, inviting participants to create their own works inspired by the Louvre Abu Dhabi's acquisitions. Once again, the aim is to create a connection with the public even before Louvre Abu Dhabi opens and make its collections familiar.
The United Arab Emirates and Abu Dhabi

The UAE, formed in 1971, is a federation of seven emirates (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain) that covers 82,880 km². The Emirate of Abu Dhabi is the largest, accounting for more than 85% of the country's total territory. Abu Dhabi City is the capital of the country and home to the federal government. Abu Dhabi is home to a highly cosmopolitan population of 1.6 million people, of the more than 8.4 million who call the United Arab Emirates home (as of 2012).

Emir of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan died on November 2, 2004 after serving as UAE president since the federation was formed; his eldest son Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, succeeded him as both emir and president. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Sheikh Khalifa's half-brother, is Crown Prince and Chairman of the Executive Council (Prime Minister) of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Official Language: Arabic
Other Languages: Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu
Currency: Emirati dirham (1 AED = €0.20; €1 = 5.07 AED, October 2013)
National holiday: December 2 (formation of the Union in 1971)

http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/Émirats-arabes-unis/
Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi)
TCA is in charge of tourism and culture in Abu Dhabi. The authority highlights and promotes the Emirate as a destination internationally with a broad range of activities designed to attract visitors and investments. Its work involves preserving culture and heritage, protecting archaeological and historic sites, and developing museums, including Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. To expand its offering, TCA Abu Dhabi supports intellectual, art, and cultural events taking place in Abu Dhabi. TCA is also committed to creating synergies in Abu Dhabi's tourism and culture by cultivating close coordination between the various stakeholders.

Agence France-Muséums (AFM)
Created on July 11, 2007 in Paris under the intergovernmental agreement signed by France and the United Arab Emirates, Agence France-Muséums is a simplified joint-stock company in which 12 public cultural establishments hold a share of the capital: see list on page 3.
Agence France-Muséums is tasked with advising the sponsor the creation of a universal museum project on behalf of the UAE authorities, as well as structuring the expertise of the French cultural institutions. This responsibility covers the following areas:

- Defining the scientific and cultural objectives;
- Providing assistance to the contracting authority on topics including museography, signage, and multimedia projects;
- Organizing loans from French collections and temporary exhibits;
- Advising on the formation of a permanent collection;
- Defining the audience policy.

In 2008, Agence France-Muséums signed a service agreement with its Emirati partner listing the services that Agence France-Muséums will provide over a 20-year period. As stipulated by the intergovernmental agreement on March 6, 2007, the Agency is fully funded by the authorities of the United Arab Emirates.

Ateliers Jean Nouvel
The Ateliers Jean Nouvel were founded in 1994 and are made up of some 140 employees working on projects in France and around the world, including Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Philharmonie de Paris, the glass tower and extension of the MoMA in New York, the Gare du Midi in Brussels, the European Patent Office (EPO) in Rijswijk, and One Central Park tower in Sydney.
In terms of museums, Jean Nouvel is behind the design of the Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris—1987), the Fondation Cartier (Paris—1994), the Musée Gallo-Romain Vésunna (Périgueux—2003), the extension of the Museo Reina-Sofia (Madrid—2005), and the Quai-Branly museum (Paris—2006). He is currently working on the National Museum of Qatar (scheduled for 2015) and already has the Doha Tower (2011) to his credit. Jean Nouvel was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2008 for his career.
Additional information

Financial figures

**Acquisitions:** €40 M annually on average for 10 years to purchase artworks

**Contributions to France:** approximately €1 billion

- **Louvre name** €400 M for 30 years
- **Compensation for loans** €190 M divided between the lending museums over 10 years
- **Temporary exhibits** €120 M in organization fees (€8 M /year for 15 years), managed by the Agency on behalf of the Emirati party
- **Compensation to AFM** €75 M in compensation for loans (€5 M/year for 15 years) to be divided by the Agency between the lending museums
- **Compensation to AFM** €164 M (until 2026) over 20 years

*Amounts in euros, December 2006, indexed*

Loans of works from French public collections

To complement the permanent collection of Louvre Abu Dhabi acquired by the Emiratis, the intergovernmental agreement calls for loaning works from the French collections for 10 years from the museum's opening on a rotating basis:
- 300 loans from French collections upon opening
- 250 loans starting in the 4th year
- 200 loans starting in the 7th year

Timing of the intergovernmental agreement