

Louvre Abu Dhabi, a new cultural landmark for the 21st century, opens to the public on 11 November

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Abu Dhabi, 7 November 2017

The much-anticipated Louvre Abu Dhabi will open to the public on Saturday November 11, with a spectacular week-long series of celebrations. It is the first museum of its kind in the Arab region and offers a new perspective on the history of art in a globalised world.

An iconic architectural masterpiece designed by Jean Nouvel, it is located on the waterfront in Abu Dhabi's cultural district on Saadiyat Island. The inaugural installation in its spacious collection galleries will present 600 works of art, half from its own rich holdings, and half consisting of stellar works visiting from its 13 partner museums in France. The museum will also begin an ongoing programme of special exhibitions in December.

Louvre Abu Dhabi is the result of a unique collaboration between Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and France.

The museum's collection spans the history of humanity and will explore a universal narrative through artworks and artefacts from all over the world. The inaugural installation will take visitors on a chronological journey from prehistory to the present day, encompassing 12 chapters including the birth of the first villages; universal religions; cosmography; the magnificence of the royal court; and the modern world.

His Excellency Mohamed Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture & Tourism and the Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC), said: "The UAE is proud of our rich heritage, while also

embracing progress and change. We are a dynamic, vibrant and multicultural society, where people live in harmony and tolerance. This diversity is reflected in Louvre Abu Dhabi's collection, which celebrates the innate human fascination with discovery. Each visitor will encounter extraordinary artworks and artefacts from global cultures that are both familiar and surprising. Louvre Abu Dhabi is the UAE's gift to the world, and we look forward to welcoming our first visitors."

Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "Louvre Abu Dhabi sets a benchmark for the region, attracting the next generation of talented museum professionals. It has reinvented the 18th-century premise of the universal museum for a demanding contemporary audience. In a complex multi-narrative world, these ideas are more important than ever. By exhibiting works from diverse cultures in the same space, our curation shows the interconnectedness of different ideologies, aesthetics and artistic techniques. The museum story transports visitors through a history of humanity illuminated by our collection of exceptional treasures."

Commenting on behalf of musée du Louvre, **Jean-Luc Martinez, President-Director of musée du Louvre and Chairman of the Scientific Board of Agence France-Muséums**, said: "Today is the inauguration of Louvre Abu Dhabi; a museum like no other, which could be considered as the most ambitious cultural project of the early 21st century. It carries a message of openness, which is critical for our era. This incredible project was conceived in the Emirates and carried out as an inspiring partnership. Today, we are proud that expertise given by French museums, and the extraordinary artworks that have been gathered together, contribute to the achievement of this museum, which will amaze the world and make its mark in the history of museums."

Architect Jean Nouvel has designed Louvre Abu Dhabi as a museum city (*medina*) which combines traditional Arabic inspiration with contemporary design and cutting-edge energy-efficient engineering. Visitors can walk along promenades overlooking the sea underneath the iconic dome, comprised of 7,850 unique metal stars set in a complex geometric pattern. When sunlight filters through, it creates a moving 'rain of light', reminiscent of the overlapping palm trees in the UAE's oases.

Jean Nouvel, the architect of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "Louvre Abu Dhabi embodies an exceptional programme in the literal sense of the word. Its vocation is now to express what is universal throughout the ages. Its architecture makes it a place of convergence and correlation between the immense sky, the sea-horizon and the territory of the desert. Its dome and cupola imprint the space with the consciousness of time and of the moment through an evocative light of a spirituality that is its own."

The collection

Presented across 6,400 square metres of galleries, the museum's growing collection includes more than 600 important artworks and artefacts, approximately half of which will be presented for the opening year. It includes ancient archaeological finds, decorative arts, neoclassical sculptures, paintings by modern masters and contemporary installations.

Jean-François Charnier, Scientific Director of Agence France-Muséums, said: "At Louvre Abu Dhabi, works of art provide the most eloquent testimony of the course of time, enabling its visitors to look back over the ages that have fashioned the world in which they live. Encounters with artefacts of different cultures give rise to emotions and questions, making this universal museum the ideal place to embark on a global history of humanity."

Ancient masterpieces from the collection include a Bactrian Princess created in Central Asia at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, a Grecian sphinx from the 6th century BCE and an Iranian gold bracelet in the shape of a lion. Visitors encounter works from universal religions, including sacred texts such as a *Leaf from the "Blue Quran"*

and a Gothic Bible, as well as a Standing Bodhisattva from the 2nd or 3rd century and a white marble Head of Buddha from China.

Highlights from later periods include an ancient astrolabe, part of a display showing the science of cosmography; a red Chinese lacquer chest of drawers produced in France by Bernard II van Risenburgh, which shows the cross-cultural inspirations born from global trade routes; and Giovanni Bellini's *Madonna and Child*, representing the emergence of religious art and iconography.

Works such as a Bronze Oba head from the Benin Kingdom and Jacob Jordaens' *The Good Samaritan* demonstrate the magnificence of royal courts around the world.

A series of iconic paintings captures the emergence of the modern world, including Gustave Caillebotte's *Game of Bezique*, Edouard Manet's *The Gypsy*, Paul Gauguin's *Children Wrestling*, Osman Hamdi Bey's *A Young Emir Studying*, Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black*, René Magritte's *The Subjugated Reader* and Pablo Picasso's *Portrait of a Lady*.

The museum's contemporary art collection has nine canvases by Cy Twombly and a monumental sculpture by renowned international artist Ai Weiwei. As part of an ongoing programme of commissions, Jenny Holzer and Giuseppe Penone have created monumental site-specific installations, exhibited under the dome in open air and embedded in Louvre Abu Dhabi's architecture.

Sharing art and expertise

As part of the intergovernmental agreement between the UAE and France, Louvre Abu Dhabi has access to expertise and training from 17 French partner institutions. It will also benefit from the ability to borrow works of art from 13 leading French museums for 10 years, and from special exhibitions organised by these institutions for 15 years.

Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, Chairman of Agence France-Muséums, said: "What more stimulating challenge could there be for the French museums and cultural institutions than to invent, in partnership with Louvre Abu Dhabi, a museum entirely unlike any other in existence? Committed all together, they remind us with Louvre Abu Dhabi that culture and education remain invaluable foundations that this museum, now open to one and all, embodies in so many ways."

At opening, 300 works from French partner museums are on display. Some highlights include Leonardo da Vinci's *La Belle Ferronnière* (musée du Louvre); Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* (musée d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie); a rare ivory saltcellar from the Benin Empire (musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac); a *Globe* by Vincenzo Coronelli (Bibliothèque nationale de France); a pair of *gui* vessels (musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet); Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (Château de Versailles); Auguste Rodin's *Jean d'Aire* from the group *The Burghers of Calais* (musée Rodin); a 13th-century reliquary chest (musée de Cluny - musée national du Moyen Âge); a Chinese ewer of Persian shape (musée des Arts Décoratifs); a breastplate from Marmesse (musée d'archéologie nationale - Saint Germain en Laye); the sculpture *Apollo Belvedere* by Primitice (Château de Fontainebleau); and *Standing Woman II* by Alberto Giacometti (Centre Pompidou).

Additional works from regional and UAE institutions will be on view at Louvre Abu Dhabi at the time of the opening. The National Museum of Ras Al Khaimah provides key objects including a pendant dating back to 2000-1800 BCE and a painted Neolithic vase, discovered on the 8000-year-old settlement on Marawah Island off the coast of Abu Dhabi. Al Ain National Museum lends an important fragment of stucco from an ancient church in Abu Dhabi's Sir Bani Yas Island.

Highlights of objects borrowed from within the region include a prehistoric stone tool dating back to 350,000 BCE, a milestone indicating the distance from Mecca in Kufic inscriptions and a funerary *stèle* dating back to 700–900 CE from the Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage; a collection of over 400 silver Dirham coins from the National Museum – Sultanate of Oman; and an 8000-year-old, two-headed figure from Jordan’s Department of Antiquities called the *Ain Ghazal* Statue.

Opening events

The museum’s doors will open to the public alongside an exciting programme of multicultural music, arts and dance performances, workshops and, on November 11, *Museum Reflections (Vives Réflexions)* – a spectacular light show and firework display by world-renowned Groupe F. Running from November 11 – 14, this opening week programme was curated by Louvre Abu Dhabi in collaboration with Agence France-Muséums and Arwad Esber, Artistic and Programming Advisor.

Special ticketed headline acts during opening week include a sold-out show by French singer and rock guitarist Matthieu Chedid, known as –M– (November 11); mesmerising Malian performer Fatoumata Diawara (November 12); Lebanese jazz and world musician Ibrahim Maalouf (November 13); and the magnificent singer and dancer Totó La Momposina (November 14), whose performances are inspired by Colombian-Caribbean traditions. Admission tickets are now available for purchase online. Space is limited; to purchase tickets, please visit www.louvreabudhabi.ae.

Children’s Museum

The Children’s Museum at Louvre Abu Dhabi will also open to the public. This is an exploratory space providing the opportunity to engage with artworks from Louvre Abu Dhabi’s collection to young visitors (aged 6-12) and their families. It presents its own special exhibitions, with artworks displayed in specially designed cases at children’s eye level and interactive mediation tools. With a range of immersive and interactive zones, the Children’s Museum offers a programme of hands-on activities and educational workshops.

The inaugural exhibition in the Children’s Museum is titled *Travelling Shapes and Colours*. It explores shapes and colours, such as floral and geometric ornamentation, through a selection of works from artistic traditions across the globe, including 16th-century Turkish ceramics, 18th-century decorative French vases and a 19th-century painting by German artist Paul Klee.

Educational initiatives

Louvre Abu Dhabi has worked in close collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, schools and universities in the UAE to develop educational materials and initiatives for students of all ages. During the opening week, it will launch an educational portfolio for teachers from primary to secondary levels. Over the past three years, Louvre Abu Dhabi has worked with a number of Emirati students through its Student Ambassador Programme, which trains and empowers young Emiratis to become skilled ambassadors for the project among their communities.

In a collaborative effort running since 2009, Louvre Abu Dhabi and other Saadiyat Cultural District museums have organised a variety of programmes to engage and develop audiences with a wide range of backgrounds, interests and ages. To date, Louvre Abu Dhabi has presented a series of exhibitions including *Talking Art* (Abu Dhabi, 2009) and *Birth of a Museum* (Abu Dhabi, 2013 and Paris, 2014). The museum has staged more than 50 talks, such as the *Louvre Abu Dhabi Talking Art Series*, and run more than 80 workshops for families and young

people. These explored the ideas behind the museum's vision, highlighted significant works and offered opportunities to test the visitor experience and showcase the collections in anticipation of the opening.

Inaugural exhibition

The inaugural special exhibition, *From One Louvre to Another: Opening a Museum for Everyone*, opens on 21 December 2017. It traces the history of musée du Louvre in Paris in the 18th century. Divided into three sections, the exhibition will look at the royal collections at Versailles under King Louis XIV; the residency of the Academy and Salons in the Louvre, converted into a palace for artists; and the eventual creation of the musée du Louvre. The exhibition will feature approximately 150 significant paintings, sculptures, decorative arts and other pieces, mainly from the collections of musée du Louvre, but also from the Château de Versailles.

The exhibition is curated by Jean-Luc Martinez, President-Director, musée du Louvre, and Juliette Trey, Curator, Prints and Drawings Department, musée du Louvre.

Visiting information

In addition to its 23 permanent galleries, special exhibition space and Children's Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi features a 270-seat auditorium, restaurant, boutique and café.

Opening hours for the museum galleries and exhibitions are: Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 am - 8 pm; Thursday and Friday: 10 am - 10 pm. Last entry and purchase of tickets is 30 minutes prior to closing. The museum is closed on Mondays.

Tickets to the museum cost 60 AED for general admission and 30 AED for visitors aged 13–22, as well as UAE education professionals.

Free entry will apply to children under 13 years, ICOM or ICOMOS members, journalists and visitors with special needs as well as their companion.

Louvre Abu Dhabi's Art Club membership programme offers a range of exciting benefits and discounts as well as the chance to become part of the museum's vibrant cultural community.

Louvre Abu Dhabi offers a variety of guided walking tours and an audio tour through which visitors can explore the museum's collection. Thematic walking tours are available on the museum's masterpieces and architecture; there is also a child-friendly tour entitled A First Look at Louvre Abu Dhabi. The audio tour of the museum is offered in Arabic, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish. To purchase admission tickets and tours, please visit www.louvreabudhabi.ae.

Follow Louvre Abu Dhabi on social media: Facebook ([Louvre Abu Dhabi](#)), Twitter ([@LouvreAbuDhabi](#)) and Instagram ([@LouvreAbuDhabi](#)) #LouvreAbuDhabi

Notes to editors:

ABOUT LOUVRE ABU DHABI

[Louvre Abu Dhabi](#) is a universal museum on [Saadiyat Island](#) that exhibits art and artefacts from ancient times to the present day. It offers a different way of looking at art—a window into the imagination of some of the world's

greatest artists. Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the museum contains 23 permanent galleries, special exhibition spaces, a Children’s Museum, auditorium, restaurants, retail and a research centre. Surrounded by the sea, the buildings are connected by waterfront promenades beneath the museum’s stunning dome.

Louvre Abu Dhabi has developed a rich collection of works originating from throughout human history and around the world, brought together to highlight universal themes and influences. To date, Louvre Abu Dhabi has acquired more than 600 artworks, exhibited alongside 300 works on loan from 13 leading French institutions.

Louvre Abu Dhabi was born out of a unique intergovernmental agreement between the governments of Abu Dhabi and France in 2007.

ABOUT AGENCE FRANCE-MUSÉUMS

[Agence France-Muséums](#) has been entrusted with the task of carrying through the commitments of France to the project of the universal museum of Louvre Abu Dhabi, and of structuring the expertise of the French cultural institutions involved. It provides assistance and expertise to the authorities of the United Arab Emirates in the following areas: definition of the scientific and cultural programme, assistance in project management for architecture including museography, signage and multimedia projects, coordination of the loans from French collections and organisation of temporary exhibitions, guidance with the creation of a permanent collection, and support with the museum’s policy on guests.

Chaired since its creation by Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Agence France-Muséums brings together Louvre Abu Dhabi’s partner institutions: musée du Louvre, Centre Pompidou, musée d’Orsay and musée de l’Orangerie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Réunion des Musées Nationaux et du Grand Palais (RMNGP), Château de Versailles, musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet, musée de Cluny, École du Louvre, musée Rodin, Domaine National de Chambord, musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, Cité de la Céramique – Sèvres & Limoges, musée d’Archéologie nationale – Saint-Germain en Laye, Château de Fontainebleau, and OPPIC (Opérateur du patrimoine et des projets immobiliers de la culture). Jean-Luc Martinez chairs the Scientific Council of Agence France-Muséums.

ABOUT SAADIYAT CULTURAL DISTRICT

[Saadiyat Cultural District](#) on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi, is devoted to culture and the arts. An ambitious cultural undertaking for the 21st century, it will be a nucleus for global culture, attracting local, regional and international guests with unique exhibitions, permanent collections, productions and performances. Its ground-breaking buildings will form a historical statement of the finest 21st-century architecture; [Zayed National Museum](#), [Louvre Abu Dhabi](#) and [Guggenheim Abu Dhabi](#). These museums will complement and collaborate with local and regional arts and cultural institutions including universities and research centres.

About the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi

The [Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi](#) conserves and promotes the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi emirate and leverages them in the development of a world-class, sustainable destination of distinction that enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike. The Department manages the emirate’s tourism sector and markets the destination internationally through a wide range of activities aimed at attracting visitors and investment. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. The Department of Culture and Tourism supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the

emirate's heritage. A key role played by the Department is to create synergy in the destination's development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.

<http://tcaabudhabi.ae>

ABOUT MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

The Louvre in Paris opened in 1793, after the French Revolution, and from the very beginning was intended to provide inspiration for contemporary art. Courbet, Picasso, Dalí and so many others came to its hallowed halls to admire the old masters, copy them, immerse themselves in masterpieces and improve and fuel their own art. As an ancient royal residence, the Louvre is inextricably linked to eight centuries of French history. As a universal museum, its collections, among the best in the world, span many millennia and miles, from the Americas to Asia. Over 38,000 artworks are grouped into eight curatorial departments, including universally-admired works such as the *Mona Lisa*, the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* and the *Venus de Milo*. With over 7.4 million guests in 2016, the Louvre ranks as one of the world's most visited museums.

ABOUT ATELIERS JEAN NOUVEL

[Ateliers Jean Nouvel](#) (AJN) is a world-renowned design firm that combines the disciplines of architecture, urban planning, interior design, landscape design, graphic design, and product design into a single integrated practice. Jean Nouvel has been the recipient of numerous prizes and awards over the years. In 1989, The Arab World Institute in Paris was awarded the Aga-Khan Prize. In 2000, Jean Nouvel received the Lion d'Or from the Venice Biennale. In 2001, he received the Royal Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Praemium Imperiale of Japan's Fine Arts Association and the Borromini Prize for the Culture and Conference Center in Lucerne. Jean Nouvel was the recipient of the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 2008. The design of the Louvre Abu Dhabi began in 2006 with Jean Nouvel's Partner Architect Hala Wardé.

Among Jean Nouvel's principal completed buildings are the Arab World Institute, the Cartier Foundation and the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, the Lucerne Cultural and Congress Center, the extension to the Queen Sophia Museum in Madrid, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and the Philharmonic Concert Halls in Copenhagen and Paris. Among the ongoing projects: the 53W53 Tour de Verre MoMA extension in New York, the Hekla and Duo office towers in Paris, the "The Artists' Garden" cultural complex in Qingdao and the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC) in Beijing.