

**ABU DHABI OFFERS A PREVIEW EXPERIENCE OF
THE LOUVRE ABU DHABI, THE FIRST
UNIVERSAL MUSEUM TO BE BUILT IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Talking Art Louvre Abu Dhabi Features the Museum's First Acquisitions

**Distinguished French Museum Leaders Initiate the Preview with
Two Sessions of Public Panel Discussions, 26 and 27 May**

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 26 MAY 2009— On the occasion of a state visit by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, His Highness General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and President Sarkozy today inaugurated a preview experience of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the first universal museum in the Middle East. The event took place as part of a celebration to mark the commencement of construction of the museum. The preview, titled *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi*, will reveal for the first time the concept of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, with works from the Louvre and other French national museums being shown with the first acquisitions for the Louvre's Abu Dhabi developing collection.

Presented in Gallery One of Emirates Palace through 2 July, the 90-minute preview features a brief film screening illustrating the Louvre Abu Dhabi design by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel; an illustrated talk about the concept of the Louvre Abu Dhabi; and a guided tour of a group of artworks specially chosen to show the curatorial vision for the museum. When it opens in 2012/13, the Louvre Abu Dhabi will showcase the interrelationships among artistic achievements from different cultures around the world, from the most immemorial to the very latest, across borders of technique and geography and will establish a distinctive dialogue among fine arts, decorative arts, and archaeological artefacts, in exhibitions that are unique to this museum and its setting.

"Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi is a beautifully crafted example of what a visitor will experience in the Louvre Abu Dhabi. It gives the public an opportunity to open the doors of the Louvre Abu Dhabi before its physical completion on Saadiyat Island," stated His Excellency Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture & Heritage and of Tourism Development & Investment Company. "We welcome the highly distinguished French scholars and cultural leaders who have joined us for the inauguration of this programme, to offer the public an exceptional series of discussions."

"The Louvre Abu Dhabi project is unique, in that it does not attempt to duplicate the Louvre but to create an entirely new museum," stated Henri Loyrette, Director, Louvre Museum. "This new institution will take the very essence of the Louvre--an essence that resides above all in the skills and knowledge that led to its foundation and continued development--and combine it with the tradition of openness that characterises the United Arab Emirates, thus giving a new dimension to the aspirations of a universal museum."

"This effort involves more than just the Louvre Museum," Mr. Loyrette continued, "because all of the major French museums have been involved in creating Agence France-Muséums. This is a wonderful opportunity to link all of the French national collections, allowing specific projects to be undertaken thanks to French loans, while also assisting in the development of Louvre Abu Dhabi collection."

On view are the first works acquired for the Louvre's Abu Dhabi developing collection, ranging in date from the 6th century BC to the early 20th century, and in place of origin from China to France. Accompanying them are works on loan from French national collections (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musée Guimet, Musée du Louvre, Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne, Musée d'Orsay, Musée du Quai Branly). Together these works illuminate the artistic and cultural interrelationships that are at the heart of the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

The film of Jean Nouvel's architectural vision for the Louvre Abu Dhabi depicts a museum city, where a variety of Arab architectural forms combine to create a showcase for the artistic expressions of different civilisations and cultures. Relating to the film, a large-format photograph by Thomas Struth (1989, Paris, Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne) offers a glimpse of the galleries of the Louvre, combining the perspectives of the visitor and the artist-photographer.

Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi will include two Mamluk works, a section of a Holy Qur'an from Egypt or Syria (second quarter of the 14th century) and a Mosque lamp (1347-1361, Paris, Musée du Louvre), which evoke the symbolism of light as the illumination of the mind and the understanding of the divine. Influences across cultures are seen in two Buddhist sculptures,

one from the Gandhara region (2nd-3rd century) showing Mediterranean stylistic traits in an Indian subject, and one from the north of China (550-577 AD) showing the translation of an Indian tradition into China.

Pierre Legrain, the favourite decorator of the celebrated fashion designer and art patron Jacques Doucet, created the *Curule Stool* (c. 1920-25) in homage to the first exhibitions of African art in France, presented from the end of the 1910s onwards. The stool recalls two works of the Musée du Quai Branly: an elegant Tsonga headrest (2nd half of the 19th century), which entered the French national collections after the 1890s, and an Abomey stool with a curule seat (late 19th century), made of kapok wood, which entered the French national collections in 1931.

Two paintings by Edouard Manet, *The Bohemian* and *Still Life with Bag and Garlic* (1861-62), which were cut from their original canvas by Manet himself and had long been separated, have now been reunited at the Louvre Abu Dhabi. They are seen with the engraving *Les Gitanos* (1862, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, department des estampes et de la photographie), which shows the artist's original composition. Paul Cézanne's highly abstract *Rocks Near the Caves Above Château Noir* (1904, Paris, Musée d'Orsay) is one of the artist's late works that had a deep impact on the avant-garde of the early 20th century. Its visual synthesis of forms and colours, blended to capture the essence of a landscape, was one of the paths that Piet Mondrian meditated upon to create his pure abstraction, whose quintessence can be found in his *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black* (1922).

Two sessions of this preview experience are available to the public each day, at 11:00 am and 6:30 pm, with pre-registration required. An exhibition presenting a thorough overview of the Louvre Abu Dhabi will be organised at a later date.

To help inaugurate *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi*, a high-level delegation of distinguished French scholars and cultural leaders are presenting a two-day series of public panel discussions that will explore issues that are central to the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The panels will be held at 6:30 pm on 26 and 27 May in the Ballroom at Emirates Palace.

The first of these public discussions, "Museums and Universalism" on 26 May, will be opened with a message by Christine Albanel, Minister of Culture and Communications of France. The programme will address such topics as contemporary art in a global age, the building of a universal collection, and the appreciation of artistic expression across barriers of time and geography. Henri Loyrette, director, Musée du Louvre, and Laurence des Cars, curatorial director of Agence France-Muséums, will introduce the panel. Dominique de Font-Réaulx, curator at the Musée du Louvre, will moderate the talk. Participants scheduled in this session

are: Sylvie Aubenas, curator in charge of the Department of Prints and Photographs of the Bibliothèque nationale de France; Didier Ottinger, deputy director of the Musée national d'art moderne–Centre Pompidou; Jean-Luc Martinez, curator in charge of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Musée du Louvre; Jean-François Jarrige, member of the Institut de France and honorary director of the Musée national des arts asiatiques; Béatrice André-Salvini, curator in charge of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, Musée du Louvre; Yves Le Fur, director of collections of the Musée du Quai Branly; Sophie Makariou, curator in charge of the Department of Islamic Art, Musée du Louvre.

On 27 May a programme entitled “The Louvre Abu Dhabi: A New Way of Showing Art” addresses the innovative curatorial vision being developed for the new museum. The complete curatorial team of Agence France-Muséums will participate in this session, including: Laurence des Cars; Emmanuel Coquery, deputy curatorial director and curator in charge of paintings and sculptures (16th-18th centuries); Jean-François Charnier, curator in charge of archeology; Olivier Gabet, curator in charge of decorative arts and design; Vincent Lefebvre, curator in charge of Asian arts; and Manon Six, curator in charge of medieval art and Islamic art.

A third session of these public discussions, held at 3 pm on 27 May, is devoted to training schoolteachers to assist them in making *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi* more meaningful to young people ages 11 and higher. Leading the training will be Dominique de Font-Réaulx; Magali Simon, education manager, Musée du Louvre; Manon Six, curator, Agence France-Muséums; and François Quéré, public programming officer, Agence France-Muséums. A series of free art workshops for young people (ages 11-18) will subsequently be offered on Mondays from 1 June through 6 July, by pre-registration.

End

Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi

27 May – 2 July 2009

Daily: 11:00 am and 6:30 pm

Gallery One, Emirates Palace

90-minute previews feature a brief film screening; an illustrated talk about the concept of the Louvre Abu Dhabi; and a guided tour of a group of artworks specially chosen to show the curatorial vision for the museum.

Round Table Discussions

26 – 27 May 2009

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Emirates Palace

Leading figures from the French art and museum worlds discuss two key aspects of the Louvre Abu Dhabi project. Each participant will give a short presentation, which will be followed by a moderated debate to include questions from the floor.

Briefing for Secondary School Teachers

27 May 2009

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Emirates Palace

A dedicated teacher's training session focusing not only on the works featured in *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi*, but also on the key concepts and approaches that teachers can use to increase pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the issues raised in these works.

Children's Art Workshops

Every Monday from 1 June – 6 July

10:00 am – 12:00 noon

Emirates Palace

A specially designed series of art workshops for children, 11-18 years of age. The workshops will explore themes featured in *Talking Art: Louvre Abu Dhabi*, and will give participants the opportunity to create their own artworks inspired by the themes and works discussed. *Please note that places are free but advance booking is essential.*

End

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