

Press release

Globes: Visions of the World

Louvre Abu Dhabi explores humanity's quest to understand and represent the world in its second special exhibition, opening 23 March

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 12 March 2018 - *Globes: Visions of the World* curated by Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) will open to the public on 23 March and run until 2 June 2018. Louvre Abu Dhabi's second special exhibition will explore the history of the spherical representation of the world and its scientific instruments from antiquity to the present day. A hundred and sixty works from the collections of Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and outstanding loaned works will be on display.

More than 40 globes and spheres, rare archaeological remains, magnificent scripts, astrolabes and splendid world maps will immerse visitors in the 2500 years' history of representing the world. The exhibition is curated by Catherine Hofmann, Chief Curator at Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), and François Nawrocki, Chief Curator and Deputy Director at Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris.

Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "We are delighted to host *Globes: Visions of the World* as Louvre Abu Dhabi's second temporary exhibition. We are living in an age of new scientific discoveries unparalleled throughout history. Man's perceptions of the world have been transformed by the creation of new technologies; which is why this exhibition is important to Louvre Abu Dhabi. It will introduce our guests to historical artefacts, including some of the oldest globes and astrolabes from the Islamic world, that have interconnected the world from ancient times to the present day. The collection on display echoes Louvre Abu Dhabi's ethos to narrate the story of mankind through wonderful loans from Bibliothèque nationale de France, Musée du Louvre, Musée des arts et métiers, Château de Versailles and Centre Pompidou."

The curators of the exhibition, Catherine Hofmann and François Nawrocki, said: "*Globes: Visions of the World* is not only an exceptional opportunity to show together the most precious and rare globes and spheres of the French collections, it also tells a meaningful long-term story: about the spherical visions of the universe, at the edge of astronomical and geographical sciences, religion and philosophy. These theories, born in the Mesopotamian and ancient Mediterranean world, spread and enriched by the dialogue of scholars from all regions of the world, are embodied in objects, images, representations whose forms have constantly evolved. They unveil a complex and meaningful symbolic system that evolved over time and integrated the legacy of many myths and cultures of the world. The exhibition highlights, in particular, the fundamental contributions of the Arab science, at the confluence of civilisations. That's why we are particularly pleased and proud to present it here, at Louvre Abu Dhabi, in this innovative and universal place of art, history and science."

The exhibition's innovative scenography designed by Laurence Fontaine in spherical shapes guides the visitors into a chronological tour from Antiquity to the present day. Starting with the display of Vincenzo Coronelli's majestic globes and Jérôme Martinot's armillary sphere, the artists Jean-Luc and Patricia Boivineau have created an artistic vision of the stars and constellations which can be seen in Abu Dhabi's sky during the winter season.

The first part of the exhibition focuses on the ancient times, when Greek scholars and philosophers in the sixth century BCE conceived a world of concentric spheres carrying the planets and the stars. Aristotle noted the Earth's circular shadow on the Moon's surface, corroborating the hypothesis of a spherical world. The first globes and spheres were produced from the fourth century BCE; the exhibition presents a small silver celestial sphere, dating to 200 BCE (is just 6.4 cm in diameter), which is the oldest remaining copy of those early spheres. Inspired by the cultures of ancient Egypt, Persia, and Babylonia, promoted by the greatest Hellenistic philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and then enhanced by scholars like Claudius Ptolemy (Egypt, second century CE), this vision of the world ruled the cosmological science during over 1500 years, in the Roman world, as well as in the Islamic and in the Western Christian areas. In the exhibition, rare archaeological remains like the famous Bianchini's *celestial planisphere* from Musée du Louvre, many Roman coins and precious Arab or Latin manuscripts, provide a rich testimony of these origins of the spherical visions of the world.

From the 8th to the 15th centuries, Muslim astronomers were at the forefront of astronomical research. Celestial globes and astrolabes were among the most used scientific instruments in the Islamic world, from Andalusia to Mughal India. Some of the oldest astrolabes and globes in the world are shown in this exhibition: Ahmad ibn Khalaf's astrolabe (Iraq, 10th century), Ibrahim ibn Said al-Sahli al-Wazzan's (Spain, 11th century) and Yunus ibn al-Husayn al-Asturlabi's (Iran, 1144) celestial globes. The use of those instruments and the knowledge of the movements of the starry sky were necessary to determine the lunar calendar, for instance, and the times for the five daily prayers and the direction of *Qibla* (Mecca), and thus, for religious practices. In the Christian West, ancient science was largely rediscovered through Arab connections, beginning in Andalusia (Cordoba, Toledo) in the 10th century. In the 12th century, the rediscovery of Aristotle's works and Ptolemy's *Almageste*, and the Latin translations of the *Kitâb suwar al-kawâkib al-thâbita* (*The Book of Fixed Stars*) by Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, started the renewal of Western astronomical science. The exhibition shows a rare Latin translation of al-Sufi, the *Liber de locis stellarum fixarum* (Italy, 13th century). The hypothesis of the Earth's spherical shape, which was for a long time accepted by the majority of intellectuals, gained popularity in society as demonstrated by Gossuin de Metz's *L'Ymage du monde*, a vernacular treaty in French.

At a time of great discoveries and explorations, globes became both a tool for explorers to navigate the world and a means to publicise their new discoveries, as revealed by unique and rarely shown terrestrial of such objects from the times of Christopher Columbus and Magellan's adventurous travels. The knowledge of geographers, combined with that of astronomers, was the basis of cosmography, a leading discipline in the 16th century. While voyages and trade made it possible to expand the horizons of Europeans and enrich their visions of the world, they also made it possible to

export these visions to other continents. Examples of such include a tapestry made of wool and silk from the Manufactory at Beauvais known as *“The Astronomers”*, from *“The History of the Emperor of China”* and a Namban screen of the map of the world from Louvre Abu Dhabi’s collection. Terrestrial and celestial globes alike became household objects and were represented in the arts in a great variety of shapes and symbolic meanings, including beautiful engravings and paintings, and medallions such as Louis XIV of France’s *Attentiveness of the King to his advisers* (1661).

The exhibition concludes with spheres in revolutions in the 17th and 18th centuries, as the intellectuals questioned the traditional foundations of its theories. The Sun took the Earth’s place at the centre of the celestial sphere. With astronomers’ new discoveries through powerful and gigantic telescopes, Newton’s laws, scholars of the Enlightenment, and ground-breaking theories leading to astrophysics, old frontiers drastically changed. The expeditions of Maupertuis to Lapland and La Condamine to Peru, and then La Pérouse in Oceania – commemorated by a famous painting of Monsiau, from the collections of Château de Versailles – unveil the real shape and measure of our planet, while the knowledge of its most remote areas were developed. In the 19th century, production methods improved, and terrestrial globes became everyday objects of various scales. They ranged from the very little pocket globes to colossal buildings like the temporary *Grand Celestial Globe of the Paris World Fair of 1900*, which was originally built next to the Eiffel Tower. At the same time, artists borrowed and reinterpreted the shape of our planet as seen from space, an image that became popular even before the space conquest and the famous Apollo programme’s photographs – this can be seen for instance in Georges Méliès’s movie *A Trip to the Moon* or the stunning Alain Jacquet’s painting *Reflexion of a Golden Egg*. Globes have continued to be meaningful and inspirational objects in various forms to the present day.

Visitor Information

Louvre Abu Dhabi hours are: Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 10 am–8 pm; Thursday and Friday, 10 am–10 pm. Last entries and ticket purchases end 30 minutes prior to closing. The museum is closed on Mondays. Special visitor hours will be in effect during Ramadan and some holidays.

General admission tickets are 60 AED (excluding 5% VAT). Tickets are 30 AED (excluding 5% VAT) for visitors ages 13-22, UAE education professionals, and members of the military. Admission is free for members of the museum’s loyalty programme, children under the age of 13, ICOM or ICOMOS members, journalists, visitors with tickets to workshops and auditorium events, and visitors with special needs and their companions.

Special exhibitions are open during public hours and are free with museum admission.

Other Exhibitions at Louvre Abu Dhabi

During the presentation of *Globes: Visions of the World* at Louvre Abu Dhabi, visitors can also view *From One Louvre to Another: Opening a Museum for Everyone* (until 7 April 2018), curated by Jean-

Luc Martinez, President-Director of Musée du Louvre, and Juliette Trey, Curator of Prints and Drawings Department at Musée du Louvre, as well as *Co-Lab: Contemporary Art and Savoir-faire* (until 6 May 2018) at Louvre Abu Dhabi's Forum.

Globes: Visions of the World will then travel to Paris, where it will be seen at Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in Spring 2019.

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ABOUT LOUVRE ABU DHABI

Born of a collaboration between Abu Dhabi and France, [Louvre Abu Dhabi](#) is a universal museum that enables visitors to experience art—and humanity—in a new light. Master works by many of the world's greatest artists are on display, revealing threads of creativity that connect diverse cultures across thousands of years.

Housed in a magnificent domed structure designed by architect Jean Nouvel in Abu Dhabi's cultural district on Saadiyat Island, Louvre Abu Dhabi opened to the public in November 2017. In the first decade, hundreds of artworks from its own expanding collection will be on view, in combination with an equal number of masterpieces borrowed from the Louvre and 12 internationally preeminent French partner museums.

Every year, Louvre Abu Dhabi offers visitors a vibrant programme of exhibitions, performances, cultural and education events, a Children's Museum, a lounge, restaurant, and a boutique. Today Louvre Abu Dhabi is a place for people to meet, learn, reflect, and find their own stories. It presents a different way of looking at art - a gift from the United Arab Emirates to the world.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

The [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#) watches over some collections gathered over five centuries thanks to the legal deposit instituted by King Francis I in 1537 and through an active policy of acquisitions. Responsible for the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations, it also ensures the preservation and conservation of the documents housed in its premises.

The ever-increasing collections of the BnF are quite unique: 15 million books and magazines but also one of the most beautiful collections of manuscripts in the world, numerous prints, 5 million photographs, maps and plans, scores, coins, medals, sound, video and multimedia documents, sets, costumes. All the intellectual, artistic and scientific disciplines are represented and organized along an encyclopaedic spirit.

As a place of excellence and knowledge, the BnF offers a wide variety of cultural events: exhibitions, lectures, concerts, tours as well as a rich editorial production.

Paying attention to the changes in cultural and research practices, the BnF serves the needs of its users on site and online. On its various sites, the library counts over one million visitors each year and its online resources represent 30 million views. Gallica, its digital library, allows to consult for free over 4 million documents. Eventually, the BnF develops an active policy of cooperation in France and abroad.

ABOUT AGENCE FRANCE-MUSÉUMS

Created in 2007 following the intergovernmental agreement between Abu Dhabi and France, Agence France-Muséums has been for 10 years a key link between France and the UAE in the accomplishment of Louvre Abu Dhabi. By gathering for the first time the collections and the expertise of the French cultural institutions involved, AFM has provided since its creation 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 visitors.

AFM now continues its missions for Louvre Abu Dhabi after its opening with the training of the museum's professionals, the coordination of loans from French museums for 10 years and the organisation of temporary exhibitions for 15 years.

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