

press release



Eternal sites **From Bamiyan to Palmyra** **A journey to the heart of universal heritage**

14 December 2016 - 9 January 2017

Grand Palais
Galerie sud-est

This exhibition is organised by Réunion des Musées Nationaux – Grand Palais and the Musée du Louvre, in collaboration with Iconem.

Rmn-Grand Palais and the Musée du Louvre are working together, under the distinguished patronage of UNESCO, to present a free exhibition that allows an exploration or the rediscovery of important archaeological sites that are now inaccessible: Bamiyan, Khorsabad, Palmyra, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and Kerak Castle, Universal Heritage sites that are now specifically under threat from conflicts in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

This exhibition aims to make the general public aware of the notion of heritage in danger through an evocation of iconic sites. According to UNESCO, the 6 World Heritage sites, in Syria, and many other cultural and archaeological sites have been damaged or pillaged, or even completely destroyed.

The exhibition is immersive, plunging visitors into the heart of the sites through the 360° projection of images in the exhibition space. The emergence of new photographic techniques using drones and digital reconstructions allows an up-to-date assessment of the condition of sites that have become inaccessible due to their locations in zones of conflict. Filmed images are combined with archival documents, drawings, engravings and antique photographs in a dynamic fashion, giving an idea of the development of several sites through history.

Following an introduction that sheds light on the problems of heritage in danger, the exhibition is divided into two sections – the Universal Site and the Image Laboratory:

- the Universal Site projects four films from four major archaeological sites in a vast 360° panorama, allowing an immersive experience never seen before by visitors. Each film sheds specific light on the destruction, conservation and restoration of heritage in danger: the pillaging of antiquities and the illicit trafficking in Khorsabad, the reconstruction and its challenges for Palmyra, the archaeological (re)discovery of the Umayyad mosque, and finally the conservation and promotion of the ruins of Kerak Castle. The four sites are each represented by an iconic work from the Musée du Louvre.

- The Image Laboratory is specifically focused on surveying techniques used by archaeologists and their development through history, arranged as a cabinet of curiosities in which, for each site, the different tools that have allowed them to convey their knowledge are displayed: engravings, paintings, watercolours, diagrams and photographs initially, and more recently digital imaging and drones that allow scientific reconstructions. Images brought back by tourists who visited these sites before their recent transformations and before

they became inaccessible due to conflict are now a precious resource. The citizens of affected countries, particularly Iraq and Syria, archaeologists and ordinary people, are also given a voice through a range of testimonies. For the first time, a dynamic, virtual reality 3D reconstruction will be on display. Visitors can observe an interactive reproduction of Palmyra at scale on tablets, especially the piece by piece destruction of the Triumphal arch and its simulated reconstruction.

The four sites on display in the Universal area are important locations from four different civilisations: Khorsabad, the ancient city founded by King Sargon II (713-706 BCE) in the province of Ninive, was one of the capitals of the great Neo-Assyrian Empire that came to dominate the Near East during the first millennium BCE ; Palmyra, at the heart of the desert, halfway between the Mediterranean coastline and the Euphrates, an ancient staging post that retains the splendour of Roman times and whose history stretches back to the second millennium BCE; the Great Mosque erected at the heart of Damascus by the Umayyad dynasty (661-750), one of the most ancient masterpieces of Islamic architecture; and Kerak Castle, a fortified stronghold in western Syria from the time of the Crusades, one of the most prestigious and best preserved Crusader castles.

From 2 November 2016 to 23 January 2017, the Musée du Louvre-Lens will present History Begins in Mesopotamia, an exhibition on Mesopotamia, now largely situated in Iraq, the cradle of modern economics and writing.

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curator general: Jean-Luc Martinez, president-director of the musée du Louvre
curators: Yannick Lintz, director of the Département des Arts de l'Islam du musée du Louvre ;
Marielle Pic, director of the Département des Antiquités orientales du musée du Louvre
scenography: Sylvain Roca et Nicolas Groult
film maker: Olivier Brunet
scientific documentation: Thomas Sagory, chief of department of digital development of Musée d'Archéologie nationale - Domaine national de Saint-Germain-en-Laye and in charge of the collection *Grands sites archéologiques*

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open: daily from 10am to 8pm, and until 10 pm on Wenesday. closed on 25 December. closed at 6pm on 24 and 31 December.

access: metro line 1 and 13 «Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau» or line 9 «Franklin D. Roosevelt»

free entry

information:
www.grandpalais.fr

#SitesEternels

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Organisation
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pour l'éducation,
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