

Topic Page: [Musée du Louvre](#)

Definition: **Louvre** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

France's national museum and art gallery in Paris. It holds a collection of more than 100,000 works, including paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture from all over the world, from the prehistoric period to the late 19th century. Originally a royal palace, the Louvre became a fully fledged museum in the 18th century and opened as the first national public gallery during the Revolution in 1793.

Summary Article: **Louvre**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(lō'vrə), foremost French museum of art, located in Paris. The building was a royal fortress and palace built by Philip II in the late 12th cent. In 1546 Pierre Lescot was commissioned by Francis I to erect a new building on the site of the Louvre. During his reign, several paintings by Leonardo, including the *Mona Lisa*, and works of other Italian masters came into the royal collections. In 1564, Catherine de' Medici commissioned Philibert Delorme to build a residence at the Tuileries and to connect it to the Louvre by a long gallery. The Grande Galerie was completed in 1606 under Henri IV.

While Cardinal Richelieu collected art with state funds, work on the buildings was continued under Louis XIII. Lescot's architectural designs were expanded by Jacques Lemercier in 1624, and under Louis XIV the magnificent colonnade was brought to completion (1670) by Louis Le Vau and Claude Perrault. In 1750 part of the royal collections was put on view in the Luxembourg palace. The modern museum, made for the use of the French people, was a direct result of the French Revolution; the revolutionary regime passed (1791) a law that brought it into being. In 1793, in the midst of the Reign of Terror, the Musée Central des Arts was created and the Grande Galerie of the Louvre was officially opened. For many years the area beneath the Grande Galerie served as artists' studios and workshops. The museum's first collection consisted largely of works taken from aristocratic émigrés and royal academies as well as possessions of the king and his court.

Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon assumed the directorship of the Louvre in 1802 and his patron, Napoleon I, added vastly to its collections by his conquests, systematically looting the treasures of W Europe and Egypt and shipping them off to the museum. Under Denon's leadership the museum became the first public institution in which works of art and objects taken from other locations were displayed in a systematic and educational fashion to a large public audience. In 1803 the museum was proclaimed the Musée Napoléon, keeping that title until 1814, when Napoleon fell. Many famous works were returned after his downfall, and Denon resigned his directorship, but about half of the works taken by Napoleon's army remained in the museum. The grand architectural scheme of the Louvre that was completed by Napoleon III remained unmodified until the late 20th cent. The museum is famous for its enormous collection of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities, and for its superb old masters, a collection especially rich in works by Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, and Leonardo. Its most famous sculptures include the *Nike, or Victory, of Samothrace* and the *Venus of Milo*. A part of the museum building houses the Museum of Decorative Arts, a private institution.

During 1984–93, the Louvre was expanded underground. A glass pyramid, designed by I. M. Pei and opened in 1989, sits atop the entrance to the expansion. Pei also oversaw the extensive renovations and expansions of exhibition space that continued through the 1990s. Opened in 2012, the Islamic

Gallery, designed by Italian Mario Bellini and Frenchman Rudy Ricciotti, is located within the Visconti Courtyard and is topped by a billowing golden roof that rises into, and appears to float within, the courtyard.

In 2017 the Louvre opened an overseas branch in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on Saadiyat Island. The building, designed by architect Jean Nouvel, features a large, low silvery dome formed of a star-shaped, stainless steel and aluminum latticework, surrounded by clusters of differently shaped waterfront galleries. The collection consists of works on loan from 17 French institutions and donations from other collections.

See Huyghe, R. , ed., *Art Treasures of the Louvre* (1960);

Gould, C. , *Trophy of Conquest: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (1965);

Regoli, G. D. et al., *Louvre, Paris* (1968);

Schneider, P. , *Louvre Dialogues* (tr. 1971);

McClellan, A. , *Inventing the Louvre* (1994);

Bauier, G. B. , *The Louvre* (1995).

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