



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

Versailles, 1st July 2010

PRESS RELEASE

SCIENCES AND CURIOSITIES AT THE COURT OF VERSAILLES

North Wing of the Château de Versailles, Africa and Crimea rooms

From 26 October 2010 to 27 February 2011

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THIS IS AN EXHIBITION THAT WILL REVEAL A NEW IMAGE OF VERSAILLES, AN UNEXPECTED FACET: IT WAS A PLACE WHERE THE PRESENCE OF THE SCIENCES WAS MANIFESTED IN THE MOST VARIED FORMS. THE EXHIBITION FEATURES WORKS AND INSTRUMENTS FROM THE OLD ROYAL COLLECTIONS, SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENTS OF BEAUTY AND INTELLIGENCE, THAT WILL BE BROUGHT TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN ORIGINAL AND INNOVATIVE STAGING-DESIGN: VERSAILLES, ALWAYS AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY!

EXHIBITION CURATORSHIP

General Curator

Béatrix Saule,

Director General of the
Public Establishment of
the Museum and National
Estate of Versailles.

THE SCIENCES WERE UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF VERSAILLES. Under the impetus of Colbert, the royal power became aware of the stakes involved in scientific research. The founding of the Académie des Sciences established a new contract between the power and the scientific community whose work had to serve the good of the kingdom. The Observatoire, financed by the royal treasury, gave decisive momentum to the resolution of the question of longitudes which engrossed researchers throughout the 18th century, and whose strategic importance was then comparable to that of our modern research on the atom: a manifestation among so many others in the most diverse fields of the emergence of a genuine scientific policy.

Curator

Catherine Arminjon,

General Heritage Curator

VERSAILLES, A PLACE OF EXCHANGES BETWEEN SCIENTISTS... Many scientists, including the most renowned, frequented the court for extended periods as tutors to the princes, health officers and engineers of the army and navy, etc. Diderot and d'Alembert met in the mezzanine of doctor Quesnay, Madame de Pompadour's personal physician. In the king's presence, the Abbé Nollet and Benjamin Franklin confronted their theories. And some courtiers became real experts in their field.

STAGING-DESIGN

Frédéric Beauclair

A PLACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION IN SCIENCES AND TECHNIQUES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS... The huge scope of the "Versailles" project raised new scientific, technical and sanitary questions: members of the Académie were consulted. In return, Versailles offered resources for research: the Menagerie and its rare animals were at the disposal of anatomists, the Trianon estate was available to botanists, zoologists and agronomists, while the Grandes Écuries (stables) saw the emergence of farriery, the prelude to veterinary science...

A PLACE OF TEACHING AND PRACTICAL LEARNING... New teaching methods were devised for the princes, using tools derived from the latest research. The same applied to the personal practices of the kings. Although Louis XIV saw himself as a protector of the sciences, as he was of the arts, without practising them, in contrast, his successors, both Louis XV and Louis XVI, were true connoisseurs; and the instruments and scientific books in their collections are recognised as masterpieces of art and science.

A PLACE OF DEMONSTRATION. A presentation made to the king or a demonstration before the court, a supreme consecration that was the equivalent of a Nobel prize, offered scientists the opportunity of obtaining grants for pursuing research work or finding commercial outlets for their inventions. The flight of the first Montgolfier balloon is well known, but many others have been forgotten, such as the experiment with the “miroir ardent” (burning mirror) before Louis XIV or, in the following reign, the electricity experiment in the Hall of Mirrors.

THE EXHIBITION HAS BENEFITTED FROM THE EXPERTISE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING HISTORIANS OF THE SCIENCES, CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH PRESTIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC AND ART HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE THE HEIRS TO THE ROYAL FOUNDATIONS, TRULY EXCEPTIONAL LOANS, AND STAGING-DESIGN THAT PROPOSES EVOCATION, RECONSTRUCTION AND IMMERSION TOOLS FOR VISITORS.

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and



Publication

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Information

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Practical information

Opening times:

- until 31 October from 9:00 am to 6:30 pm (last admission: 6:00 pm).

- from 1 November from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm (last admission: 5:00 pm)

Tickets: €15, reduced rate: €13.

Audioguide included.

