

2025 EXHIBITION PROGRAM AT VERSAILLES

Versailles, 18 December 2024
Press Release

In 2025, the Palace of Versailles will offer a rich program of exhibitions. In January, contemporary art will kick off the year with the first retrospective of painter Guillaume Bresson, whose works will engage in dialogue with the grand battle scenes in the African Rooms. In June, an exhibition will be dedicated to one of the Palace's most iconic pieces: the bust of Louis XIV by Bernini. Autumn will spotlight a figure now largely forgotten but once central to the history of the French monarchy: the Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, a great art enthusiast and collector. The year will conclude with an unexpected exploration of the visit to the French court by Native American chiefs invited by Louis XV in 1725, marking the 300th anniversary of this event. Additional exhibitions held off-site, both in France and abroad, will punctuate the year.

GUILLAUME BRESSON - VERSAILLES

From January 21 to May 25, 2025

Africa Rooms

Curator: Christophe Leribault, President of the Palace of Versailles

The Palace of Versailles is hosting the first retrospective exhibition of contemporary artist Guillaume Bresson. A leading figure in French figurative painting, Guillaume Bresson depicts characters caught in the violence of suburban areas, with references to religious and historical painting.

Bresson's paintings are marked by their realism. To achieve this photographic precision, the artist follows a process that begins with preparatory photography sessions with models in his studio. The models



participate in staging their bodies, offering theatricalized poses and movements reminiscent of Baroque painting. Through a montage process, the artist isolates and detaches the figures before

rearranging them into groups. In this way, Guillaume Bresson constructs paintings in which body language plays a central role in shaping the narrative.

The exhibition will take place in the Africa Rooms, built under Louis-Philippe, which house immense paintings depicting the battles of France's colonial conquest of North Africa in the 1830s and 1840s. In this confrontation between historical paintings, including works by Horace Vernet, and Guillaume Bresson's creations, battlefields and urban guerrillas come face-to-face, challenging visitors to reflect on the staging of violence in history and in art.

Guillaume Bresson, born in 1982 in Toulouse, trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Now living in New York after periods in Paris and Berlin, the painter is renowned for his resolutely contemporary scenes, often set in suburban areas. Reviving a mode of representation derived from the classical tradition, largely abandoned until the early 21st century, Guillaume



Bresson breathes new life into contemporary historical painting by applying this method of reconstructing reality to his own time. Both a painter and a stage director, he grounds his work in the present, linking his creations to current social issues.

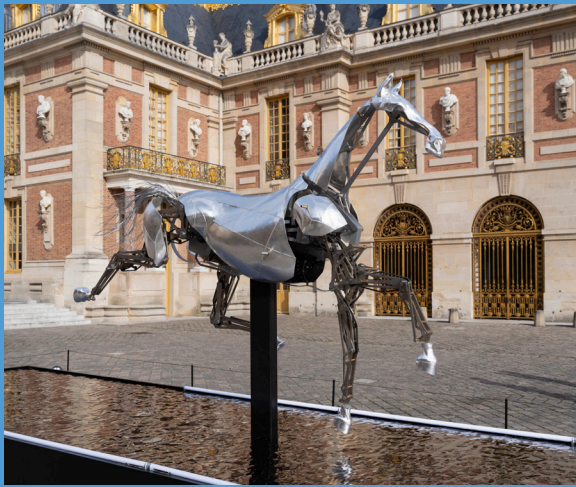
The exhibition is organised in collaboration with Galerie Nathalie Obadia.

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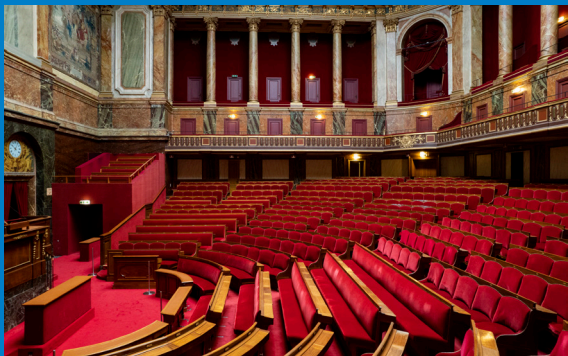
THE EXHIBITION OF ZEUS EXTENDED

The Palace of Versailles has been hosting Zeus, the metallic horse that illuminated the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, since October 1. Created by Atelier Blam with the support of Sanofi, Zeus is a true mechanical and artistic masterpiece. **It is on display in the Palace's Cour royale until January 12, 2025.**



1875-THE REPUBLIC AT VERSAILLES

To mark the 150th anniversary of the Wallon Amendment, which established the election of the President of the Republic by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies convened at Versailles, the Palace of Versailles invites visitors throughout the year to rediscover its republican history. The program includes an exhibition, conferences, symposiums, and tours of the Hall of Congress.



GENIUS AND MAJESTY: LOUIS XIV BY BERNINI

June 3 to September 28, 2025

Dauphine's Appartement

Curator: Lionel Arzac, Heritage Curator at the Palace of Versailles

This exhibition focuses on the renowned marble bust of Louis XIV created by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. During the restoration of the Diana Room, where it has



been displayed since 1684, this iconic work from the Palace of Versailles collections will be showcased at eye level, just as Louis XIV first saw it when it was presented to him in 1665.

This exhibition offers a unique opportunity

to admire up close this masterpiece of 17th-century sculpture, typically displayed at a height and distant from the public. Thanks to significant loans from French and international institutions, visitors will also explore the context in which the work was created. At the peak of his career and as Europe's most celebrated sculptor, Bernini was invited to Paris by Louis XIV in 1665. During this visit, Bernini sculpted the bust, which the Sun King particularly admired.

The exhibition will also delve into the figures who made Bernini's visit to France a significant artistic and political event.

**THE GRAND DAUPHIN (1661-1711)
SON OF A KING, FATHER OF A KING,
AND NEVER A KING**

October 14, 2025 to February 15, 2026

Curator: Lionel Arzac, Heritage Curator at the Palace of Versailles



This exhibition sheds light on a lesser-known figure in French history who never reigned: Louis, son of Louis XIV, born in 1661. Known as Monseigneur during his lifetime and later as the Grand Dauphin after his death in 1711, he remains a pivotal figure of the

Bourbon dynasty.

The exhibition will explore what it meant to be the Dauphin of France under the Ancien Régime, presenting a portrait of the heir to the throne in three major stages, inspired by Saint-Simon's famous summary of the prince's life: "Son of a king, father of a king, and never a king." Themes such as the education and training of the heir, his residences, and his extraordinary art collections will be addressed, with spectacular loans from institutions such as the Prado Museum in Madrid.

The Grand Dauphin holds a key place within the Bourbon dynasty: heir to the throne, grandfather of Louis XV, and great-great-grandfather of Louis XVI, Louis XVIII, and Charles X. He is also the father of Philip V, the first monarch of the Spanish Bourbon branch, which continues to reign today.

Around 250 works, including many previously unseen, drawn from public and private collections in France and abroad, will illustrate a wide range of artistic disciplines—paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, manuscripts, and graphic art—bringing to life the story of this prince whom Louis XIV envisioned as his worthy successor.

**1725: NATIVE AMERICAN ALLIES
AT THE COURT OF LOUIS XV**

November 25, 2025 to May 3, 2026

Dauphine's Appartement

Curators: Bertrand Rondot, General Curator at the Palace of Versailles, and Paz Núñez-Regueiro, Chief Curator at the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac

The exhibition offers an immersive exploration into the little-known world of Indigenous societies in the Mississippi Valley at the turn of the 18th century, just as the French began settling in this vast region they named «Louisiana.» The French, in turn, had to adapt to Native American diplomatic norms, and over time, their presence in the region came to rely on an economic, military, and political alliance with several Indigenous nations.

One of the most emblematic and spectacular moments of this alliance was the journey to France of Oto, Osage, Missouri, and Illinois chiefs in the autumn of 1725, arranged jointly by the Compagnie des Indes



and the young King Louis XV. This episode, described in detail in the *Mercure de France*, will be recounted in the exhibition.

Exceptional works will be on display, including little-known maps of Louisiana produced in Paris and America during the 18th century, some of which have never

been exhibited before. Artifacts created by these Native American nations in the 18th century, now housed at the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, will also be featured. These absolutely unique pieces are the oldest surviving artworks from the Mississippi Valley in the world. Today, one enduring testament to this historic visit is a masterpiece of French music: *Les Indes galantes* by Rameau.

From the banks of the Mississippi to the royal court, the exhibition traces this extraordinary human adventure, which represents not only a journey between two continents but, above all, a voyage between two worlds that managed to understand one another.

The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac.

EXHIBITIONS OFFSITE

LONDON, SCIENCE MUSEUM

VERSAILLES : SCIENCE AND SPLENDOUR

December 12, 2024 to April 21, 2025



This exhibition, presented in London with the scientific collaboration of the Palace of Versailles, unveils the major role of science at the court of Versailles during the 17th and 18th centuries. Over a hundred works will be displayed, including around forty from the Versailles collections (paintings, decorative arts, graphic arts, etc.), some of which have never been exhibited in the United Kingdom.

The exhibition will reveal how Versailles, a place of scientific experimentation during its construction, also became a hub of research for the king's pleasure (in zoology, botany, and more), as well as the stage for significant demonstrations that marked the court, such as the first flight of the hot air balloon in the Palace courtyard in 1783.

For several months in London, a lesser-known Versailles will emerge—a world of science and knowledge, far removed from the image of frivolity and lightness traditionally associated with the French court under the Ancien Régime.

CHÂTEAU DE MAISONS CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX

THE COUNT OF ARTOIS, PRINCE AND PATRON November 14, 2025 – March 2, 2026 (provisional dates)

This exhibition will explore the youth of the future Charles X, from his birth to his exile in 1789. It will provide a glimpse into several facets of his character through a selection of around one hundred works and documents, mostly drawn from the collections of the Palace of Versailles, along with items from other major public collections. The exhibition will be held in the impressive Château de Maisons, where François-Joseph Bélanger began—though never completed—the enhancement of the property at the prince's request after he acquired it in 1777.



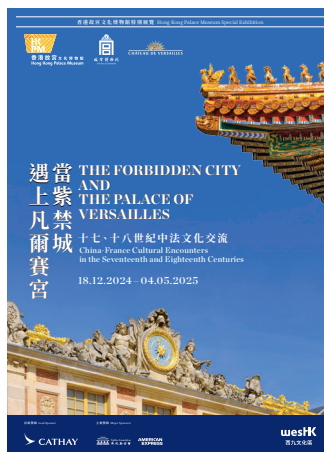
HONG KONG PALACE MUSEUM

THE FORBIDDEN CITY AND THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES: EXCHANGES BETWEEN CHINA AND FRANCE IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

December 18, 2024 – May 4, 2025

This exhibition, which follows the one held in 2024 at the Forbidden City, highlights the privileged relationship between China and France during the Ancien Régime, marked by artistic and cultural exchanges as well as shared scientific knowledge.

The exhibition will focus on the diplomatic efforts initiated by Louis XIV towards Emperor Kangxi. In



1685, French Jesuit priests were sent to China and integrated into the Beijing court as mathematicians for the King. This initiative helped establish relations of mutual trust and respect between the two countries, which lasted until the end of the 18th century.

At the French court, the fascination for

China and its art manifested through four main phenomena: the importation of Chinese art objects, the transformation of some imported works (such as the addition of gilded bronze mounts to porcelain or the use of lacquer panels for French furniture), the imitation of Chinese products, highlighted by the relentless search for the secret of making kaolin porcelain, and the strong influence of Chinese art on French art, particularly in the field of decorative arts.

A significant selection of masterpieces, mostly from the collections of the Palace of Versailles and the Beijing Palace Museum, will illustrate the mutual fascination that China and France developed for each other in the 17th and 18th centuries.