



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES



故宫博物院
THE PALACE MUSEUM

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES HEADS TO CHINA: EXHIBITION AT THE FORBIDDEN CITY IN 2024

Versailles, 6 April 2023
Press release

Initially scheduled for 2020 and postponed due to the pandemic, the exhibition entitled *The Palace of Versailles and the Forbidden City: French-Chinese relations in the 18th century* will run from 1 April 2024 at the Forbidden City's Palace Museum. On 6 April 2023, Palace of Versailles Chair Catherine Pégard and Xudong Wang, Chair of the Forbidden City's Palace Museum, met at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to reiterate their enthusiasm in seeing this joint project through to completion before Presidents Xi and Macron.

The Palace of Versailles is honoured to be working with the Forbidden City's Palace Museum in Beijing in organising this exhibition surrounding the relationship between France and China in the 18th century, due to run from 1 April to 30 June 2024. The exhibition is a more in-depth version of the one that was rolled out at the Palace of Versailles in 2014 to mark fifty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, initially sparked by General de Gaulle on 27 January 1964.

Its content will set out to explore the diplomatic policy Louis XIV put in place in the context of his relations with Emperor Kangxi, which took the form of initiatives such as French Jesuits dispatched to China in 1685 to serve at the Chinese court as mathematicians to the King. This process paved the way for the two nations to begin forging a relationship built on mutual trust and admiration, one that remains unfamiliar to many, and lasted until the 18th century. This special diplomatic relationship and mutual respect helped usher in French appreciation for modern China and Chinese artistry.

In France, the court's love affair with China and Chinese art shines through in a variety of different ways, and four key phenomena: importing Chinese artworks and pieces; altering certain imported artworks, notably by adding gilt-bronze frames to porcelain pieces and using lacquered panels on French furniture; imitating Chinese products, such as the frenzied quest to track down the secret to making kaolin porcelain; and Chinese art's marked influence on French art, particularly in the field of decorative arts. The exhibition will illustrate how Chinese art served as a bottomless source of inspiration for French artists and intellectuals, in everything from

painting, art objects, and interior design to architecture, landscape design, literature, music and the sciences.

Meanwhile, in the Chinese court, many French Jesuits also followed after the arrival of the "Mathematicians of the king" sent by Louis XIV in China, some of whom served the court for a long time. With them as the intermediary, French culture had an important influence on many fields such as science, art, architecture, medicine, mapping and so on in the Qing court. Therefore, juxtaposed with French Exhibits in the Exhibition are also clocks, scientific instruments, prints, porcelain, bronzes, books, and other objects from the Palace Museum collection, directly reflecting the achievements of exchanges and cultural exchanges between the two sides.

The exhibition in Beijing will bring together a selection of pieces taken from the Palace of Versailles and Palace Museum collections, designed to serve as broader examples of the veritable fascination for Chinese art that took root at the court of Versailles and among French enthusiasts. It showcases the efforts and achievements made by China and France to achieve mutual understanding and cultural exchanges in the 18th century, and vividly restores the splendid cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries for more than a century.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PALACE MUSEUM

Exhibition commissioned by
Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, Curator at the Palace of Versailles, and Guo Fuxiang, Curator at the Palace Museum.

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