Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Exhibition, *Dragon and Phoenix — Centuries of Exchange between Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, Opens to the Public

*In partnership with Musée national des arts asiatiques — Guimet*

*More than 200 artworks from the collections of Louvre Abu Dhabi, Musée Guimet and 12 lending museums and institutions*

*06 October 2021 – 12 February 2022*
Abu Dhabi, 5 October 2021: H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, inaugurated Louvre Abu Dhabi’s exhibition, *Dragon and Phoenix – Centuries of Exchange between Chinese and Islamic Worlds*. The exhibition opens to the public on 6 October 2021 and will run until 12 February 2022. With more than 200 artworks on display, visitors can explore the cultural and artistic exchange between the Chinese and Islamic worlds from the 8th to the 18th century. A rich cultural programme will accompany the exhibition, offering an array of events, from dragon boating to kayak cinema and family film screenings.

Organised by Louvre Abu Dhabi in partnership with Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet and France Muséums, the exhibition is curated by Sophie Makariou, President of Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, with the support of Dr. Souraya Noujaim, Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management Director, and Guilhem André, Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Chief Curator of Asian and Medieval Art.

The artworks in *Dragon and Phoenix* represent long-lasting dialogue between China (the dragon) and the Islamic world (the phoenix), chosen from the collections of Louvre Abu Dhabi and Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, alongside those of 12 international museums and institutions. The exhibition delves into the cultural exchange and prolific artistic production between the two worlds resulting in coveted luxury materials and artworks across a span of more than 800 years.

Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "Through the poetic title of *Dragon and Phoenix*, the many interpretations of these two fantastical creatures evoke the significant artistic exchange between two great cultures. The flourishing artistic production, the exquisite objects and materials that came from these two civilisations, brought together across land and sea, is extraordinary. We cannot wait for visitors to experience this fascinating exhibition. My sincere thanks to Sophie Makariou, the Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, the Musée du Louvre, the Shanghai Museum and all our lending partners, without whom *Dragon and Phoenix* would not have been possible."
Visitors will be taken on a journey organised in five chapters, through both land and sea trade routes, to explore the connections, artistic influences and remarkable untold stories, beginning from the establishment of the first Arab merchant colonies in Canton in the 8th century until the threshold of the 18th century. ‘The Islamic world’ references the regions that include countries, cultures and ethnic groups, who shared their affiliation to Islam during this period, such as the Mashriq region, Eastern Africa, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and South-East Asia.

Sophie Makariou, President of Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, said: “From the 8th century up to the beginning of the 18th century, the Islamic world never ceased to regard China as an ideal of technical achievement and beauty, while the Islamic world supplied China with precious luxury objects in metal and glass. This unique exhibition deals with this long history of cultural interactions, of material and immaterial exchanges, and with peaceful relations between those two high-world cultures.”

Dr. Souraya Noujaim, Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management Director at Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: “This exhibition brings mythical creatures, dragon and phoenix among many others, on precious objects to life. Textiles, jades, lacquer, silks and ceramics circulated from the Middle Kingdom to the shores of the Mediterranean and inspired production of both cultures. The circulation of persons and manufactured goods through diplomatic, commercial and cultural exchanges is at the core of this exhibition. The five dramatic chapters reveal a story of mutual influences where external inputs and processes of transfer did not undermine the longevity of aesthetic expression, but on the contrary stimulated its creativity.”


Cultural and Education Programming

The programming for Dragon and Phoenix is a sensory journey across the narrative of the exhibition and presents a variety of events and activities. The cultural programme will include a hand-picked selection of weekend family film screenings and kayak cinema shows, with two sessions in November and one in December. Young visitors can watch The Monkey King and an episode of The Adventures of Sinbad on November 19 and return to the museum on November 26 to watch a second installment of The Adventures of Sinbad alongside the screening of Bilal: A New Breed of Hero. The saga of Sinbad continues with a final screening on December 10 and, on the same day, children will have the opportunity to explore the world of Raya and the Last Dragon. Animated Tales of the World (shorts) will be available to watch on all the three days of the film screenings. The Adventures of Sinbad screenings will be shown as part of the kayak cinema, allowing visitors to watch the episodes while paddling around the museum.

In addition to the ongoing yoga and kayaking activities at the museum, there will also be a new seasonal offering, inspired by traditional Chinese culture – Dragon Boats from November 18 to December 31. Early next year, visitors will also be able to witness a performance piece by local artist Ahmed AlAreef whose installation responds to figures of the zodiac, as seen by both cultures.

Alongside the exhibition, a series of educational activities and programmes are available at the museum starting October. These include daily Express Tours for adults that will assist visitors to follow a journey and delve deep into the long history of cultural interactions, material and idea exchanges between the two civilisations. Students will be able to discover how cultural exchanges across communities in Asia influenced artistic production and ways of living via the Take Me to Asia interactive encounters with Museum Educators. Families can participate in the new #MakeandPlay activities inspired by the exhibition on site and those at home can follow our instructional videos online to create their very own Iznik dish. A series of Masterclasses will be offered starting from November featuring artists invited to respond to artworks within the exhibition and, later, share their skills with participants aged 18 and older in creative activities. Finally, #ARTLAB is back
this winter led by UAE-based artists to encourage museum-goers to create their own art inspired by dragons and phoenixes.

For more information about the exhibition and to book tickets, please visit louvreabudhabi.ae or call Louvre Abu Dhabi at +971 600 56 55 66. Entrance to the exhibition is free with general museum admission tickets. Admission to the museum is free for children under the age of 18.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

Louvre Abu Dhabi is open Tuesday – Sunday from 10 am – 6:30 pm; closed on Mondays. Pre-purchased tickets are required to visit the museum. E-tickets can be reserved via the museum’s website.

Follow Louvre Abu Dhabi on social media: Facebook (Louvre Abu Dhabi), Twitter (@LouvreAbuDhabi) and Instagram (@LouvreAbuDhabi) #LouvreAbuDhabi.

For more information on Louvre Abu Dhabi’s acquisitions policies and principles, visit our website.

Louvre Abu Dhabi has been certified as a “Go-Safe” site. Our partnership with VPS Healthcare means that the health and wellbeing of our visitors will be prioritized throughout their visit, from timed ticketing to temperature checks, to the ample space to social distance throughout the galleries and outdoor spaces of the museum.

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