



Louvre - DNP Museum Lab

Fourth Louvre - DNP Museum Lab Presentation

The city of Susa and its ceramics in the first centuries of Islam

April 5, 2008 – September 27, 2008

Louvre - DNP Museum Lab

Fourth presentation

Susa and its ceramics in the first centuries of Islam

Under the scientific direction of Jean-Baptiste Clais, curator, Department of Islamic Art of the Musée du Louvre.

In partnership with JAL, metaio

Since 2006, the Musée du Louvre and DNP have combined their expertise to develop a new approach to outreach in art museums, using multimedia displays.

The fourth Museum Lab presentation showcases five pieces of ceramic ware discovered in the city of Susa, a major urban center in the early centuries of the Islamic civilization.

Imaging and information technologies are used to present the city's urban history and its local and geopolitical context in the early centuries of Islam, and to highlight the evolution of the ceramics that characterize this period, in terms of styles and production techniques. This background information allows visitors to better appreciate the five exhibits on display.

The preparatory work behind the creation of the multimedia displays, and an assessment of visitors' reactions to them, will be of great interest to the Musée du Louvre for the operation of its future Islamic Art gallery, scheduled to open in 2010.

The first three Museum Lab presentations focused on the design of outreach tools. For this fourth presentation, Museum Lab research included:

- the need for such tools to be unobtrusive in the area where the exhibits are on display,
- the complementarity required between traditional information tools (descriptive notices, didactic panels...) and new technologies.

Museum Lab endeavours to find solutions to the problems of museums with a combination of printed panels and projected animations, and with a completely innovative museum visit featuring "augmented reality" (AR) technology, which makes it possible to superimpose virtual images on those perceived by visitors in the presentation area.

■ Exhibits on display

On the scale of a city, the ceramics found at Susa reflect a more general artistic trend in the early centuries of Islam.

The items on display illustrate a range of ceramic techniques, allowing visitors to appreciate the dynamism of a flourishing art form. After copying ancient designs, Islamic ceramists developed a specifically Islamic art, exemplified by the so-called "blue and white" ceramics or those with "metallic luster" decoration—a complex technique that is highlighted in the presentation.

Musée du Louvre, Communications and Promotion Direction

Aggy Lerolle, director
aggy.lerolle@louvre.fr

Bénédicte Moreau,
benedicte.moreau@louvre.fr

Dai Nippon Printing, Press and Public Relations

info@mail.dnp.co.jp

■ Visiting options and technological developments

Three visiting options are available, thanks to a range of technological possibilities.

With the first option (which requires no guidance tool), the visitor's progress is tracked by sensors and RFID tags, and the multimedia displays are automatically activated at his or her approach. The animations appear on the walls and on the panels displaying explanatory texts. This combined approach provides the visitor with information about the exhibits that is easy to understand.

The second option is based on an audio-guidance system that was designed and perfected for the previous Museum Lab presentations. Network transmission technology is used to provide visitors with an audio commentary, synchronized with the multimedia displays, in the language of their choice.

For the third option, a new mode of information transmission was developed which allows visitors to receive both audio and visual information intuitively as they make their way around the presentation. This method makes innovative use of "augmented reality" technology:

the visitor is given a portable guidance device equipped with a camera which makes it possible to add images to the traditional audioguide system. Six specific parts of the presentation area are linked to the AR system; when the visitor films these places with the camera, a virtual character appears on the captured image, and gives details about the visit.

Audio commentaries are available in Japanese, English, and French. The headset uses bone conduction technology, allowing visitors to hear ambient sounds and even share their impressions with their fellow visitors.

Augmented reality technology as an aid to the appreciation of the exhibits.

The presentation experiments the use of augmented reality technology both as a portable guidance device and as a stationary device positioned next to the exhibits.

Study of the exhibits: a fixed device, associated with the display case containing the works, offers visitors further information about the distinctive features of each item (such as signs of wear or restoration work). Digital images are superimposed on the original ceramic.

■ Visiting the presentation; multimedia displays

Islamic Art at the Louvre

The tour begins next to the reception desk with a video presenting the Department of Islamic Art and its future gallery. The design and construction of this gallery in the Cour Visconti, at the heart of the museum, constitute one of the Louvre's most ambitious projects since the construction of the pyramid.

- The Foyer, information area

The birth of the Islamic civilization

Islam was founded by the prophet Muhammad in the Arabian peninsula in the early 7th century. The first Islamic state, established by Muhammad in Medina, launched a series of conquests that lasted almost two centuries. By the mid-8th century, the Islamic civilization had spread from Spain in the west to Pakistan in the east.

A map of the relevant geographical areas serves as a support for projected animations concerning the major events of this period.

The city of Susa: geographical context, urban expansion

In the early centuries of Islam, Susa was one of the empire's regional capitals. It was also a very prosperous trading center. A projection on a screen illustrates the various facets of its development and its geographical situation at this period.

Exploration of the city of Susa

A scale model shows the topography of the city. When a visitor touches dots that indicate the location of buildings, detailed information is displayed on a screen. This tool can be used by two people at the same time.

Presentation dates:

From April 5 to September 27, 2008

Opening times:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Friday 5 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.

Saturday, 11 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.

Closed Sundays, public holidays, and during the summer holidays (Sunday August 10 to Sunday August 17).

- The projection room

Susa: history of the archaeological excavations

Ultra high definition images present the history of the site of Susa, whose foundations are thought to date back over six millennia. The presentation describes the rediscovery of the city in the mid-19th century, and the many archaeological excavations carried out there.

- The presentation room

Display of five ceramics from the Musée du Louvre, dating from the early centuries of Islam.

The multimedia displays in this area are deliberately unobtrusive, to allow visitors to concentrate their attention on the exhibits themselves.

Animated panels provide detailed descriptions of the stylistic context, materials, shapes, and decorations.

AR technology is used to present the material history of each exhibit.

The spread of "metallic lusterware"

"Metallic lusterware"—a specifically Islamic technical innovation—spread throughout the empire and as far as South-East Asia. An interactive map pinpoints the places where metallic lusterware was found or produced. The map can be interrogated by pointing to the location of a city.

Ceramic production techniques

An interactive table uses animated images to present three particularly representative techniques: molded decoration, "blue and white" faience, and metallic lusterware.

Address:

Louvre - DNP Museum Lab
Tokyo, Shinagawa-ku,
Nishi Gotanda,
3-5-20, DNP-Gotanda Building,
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo

**Reservation essential
(admission free)**

Information and reservation:

Online :
<http://www.museumlab.jp>

By telephone:
+81 (0) 35435 0880,
Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 9
p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6
p.m.

Closed Sundays, public holidays,
and during end-of-year and New
Year celebrations.

The Louvre - DNP Museum Lab project, the result of collaboration between Dai Nippon Printing (DNP) and the Musée du Louvre, is designed to explore new approaches to artworks, particularly through the use of multimedia displays. The original design of the Museum Lab presentations comprises both expertise in terms of cultural mediation and the results of research undertaken by the Musée du Louvre. The presentations are orchestrated using imaging and information technologies operated by DNP.

From 2006 to 2010, six different presentations have been scheduled, for a six-month period each, on the DNP premises in Tokyo. Each multimedia presentation is supplemented by on-site lectures, screenings, and workshops, and is further developed on the project's web site:

[Museumlab.jp](http://www.museumlab.jp).

The web site: [museumlab.jp](http://www.museumlab.jp)

On the web site (www.museumlab.jp/english), visitors can find information to prepare their visit to Louvre - DNP Museum Lab, and can review their own visit afterwards (accessible via the code on their admission ticket).