

Press release

Louvre - DNP Museum Lab

Sixth presentation in Tokyo

Portraits of women in Egypt, 1800 years ago

July 18th - December 19th, 2009



Portrait of a woman known as "*L'Européenne*"
First half of the 2nd century AD.
Cedar wood, encaustic, partially gilded.
H. 42.5 cm; W. at the bottom 24 cm ;
W. at the top 17.4 cm; D. 1.2–1.6 cm.
Provenance: probably Antinoopolis
Paris, musée du Louvre, MND 2047
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Organizers: Louvre, DNP
Museum Lab sixth presentation
« Portraits of women in Egypt,
1800 years ago »

Scientific representative :
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Louvre

In partnership with JAL, metaio

Artworks on display

The artworks that are displayed in this presentation are Ancient Egyptian portraits created in the 2nd century A.D. during the period of Roman domination. They belong to a group commonly known as "Fayum portraits". Painted on wood during the models' lifetimes, they were fixed to their mummies when they died. Around a thousand images of this type are known to exist to date, found buried among grave goods and protected by Egypt's dry climate; today they are among the oldest known examples of portraits painted on wood using the encaustic* technique. These works, the fruit of a hybridization of Egyptian funerary rites, the Greek technique of encaustic painting, and the Roman tradition of realistic portraits, reflect the cultural blend prevalent in Egypt at the time. Among the three works on display, the portrait known as "*L'Européenne*" is one of the major artworks in the Louvre's collection in the quality of its execution and the beauty of the woman's features.

* with a wax-based binder

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Mediation and multimedia tools

- **Reception**

Visitors pick up their multimedia handsets at reception and select one of the three languages available (Japanese, French, or English). They can then begin their visit following the directions provided by the multimedia handset, which will accompany them throughout the seven multimedia displays on offer. For this presentation, all of the multimedia handsets feature Augmented Reality* technology, offering a new kind of visitor assistance. By simply bringing the handset's camera up to one of the pictograms found near each display and photographing it, visitors can obtain information at any time on the way they work. This information appears on the handset's screen in the form of synthesized images superimposed on those of the actual environment.



© photo DNP

- **Presentation room**

Here visitors can admire the three portraits from the Louvre's collections.

Discovering other portraits

By means of a multimedia display installed in a separate, adjacent area, visitors can discover a large selection of other "Fayum portraits," projected actual-size on a wall. The images are shown in slow sequence. Drawing nearer to the wall, visitors have an enlarged view of the portraits closest to them so as to let them enjoy going back and forth between the observation of a group of works and of a particular work that has caught their eye. They are therefore able to admire in greater detail the techniques employed and their specific features.

- **Theater**

Admiring the artist's touch

By comparing the various processes used so skillfully by the authors of the three portraits on display, we are able to distinguish the main specific features of the "Fayum portraits," particularly the modes of representation peculiar to encaustic painting. Visitors can discover the whole palette of these highly-detailed expressions via an impressive super high-definition program on a big screen entitled "Observing the painters' hand."



© photo DNP

- **Foyer / Multimedia zone**

Five multimedia displays are on offer in the foyer's multimedia zone. They make use of digital and image processing technologies to provide an in-depth discovery of the works on display and a better understanding of their specific features, the historical context, or the techniques used.

* AR, Augmented reality: a new technology that makes it possible to combine real and virtual images.

Observing the details

By tracing with their fingers an actual-size reproduction of a work on a screen, visitors can linger over details of interest to them and enlarge them for a closer look. This applies, for example, to the artist's techniques or to the clothes and jewelry worn by the women. Visitors can use this display at their own pace and return to it at any point during their visit, as they make new discoveries.



© photo DNP

Understanding the background context

These Roman-Egyptian portraits appeared at the crossroads of the three ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome—but how and when did these three civilizations encounter and influence one another? An image sequence seeks to chart the evolution of these three civilizations in time and in space, with particular attention to the three aspects of political context, gods, and the representation of the human figure.

Questioning a mummy

One mummy in the Louvre's collections has retained its painted portrait. This mummy of Eudaimonis is to act as a model in an attempt to decipher the various elements that reflect the cultural intermingling of the time, by inviting visitors to consult a touch panel based on six thematic approaches, including portrait depiction, pictorial technique, and funerary rites. Visitors can therefore enjoy a preview experience of a display that will be introduced into the Musée du Louvre in Paris.



© photo DNP

Deconstructing/Reconstructing the painting, layer by layer

In this display, which is placed on a specimen box containing examples of the materials used to create an encaustic painting, digitally-reconstructed images chart the production process. In the course of an interactive operation, visitors are able to explore the various pictorial levels—usually imperceptible to the naked eye—layer by layer, and thereby instinctively understand the technique of stacked layers of paint characteristic of encaustic painting.



© photo DNP

What impression do these faces make on you?

Here visitors are invited to select those works that they particularly liked from among the works on display and the portraits they were able to encounter throughout the course of their visit, and give their impressions using key words. They can take home a reproduction of one of the works on show, associated with the key words they selected.

Louvre - DNP Museum Lab

Venue:

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

Exhibition period :

From July 18 to December 19, 2009

Opening times :

From 5 to 7.30 p.m. on Mondays,
Tuesdays, and Thursdays
From 5 to 8.30 p.m. on Wednesdays
and Fridays
From 11 to 5.30p.m. on Saturdays

Closed Sundays and public holidays
Also closed from Sunday August 9
to Sunday August 16

Louvre - DNP Museum Lab is a joint project between the Musée du Louvre and DNP that seeks to offer new modes of mediation for enjoying artworks. Launched in October 2006 with the joint aim of exploring innovative approaches conducive to a favorable visitor-artwork experience, this project develops multimedia offerings designed to help discover the artworks, tailored to each new presentation. The Musée du Louvre has designed an exhibition circuit for Museum Lab in DNP's premises in Gotanda, focusing on the display of one or more works selected from the Louvre collections.

The innovative design of the Museum Lab presentations combines cultural outreach expertise and the results of research undertaken by the Musée du Louvre. The presentations are orchestrated using information and imaging technologies operated by DNP.

Visitors can therefore enjoy a unique experience, which they can follow up after their visit through the link provided by the activities offered on its website (museumlabor.eu). Continuous rounds of conferences, workshops, and other screenings also supplement each presentation.

This presentation is the last in the project's first phase of six exhibitions held over three years; the Musée du Louvre has agreed to take the experience further. A contract relating to a second phase is to be signed shortly, and a seventh presentation should be open to visitors in September 2010. In this second stage, the project schedules the systematic relocation in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, of multimedia displays developed at Gotanda, and is also considering the promotion of new outlets for Museum Lab's results by reusing or adapting them in other museums. Museum Lab's second phase should consist of four presentations over three years.

Reservation compulsory (free admission)

Reservations / Information :

On line :

<http://museumlabor.eu>

By telephone :

03-5435-0880

from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on
weekdays, and from 9 a.m. to 6
p.m. on Saturdays (closed
Sundays, public holidays)