

Restricted



Van Cleef & Arpels

{BnF} Bibliothèque nationale de France

## PRESS RELEASE

For press materials, please click [here](#).

# Louvre Abu Dhabi's First Exhibition of 2024 'From *Kalila wa Dimna* to La Fontaine: Travelling through Fables' Now Open to the Public

*Running until 21 July 2024, the exhibition will showcase the literary genre of animal fables*



©Department of Culture and Tourism–Abu Dhabi. Photo: Ismail Noor/Seeing Things

**Abu Dhabi, UAE, 26 March 2024:** Louvre Abu Dhabi, one of the region's leading cultural institutions, has announced the opening of its first exhibition of the year, '*From Kalila wa Dimna to La Fontaine: Travelling through Fables*'; following its inauguration by H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, the museum's Chairman. Held in partnership with Bibliothèque nationale de France and France Muséums along with the generous support of Van Cleef & Arpels, this groundbreaking exhibition showcases a remarkable collection of ancient tales and illustrated fables, promising to captivate visitors as they embark on a unique journey through time.

Curated by **Annie Vernay-Nouri, Former Chief Curator, Oriental Manuscripts Department, Bibliothèque nationale de France**, the exhibition draws inspiration from traditional illustrated fables and delves into the mystical world of animal tales embedded within historical manuscripts. With more than 132 artworks on display, the exhibition features an eclectic collection of rare manuscripts, paintings, contemporary works, and more — unveiling the timeless narratives of friendship, loyalty, cunning, and morality, as portrayed through anthropomorphic animal characters.

Restricted

Fables are a genre of literature that typically consists of short stories featuring animals or inanimate objects that possess human-like qualities. These stories often convey moral lessons and teach readers about human behavior through the actions and interactions of the characters. Fables have been passed down through generations and are found in various cultures around the world. They serve as a means of entertainment as well as a way to impart wisdom and values to readers.

The exhibition traces the origins of this genre in India and Greece, following its evolution through the contributions of two key figures: Aesop in the Greco-Roman world and Ibn al-Muqaffa in the Arab-Islamic world. It highlights how the Arabic translation of Ibn Al-Muqaffa (c.720-756 CE) played a pivotal role in the translations that followed, such as the Persian and French versions that Jean de La Fontaine based his translations on. La Fontaine (1621-1695 CE) is widely recognised as one of the most prominent literary figures in French history and his unique works have left a lasting impact on French literature, celebrated to this day for their timeless charm and wit.

**Manuel Rabaté, Director, Louvre Abu Dhabi,** said: "At Louvre Abu Dhabi, we are not just presenting art; we are weaving narratives as a universal museum, leading by storytelling. Fables have transcended linguistic and cultural boundaries, inspiring new creations in both the East and the West, perfectly aligning with our mission—shedding light on the shared stories of humanity."

**He added:** "Our partnership with Bibliothèque nationale de France and France Muséums as well as our collaborations with regional institutions have been invaluable and brought forth incredible loans. This exhibition also presented a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center, seamlessly enhancing the cultural richness of this fascinating narrative."

**Annie Vernay-Nouri, Former Chief Curator, Oriental Manuscripts Department, Bibliothèque nationale de France,** said: "For the first time, visitors have a unique opportunity to witness and compare rare and precious artworks representing three distinct traditions of fables. The Eastern and Western traditions, rooted in a shared universal heritage, have evolved independently without direct contact, each charting its own course. It is only through the works of the eminent fabulist Jean de La Fontaine that these traditions have finally converged and united in a singular collection showcased at Louvre Abu Dhabi."

**Dr. Guilhem André, Acting Director for Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management, Louvre Abu Dhabi,** said: "We are excited to bring this unique and thought-provoking exhibition to Louvre Abu Dhabi, showcasing the timeless power of fables from different cultures and eras. Through this exhibition, visitors will have the opportunity to explore the universal themes and lessons found in these stories and understand the significance they hold in shaping our world."

The exhibition is divided into three main sections – *Travelling Tales*, *Telling Stories*, and *The Fables Today*—taking visitors on a voyage of texts over time through their various adaptations and translations. Several prominent pieces from France, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates will be showcased throughout.

Notable loans from Louvre Abu Dhabi's partners include one of the oldest illustrated manuscripts of *Kalila wa Dimna*, by Ibn al-Muqaffa dating back to the Ayyubid dynasty (1171-1250 CE); *The Two Adventurers and the Wondrous Writ* by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, draughtsman Bonaventure Louis Prévost; *Portrait of Jean de La Fontaine* by Émile Bayard, draughtsman L. Wolff (engraver); and *La Fontaine composant ses fables* [*La Fontaine writing his fables*] by François Vayron, engraver.

As part of the museum's continuous efforts to offer its visitors compelling and engaging experiences, Louvre Abu Dhabi is utilising artificial intelligence for the first time within the mediation devices for this exhibition, allowing visitors to create their own fable via touch tables and download their composition by scanning a QR code. Visitors can customise their fables by selecting characters and the moral of the story, which they can keep and share with their children and loved ones.

To complement the exhibition, Louvre Abu Dhabi has curated a range of cultural and educational programmes to elevate the overall visitor experience. Visitors can immerse themselves in the world of fables with insightful curatorial talks, along with a series of carefully curated film screenings that explore themes of morality, wisdom, and the power of storytelling. Additionally, Louvre Abu Dhabi has organised a line-up of talks for engaging discussions on various aspects of fables. Details on the exciting schedule of cultural and educational programmes will be announced soon.

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

**ENDS**

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Louvre Abu Dhabi's new operating hours

Museum: Open: 10 am – 6.30 pm (Tue - Thurs); extended hours: 10am – 8.30pm (Fri - Sun); closed on Mondays.

Dome: Open: 10am – midnight (Tues - Sun) - last entry 11 pm; closed on Mondays

Museum Café: Open: 10 am – 6.30 pm (Tue - Thurs); extended hours: 10 am – 10 pm (Fri – Sun). Closed on Mondays

Art Lounge: Open: 3 pm – 12 am (last orders 11 pm); closed on Mondays

Fouquet's Abu Dhabi and Marta Bar: Open: 12 pm – 12 am (last orders at 10 pm) (Tue – Thurs, Sun); weekends: 12 pm – 1 am (last orders at 10.30 pm) (Fri – Sat); closed on Mondays

Aptitude Café: Open: 9 am – 10 pm (daily including Mondays)

Follow Louvre Abu Dhabi on social media: Facebook ([Louvre Abu Dhabi](https://www.facebook.com/LouvreAbuDhabi)), Twitter ([@LouvreAbuDhabi](https://twitter.com/LouvreAbuDhabi)) and Instagram ([@LouvreAbuDhabi](https://www.instagram.com/LouvreAbuDhabi)) #LouvreAbuDhabi.

## ABOUT LOUVRE ABU DHABI

Created by an exceptional agreement between the governments of Abu Dhabi and France, Louvre Abu Dhabi was designed by Jean Nouvel and opened on Saadiyat Island in November 2017. The museum is inspired by traditional Islamic architecture and its monumental dome creates a rain of light effect and a unique social space that brings people together.

Louvre Abu Dhabi celebrates the universal creativity of mankind and invites audiences to see humanity in a new light. Through its innovative curatorial approach, the museum focuses on building understanding across cultures: through stories of human creativity that transcend civilisations, geographies, and times.

The museum's growing collection is unparalleled in the region and spans thousands of years of human history, including prehistoric tools, artefacts, religious texts, iconic paintings, and contemporary artworks. The permanent collection is supplemented by rotating loans from 19 French partner institutions, regional and international museums.

Louvre Abu Dhabi is a testing ground for new ideas in a globalised world and champions new generations of cultural leaders. Its international exhibitions, programming and Children's Museum are inclusive platforms that connect communities and offer enjoyment for all.

## ABOUT BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

The Bibliothèque nationale de France is the heir to the royal collections built up since the end of the Middle Ages. It preserves a heritage that is unique in the world: more than 40 million documents, including 15 million books and journals, but also manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps and plans, scores, coins, medals, sound documents, videos, multimedia, sets, costumes, to which must be added, since 2006, the billions of files collected as part of the legal deposit of the French web. Through them, BnF preserves and transmits a part of the world's memory. Its encyclopedic collections have been feeding and enriching a constantly evolving thought process for nearly five centuries. A universal heritage made available to all to help them better think about the world, and formed from a network of resources designed to enlighten and create knowledge.

The historic site, Richelieu, allows visitors to discover 900 treasures from the BnF's collections in a new museum and the mythical Oval Room invites the public to consult 20,000 volumes presented for free consultation.

Digital technology is a major challenge for the preservation and dissemination of BnF's collections. Gallica, its digital library, now provides free access to 10 million documents.

As a place of transmission and accessibility to culture, the BnF offers exhibitions, events, workshops, visits, participative events, book editions, online conferences, etc.

## ABOUT FRANCE MUSÉUMS

Following the intergovernmental agreement between France and the Emirates of Abu Dhabi signed in 2007, France Muséums, a cultural consulting and engineering agency, was created to work towards the creation of Louvre Abu Dhabi and support the project in all its dimensions (strategic, scientific, cultural, building, human resources).

Since the opening of the UAE museum in 2017, France Muséums continues to support Louvre Abu Dhabi in four main fields of activity: the management and coordination of loans from French museums for the permanent galleries of the museum, the organisation and production of international exhibitions, training of teams and a wide range of consultancy and auditing assignments in all areas of museum management.

France Muséums mobilises its teams based in Paris and Abu Dhabi and a network of 18 major French cultural institutions and museum partners: Musée du Louvre, Centre national d'art et de culture – Georges Pompidou, Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Réunion des Musées Nationaux et du Grand Palais (RMN-GP), Château de Versailles, Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet, Musée de Cluny – musée national du Moyen-Âge, École du Louvre, Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD), Musée d'Archéologie nationale – Saint-Germain en Laye, Musée Rodin, Domaine national de Chambord, OPPIC (Opérateur du patrimoine et des projets immobiliers de la culture), Musée de l'Armée, Institut National du Patrimoine and Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF).

<https://francemuseums.com/>

### **ABOUT VAN CLEEF & ARPELS**

Founded at Paris' Place Vendôme in 1906, Van Cleef & Arpels came into being following Estelle Arpels' marriage to Alfred Van Cleef in 1895. Over the decades, the excellence and creativity of the High Jewelry and Watchmaking Maison established its reputation across the world. With a blend of inventiveness and poetry, Van Cleef & Arpels perpetuates a highly distinctive style that has produced numerous signatures: the Mystery Set technique, the Minaudière precious case, the transformable Zip necklace and the Alhambra motif. Its selection of gems that instill an emotion and the savoir-faire of its virtuoso craftsmen have given birth to enchanting jewelry and watchmaking collections. Whether inspired by nature, couture, dance or imaginary worlds, the Maison opens the gate to a timeless universe of beauty and harmony.

The transmission of this exceptional craftsmanship, often unknown to the general public, has always been at the heart of the values of Van Cleef & Arpels. In 2012, the Maison therefore decided to create a unique entity in the world: L'ÉCOLE, School of Jewelry Arts, with the aim to share the culture of jewelry with the widest possible audience, through courses, talks, exhibitions and books.

### **ABOUT SAADIYAT CULTURAL DISTRICT**

Saadiyat Cultural District on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi, is devoted to culture and the arts. An ambitious cultural undertaking for the 21st century, it will be a nucleus for global culture, attracting local, regional and international guests with unique exhibitions, permanent collections, productions and performances. Its ground-breaking buildings will form a historical statement of the finest 21st century architecture; Zayed National Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. These museums will complement and collaborate with local and regional arts and cultural institutions including universities and research centres.

### **ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND TOURISM – ABU DHABI**

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors and its creative industries, fuels economic progress and helps achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions. By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture and tourism industries.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.