



Musée universitaire de Louvain

Wednesday 21 June 2017

UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN regional development

Musée L, the University of Louvain Museum, where dialogue between scientific collections and art elicits new emotions

University of Louvain's new museum, the Musée L, will open on 18 November 2017 in Louvain-la-Neuve's architectural landmark, an exceptional building designed by the architect André Jacqmain. After two and a half years of renovation, University of Louvain will open Belgium's very first large-scale university museum, with more than 3830 m² accessible to the general public. **Its special features** will include the dialogues between University of Louvain's unique artistic and scientific collections, and three laboratories where the public can employ material and technical approaches to explore objects. Museum spaces will embody the wish to make the museum a 'guesthouse', a welcoming place open to all. For its first exhibition, Musée L will host **Barthélémy Togu**, an artist who engages with human realities.

Why a new museum?

The old museum building had become too small and was largely unnoticed. But the new museum building – the former Science and Technology Library, the emblem of University of Louvain in Louvain-la-Neuve, the creation of the architect André Jacqmain, fitted out and conceived by the designer Jules Wabbes (and of which some of the fittings have been reintegrated) – has a very strong presence. The new space allows for **wider deployment of University of Louvain's collections** and for a greater number of people to appreciate them, thanks to better **visibility** and **significant museographical work**.

The premises were renovated by **University of Louvain architects**, who aimed mainly to improve readability in internal spaces, create natural lighting and install visitor amenities (shop, educational areas, auditorium, etc.).

A university museum providing the general public broad access to its collections

It's no small matter that University of Louvain is the first Belgian university to open a museum of more than 5000 m²: **University of Louvain champions culture, for example through the 2004 creation of its artist residency, and its (elective) minor in culture and creation**. In addition, University of Louvain has its own cultural season and offers the general public many cultural activities: exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, and much more.

Why 'Musée L'?

'Musée L' signifies the **Louvain university museum**. The name affirms a living university heritage and common history with KULeuven. 'L' stands for 'Louvain' and asserting the '**Louvain brand**', emblematic of University of Louvain since 1425. The letter 'L', through its very shape, expresses solidity, rootedness and openness; it breaks down barriers, as does the notion of dialogue between objects. Two necessary and complementary dimensions that art energises.

What features? What collections?

The museum's collections come from University of Louvain professors and private donors. They're comprised of artworks (by Rembrandt, Goya, Picasso, Magritte, Alechinsky, etc.), natural history specimens, archaeological and ethnographic objects, machines and scientific inventions.

Musée L has **three special features** in its DNA:

- **dialogue between works**, whether **between a medieval sculpture and a Buddha**, a **Picasso etching and an African mask**, or **writings from Antiquity and calculating machines**. These works speak all languages, all eras, all techniques. They express the incredible power of invention and creation that invigorates every man and woman;
- **its university nature**: the museum will exhibit University of Louvain **scientific and educational collections**, works **that tell the university's history**. Back when students had no tablets for learning, professors compiled collections for teaching. This is one reason for the diversity of Musée L works, which reflect subjects taught at University of Louvain;
- **its three 'labs', laboratories for experimentation** where visitors can touch and feel the collections; experiment with etching; copy casts; revamp works in 3D and colour; play, create and experience new emotions.

The museum **exhibition** is conceived as an exploration of what drives humanity to invent. The visitor learns about the collections through five **themes**:

- **Surprise**: the exhibition begins with an abundance of objects from all collections, in no apparent order. A large **cabinet of curiosities** showcases the world's incredible diversity.
- **Questioning**: after surprise comes understanding the world. The second stage presents the **passion of researchers** through University of Louvain history (films, archives, supporting research instruments).
- **Passing on knowledge**: rare manuscripts, archaeological relics – the third stage, according to the theme 'write and calculate', features tools that helped disseminate knowledge.
- **Emotions**: the fourth and largest stage is dedicated to **art**. The artworks and objects span all cultures and eras, from Antiquity to the 20th century.
- **Contemplation**: the exhibition ends with an amateur's perspective, that of Dr Charles Delsemme, whose collection invites contemplation.

The museum's **scenography** is being designed by an expert firm, *Kinkorn* (the Netherlands), which has already approved scenographic elements of the Catharijne Convent Museum (Utrecht) and the **MAS (Antwerp)**. **The name of the game**: respect for and promotion of the architecture by using simple fittings and outstanding lighting. **Display cases, stands and graphics** are the work of the firm Potteau, which is also responsible for the scenography of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, currently under renovation.

For its first exhibition, Musée L will welcome the artist **Barthélémy Toguo** (born in 1967, in Cameroon). His work reflects current issues, especially migration and climate change. The exhibition is intended for all audiences and, like its related events (round-tables, tours, conferences, workshops, etc.), will create links between artistic disciplines and other – particularly scientific – fields, research and educational goals at University of Louvain; provide food for thought and act as a ‘sounding board’ for ideas and solutions to problems that afflict our society; serve as a forum for debate and meeting others.

Public-private-sponsor funding

The future museum’s funding is **unique** in that it is generated by a **public-private-sponsor partnership: a university, public institutions and sponsors (companies and individuals)**. In concrete terms, the vast majority of funding is assured by sponsorships, while University of Louvain contributes one of its buildings and public authorities provide subsidies. In sum, **the future museum will cost €10.4 million**, which includes €7.4 million for building renovation, €2.3 million for scenography and almost €0.7 million for redeveloping the museum’s surroundings.

Collection expansion is also assured thanks to the generosity of sponsors who offer their works to the university: over the past 40 years, **the University of Louvain museum increased its holdings from 4,000 to more than 32,000 works**.

Calendar

- **May 2015:** future University of Louvain museum renovation begins
- **May 2017:** ‘Livre et art’, Musée L café, boutique, bookshop opens
- **June 2017:** permanent exhibition moved and installed
- **July-September 2017:** museum graphics (notices, labels, etc.), multimedia, films installed
- **October 2017:** first temporary exhibition installed
- **14 November 2017:** Musée L press conference + VIP inauguration
- **18 November 2017:** museum opens to the public

Some figures. Musée L totals **5,828 m²** of which **2,580 m²** for exhibitions (permanent and temporary) on **6 floors**, **430 m²** of offices and workshops, **1,250 m²** of activity and public reception space, **1,200 m²** of reserves, **3,830 m²** accessible to the public, **1** documentation centre, **32,000** works, **5** thematic spaces, **3** Labs. Total cost of **€10.4 million**. In terms of energy savings, University of Louvain will gain **125 KW** of power from roof insulation and **25 KW** from windowpane replacement, representing total savings of +/- **17,000 m³** of gas per year.

Works will be moved via: 800 boxes, 40 trips by truck, 180 pallets, 5.4 km of plastic film.

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Information? www.museel.be

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