

Louvre Museum- A Paradise for Connoisseurs of Art

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"Louvre Museum"

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Sublime ecstasy permeated through my heart and soul when I visited Paris, the city known as '**La Ville Lumière**' or the city of lights, primarily because of its role during the age of enlightenment. Paris has remained the capital of art and cultural movement for the last couple of centuries and the highlights of the tour was a visit, no short of a pilgrimage, to Musee de Louvre on the 23rd of May 2018. I never thought that a humble artist like me would ever have the good fortune to see Louvre, the treasure of Art. The obsession of fulfilling my long cherished dream was ultimately transpired and I was overwhelmed by supreme joy and sheer delight.

I recently had the privilege of touring Greece to participate in a photography

workshop and thereafter visited Italy and France. Italy and France are known to be the cradle of art for most of the world's artists. For artists, it is always a dream to come to Paris and exhibit works. Even Rabindranath Tagore himself could not overcome the fascination of Paris. He had his first exhibition of artworkd in Paris in May 1930 at the Gallery Pigalle. Shashikumar Hesh was the first Bengali artist to go to Paris in 1896 to study art for two years. Amrita Shergill enrolled her name in the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in 1929 to study art and spent five years there. All the famous artists of the world spent some days in Paris at one time or another. Now almost every year some Indian artists come to Paris to learn painting or to exhibit their works. There are many art centres in Paris,



"Writing Table of Louis XIV " MRINAL BANDYOPADHYAY

notably among them are Louvre Museum, Picasso Museum, Orse Museum and Pompidou Center, Montmartre Museum, house of Claude Monet and Van Gogh are some of the places of special interest, but Louvre Museum is the jewel in the crown so far as art and sculpture is concerned. My discussion, therefore, is mainly about Louvre Museum.

Mrinal Banerjee and I arrived in Paris on 21st May from Milan. It was almost afternoon to reach the hotel and after a little rest, we headed straight towards the Eiffel Tower by Metro. The most convenient and cheapest way to travel in Paris is by metro rail as there are many branches of metro rail spread over in different parts of the city at three levels. But one needs to exercise caution while traversing through the city, as Mrinal sadly fell victim of pick-pockets and lost some money. Fortunately credit cards and other valuable papers were saved. That day we spent few hours in

nights in and around the Eiffel Tower, had our dinner in a nearby restaurant and returned to our hotel after mid night. It is better to note that in summer the sun shines till around 6:30 pm.

We woke up late the next morning and left for Louvre Museum at 10 o'clock, by metro. After entering through the back of the museum and initially could not work out where to buy the entrance ticket. Many people were entering but no ticket counter was to be found. Some beautiful statues could be seen from outside. After wandering around for some time, we finally came to the huge open space inside. There was the famous glass pyramid, towards the main entrance and many people crowded there. However, no entrance for the actual museum could be found there. On enquiring, we came to know that the museum remains closed on every Tuesday and that was Tuesday and we were naturally disappointed. The Louvre Museum was a special attraction for us. Fortunately we were staying in Paris for the next couple of days. So for rest



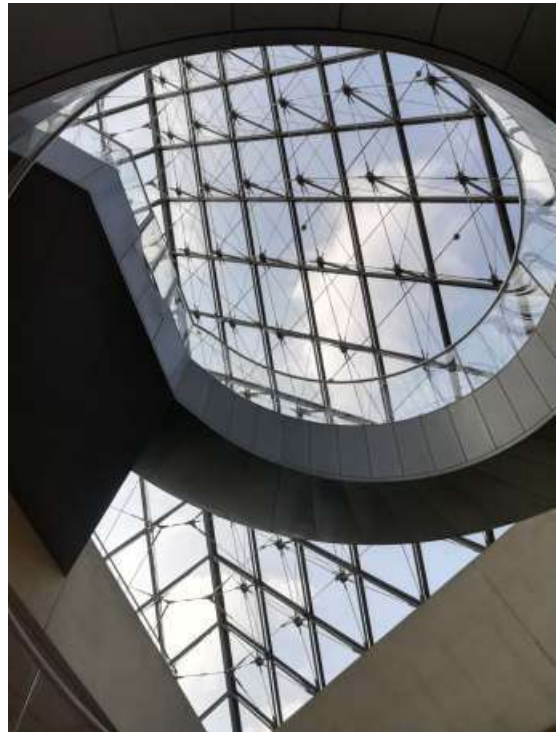
"Marine VENUS 1838"

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of the day we took a bus ride for 40 Euros for the 'Open City Tour' and fruitfully spent the day.

May 23rd is a memorable day in our life. We got up early, had our breakfast and came to the metro station and took the train to the Louvre Museum station. The Paris metro is like a giant spider web and therefore, it is better to ask before boarding the train. We changed lines from Porte De Clignancour (via M4) to Chatelet Les Halles (via M1) for the Musee du Louvre, and from there straight through the Carousel Shopping Mall to the ticket counter. Tickets cost 20 euros- 15 euros entrance fee and 5 euros audio guide. From information counter we collected Museum maps which are available in different languages. After security check we collected the audio guide and went inside.

The Louvre Museum, a monolithic renaissance palace and one of the largest museums and most visited in the world. It is the longest building in the Europe, stretching more than three Eifel Towers laid end to end. Across an expansive plaza of million square feet, the imposing facade of the Louvre museum rises like a citadel in the Paris sky. Louvre was a palace before becoming a Museum. Built like an enormous horseshoe on the east bank of



"Sky Is the Limit "

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the Seine river is the huge Louvre at Arrondissement in the heart of Paris. During twelfth-thirteenth centuries, the Louvre Palace was built as a fortress during the reign of King Philip II, some of the ruins of which are kept in the basement of the museum. Louvre Museum was established by King Francis I in the sixteenth century as his personal collection gallery, his famous being the portrait of 'Mona Lisa'. Collections continued to increase due to royal patronage. After the reign of King Louis XIV of Versailles in 1682., it became a royal museum. During the French Revolution of 1793, the Louvre was recognized as the National Art Museum, and on 10th August 1793, 537 paintings were exhibited and private collections were also opened to the public.

The main entrance of the modern Louvre is as famous as the museum itself. Standing 21 meter high is a huge glass pyramid built in 1989 by the Chinese American architect



"Cupid Kiss"

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"Food For Thought "

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I.M. Pei. Traditionalist felt that it destroyed the dignity of the renaissance courtyard, while the progressive admirers hailed it as a brilliant synergy between the old structure and the architecture, a symbolic link between the old and the new. The Louvre Museum houses artefacts dating from antiquity to the mid-nineteenth century (7th millennium BC to 1850). After 1850, European paintings were transferred to the museum at Aceh and the Pompidou Center.

The Louvre Museum houses about a million artefacts. Of these, about 35,000 are open to the public. The fact that an estimated five weeks is required to properly appreciate its 35,000 art pieces, gives the idea of enormity of the Louvre museum. However, Louvre is renowned for its huge collection of feminine art, the most famous trio being, the Monalisa, The Venus de Milo and the Winged Victory.

The Louvre Museum is divided into five floors: Level -2, -1,0,1,2, and each floor is named after three French historians and are called the Sully wing, the Richelieu wing and the Denon wing.

We decided to take an abbreviated tour of the museum since we had only about 6 hours. We studied the museum map to find out where the Mona Lisa is, and went to room 704 in Level 2+. Then from there to Picasso's house, Ingres' house then Venus

the Milo. We visited other galleries in hurry, and although there was no joy in this wandering but we were left out of option . Later we saw the ruins of the medieval palace of Louvre and European sculptures on the ground floor.

Sully Wing - The oldest part of the Louvre is Sully wing. On the third floor is a collection of French works of art - paintings, drawings, prints, etc. One of the most notable works is Jean Augustus Dominic's 18th-century oil painting 'The Turkish Bath'. The first and second floors of Sully have archaeological resources. Among the many artefacts and sculptures in 30 houses of Egyptian archaeology, are the famous 'Seated Scribe' and the gigantic statue of Pharaoh Ramesses which is a surprise to see. On the first floor, the Greek artefacts include 'Aphrodite' or 'Venus the



"Venus de Milo"

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Milo'. On the ground floor there is a completely different scenario— the ruins of the medieval palace of the Louvre are preserved there.

Richelieu Wing - The third floor of the Richelieu section features European art from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Notable among them are the paintings of the eminent painters Reuben and Rembrandt. Of particular note are Jan Vermeer's *Lesmaker* and Jan Van Icke's fifteenth-century work *The Virgin of Chancellor Ronla*. On the second floor of the Richelieu there is a store of decorative art, such as clocks, furniture, porcelain items and tapestries. On the same floor



"Spiral at LUVRE"

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Denon Wing – It is the most 'crowded' section of the Louvre since Leonardo da Vinci's *'Mona Lisa'* housed on the second floor of the Denon wing.

Among the other best works are Paolo Veronica's *'Wedding Feast at Cana'* and Jacques-Louis David's *'Conclusion of Emperor Napoleon-1'*. In addition, *'The Nike of Samthres'*, also known as *'The Winged Victory'*, is exhibited at an important location in the balcony connecting Denon and Sully wings. On the first floor are nineteenth-century Renaissance sculptures, Antonio Canova's marble *'Psyche Revived by Cupid Kiss'*, and the more popular sculpture



"Pyramid"

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there is the house of Napoleon III, beautifully decorated with expensive objects. From this it can be inferred that Louvre was like the interior of the palace when it was there. At the collection of sculptures of the first and the underground floor – one finds two wide spaces wrapped in glass arranged around the work of Cure Peugeot and Cure Marley. In the 18th century, Gil Kustar created a huge marble sculpture, Cure Marley, a stable for horses, a mourner, and a plaintiff near Philip Pot's tomb. On the first floor there is a collection of ancient art from the near east. Note: The Code of Hammurabi is a large basalt stall of eighteenth-century Babylonian law.



"The Wolf Sucking Romulus and Remus"



"Inverted Pyramid"

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Michelangelo's 'The Dying Slave', in addition to ancient Roman and Etruscans collections. Room number 8 on the same floor has artefacts from Asia, Africa, Oceania and America. Medieval European sculptures are housed at the basement.

The Mona Lisa or 'La Gioconda' as is called in French, is a half length portrait of. Ceated in the 'Sfumato' style it is a portrait of Italian noblewoman Lisa Gherardini. Measuring 31x21 inch, the portrait on a poplar wood panel is considered a masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance, it has been described as "the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world". No adjective is enough to praise this wonderful creation of Leonardo da Vinci. The painting's novel qualities include the subject's enigmatic expression, the monumentality of the

composition, the subtle modelling of forms, and the atmospheric illusionism.

Antonio Conova's marble sculpture '**Psyche Revived by Cupid Kiss**' is based on the story 'Cupid and Psyche' from Lucius Apulias' novel 'The Golden Ass'. The sculpture was first unveiled by Colonel John Campbell in 1787. This sculpture is considered as one of the best works of art of the neoclassical era. It depicts an emotional moment of fictional lover characters. Shortly after waking up, Psyche fell in love with Cupid. In this unearthly sculpture of the artist, the difference between his skin and the surrounding condition can be understood by texture of the carved cloth worn by Psyche. The success of great works of art is here. The sculpture is 61 inches high, 6 inches long and 40 inches wide.

Aphrodite of Milos, also known as Venus the Milo, is an ancient Greek sculpture of Hellenistic period. Initially it was thought to be the creation of the sculptor Praxtelis; An inscription later reveals that it was a work of art by Alexandros of Antioch, dated 130–100 BC. The statue is believed to be of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. It is a 6-foot-8-inch-tall marble sculpture, slightly larger than a living human figure in size. At the time of discovery, part of one arm of the statue and the original pillar were lost. The statue was discovered on the island of Milos in Greece, hence the name of the statue.

Jacques Louis David's 'Coronation of Napoleon' depicts Napoleon's coronation. David did the work in oil-paint. It started on December 21, 1805 and ended in January 1808 for a salary of twenty-four

thousand Francs. His student George Ruget helped him in this task. The painting remained in David's custody until 1819, when it was transferred to the royal gallery. Later, in 1838, he visited the Royal Museum of Versailles and in 1889 it was housed in the Louvre Museum. Since then, this painting measuring 20 feet 4 inches x 32 feet 1 inch, is in the Louvre Museum. David was allowed to watch the coronation ceremony. All the people present at the event came to David's workshop and posed, not just Napoleon. In 1798, Napoleon gave David a "sitting" once. Pope Pius VII came to give a 'sitting' and blessed David. When Napoleon came to see the artist, he greeted him, although David had to change the image many times because of Napoleon's whimsy. In neo-classical thought, the composition of the image revolves around many axes,



"Coronation"

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although Napoleon is the main attraction.

The French neoclassical artist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' oil painting 'Valpicon Bedar', painted in 1808, has been in the Louvre since 1879. This is a natural nude painting in terms of aesthetics which is fairly depicts sublime beauty.

Art is a creative process. Creativity cannot be taught to anyone but must be mastered through realization, perception and practice. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to observe different works of art. The more artworks are cultivated, researched and comprehended, the better it is. From that angle, the Louvre Museum is a treasure house as innumerable of world's greatest artworks are on display for the connoisseurs and students alike, to educate and enlighten themselves. A lot of knowledge about color scheme, composition, different thoughts and imaginations, techniques, expressions and their application can be learned from the

exhibits. I wish that our art college students must visit the Louvre Museum to enrich themselves. Therefore my humble request to the government and the institutional authorities is to make some arrangements for educational trips to Italy and France, the cradle of art, for those who are studying art, at least for 7 days at the postgraduate level.

Art stimulates the human mind and with it also enhances aesthetics and intensify creativity. The artist revolves around the cultured atmosphere of creation, inspiring him to transform mundane to ethereal. Art is truth, truth is art - as has been pronounced through the phrase *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. The works of masters that are in the Louvre Museum, their beauty and majesty transcend us to a higher level of understanding. May the aesthetics of the Louvre illuminate our mind and enrich our lives, bring joy happiness and peace.



"The Valpicon Bather-Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres- 1808 "



"Mona Lisa"