**Press Release**

**Art Meets Science:**

**Louvre Abu Dhabi Joins J. Paul Getty Museum in Investigating Ancient Panel Paintings**

*In partnership with NYU Abu Dhabi, the museum participates in the global APPEAR Project as part of its expanding research programmes*



***Funerary portrait of a man with a cup***

Antinopolis (?), Egypt, ca. 225 – 250 CE, 42.7 x 23 x 0.9 cm; wax paint on wood, Louvre Abu Dhabi

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**Abu Dhabi, 12 August 2020**: Louvre Abu Dhabi announced its participation in a global research project with the J. Paul Getty Museum and 47 other institutions to investigate Romano-Egyptian funerary portraits, considered to be some of the most spectacular artworks from the ancient world.

Launched in 2013 by the Getty Museum’s Department of Antiquities Conservation, the APPEAR (Ancient Panel Paintings: Examination, Analysis and Research) project aims to analyse and share the secrets of these funerary portraits, found in the collections of several major international museums. The objective of APPEAR is to expand the knowledge and critical understanding of the methods and materials used to create these paintings.

Louvre Abu Dhabi joined the APPEAR project in 2019 to analyse the artwork *Funerary Portrait of a Man with a Cup* (225–50 CE), a prime example of a Romano-Egyptian funerary portrait in the museum’s collection. Created as portraits of the deceased, these artefacts meld artistic methods and styles of the Greco-Roman period with the 2,000-year old Egyptian funerary tradition.

The project is led by a team of researchers and scientists from Louvre Abu Dhabi with the support of NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD).

“APPEAR is one of Louvre Abu Dhabi’s most significant collaborations to date. Through this project, we seek to encourage scholarly studies, as well as contribute to international academic research,” said Dr. Souraya Noujaim, Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management Director at Louvre Abu Dhabi. “It is an exciting and inspiring opportunity for the UAE to be a part of this global initiative of exchanging discoveries on some of the world’s most renowned antique artefacts. As one of many research and conservation projects we are working on, APPEARspeaks to the museum’s larger mission to be a platform for experimentation, and to offer significant academic insights into the artworks that have defined humanity.”

APPEAR follows several scientific processes. At Louvre Abu Dhabi for instance an *X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF)* spectrometer has been used to detect and identify most of the chemical elements that lie on the painting’s surface[[1]](#footnote-1). This data is then analysed to discover new information on funerary portraits, including how they were made, where they originated and who might have created them. The findings also shed light on the journey of the *Funerary Portrait of a Man with a Cup* throughout time by revealing sections that may have been painted over or restored as the artwork was handed down.

Louvre Abu Dhabi is in the process of building its first laboratory of material analysis on artefacts. For APPEAR, the museum’s scientists, Elsa Bourguignon and Pablo Londero, collaborated with colleagues from NYUAD, Francesco Arneodo, Professor of Physics, and co-Director of the NYUAD Dhakira Center for Heritage Studies, Adriano di Giovanni, Research Scientist, and Rodrigo Torres Saavedra, Research Assistant. These scientists assisted with conducting the research and analysis for APPEAR using NYUAD’s portable *XRF* spectrometer.

“NYU Abu Dhabi is a liberal arts college and a research institution, where we highly value interdisciplinarity. Our application of techniques common in atomic and molecular physics to answer questions in the cultural heritage domain is a perfect example of what we love to do,” said Arneodo. “The collaboration with Louvre Abu Dhabi on the APPEAR project is a wonderful opportunity and an example of how universities and museums can work together to answer questions and open opportunities for researchers and students.”

Following the completion of the analysis of *Funerary Portrait of a Man with a Cup*, the results will be added to the APPEAR online database that is made available to other scientists and researchers. The first results of the findings will be published at the end of 2020.

In addition to the APPEAR project, Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Research and Development department has recently launched several other research and conservation initiatives, elevating the museum’s academic contributions to the field of art history. These projects include programmes on medieval manuscripts and restorations of *The Hunts of Maximillian* tapestry and the Turkish 16th–17th century rider and horse armour, which is on view as part of the museum’s recent exhibition, *Furusiyya: The Art of Chivalry between East and West*.

Social sciences as well as translation studies in the context of museums are also a part of Louvre Abu Dhabi’s research programmes, developed in partnership with a network of UAE universities. Such extensive research projects aim to deepen knowledge of the museum’s collection and improve the process of restoring and preserving the key artefacts that have defined civilisations throughout history.

**APPEAR Participating Institutions**

The APPEAR project participating institutions include Allard Pierson Museum; Amsterdam Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Art Institute of Chicago; Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford; British Museum, London; Brooklyn Museum of Art; Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, CA; Cleveland Museum of Art; Detroit Institute of Arts; The Fitzwilliam, Cambridge, UK; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; The J. Paul Getty Museum/Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles; Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum, Baltimore; Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor, MI; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Louvre Abu Dhabi; Manchester Museum, UK; The Menil Collection, Houston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Michael C. Carlos Museum, Atlanta; Musée du Louvre, Paris; Museo Egizio, Turin; Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece; National Gallery London; National Museum in Warsaw; The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Nicholson Museum, Sydney University Museums; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London; Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley; Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; San Antonio Museum of Art; Santa Barbara Museum of Art; The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow; University of Georgia (Lamar Dodd School of Art), Athens; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia; The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

More information on the project can be found [here](https://www.getty.edu/museum/research/appear_project/).

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**Notes to editors:**

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](http://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 13 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 J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM**

The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum’s mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

**ABOUT NYU ABU DHABI**

NYU Abu Dhabi is the first comprehensive liberal arts and science campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. NYU Abu Dhabi has integrated a highly-selective liberal arts, engineering and science curriculum with a world center for advanced research and scholarship enabling its students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world and advance cooperation and progress on humanity’s shared challenges. NYU Abu Dhabi’s high-achieving students have come from more than 115 nations and speak over 115 languages. Together, NYU's campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global university, giving faculty and students opportunities to experience varied learning environments and immersion in other cultures at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.

**ABOUT MUSÉE DU LOUVRE**

The Louvre in Paris opened in 1793, during the French Revolution, and from the very beginning was intended to provide inspiration for contemporary art. Courbet, Picasso, Dalí and so many others came to its hallowed halls to admire the old masters, copy them, immerse themselves in masterpieces and improve and fuel their own art. As an ancient royal residence, the Louvre is inextricably linked to eight centuries of French history. As a universal museum, its collections, among the best in the world, span many millennia and miles, from the Americas to Asia. Over 38,000 artworks are grouped into eight curatorial departments, including universally admired works such as the Mona Lisa, the Winged Victory of Samothrace and the Venus de Milo. With 9.6 million guests in 2019, the Louvre is the most visited museum in the world.

**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 conserves and promotes the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi emirate and leverages them in the development of a world-class, sustainable destination of distinction, which enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike. The organisation manages the emirate’s tourism sector and markets the destination internationally through a wide range of activities aimed at attracting visitors and investment. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including Zayed National Museum, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, and Louvre Abu Dhabi. The Department supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the emirate’s heritage. A key role is to create synergy in the destination’s development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.

1. Only elements heavier than silicon or sodium are detected using this technique and instrumentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)