

WON
DER
LAB



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CHINA, BEIJING

PRESS KIT

*** W O N D E R**

**Speaks of amazement,
enchantment, enjoyment,
surprise, fascination and the
unexpected.**

*** L A B**

**Speaks of explorations, quests,
experiments, innovations and
the energy of a laboratory.**

W O N D E R L A B

**is the laboratory of beauty and
wonderment.**

15 EXCEPTIONAL MASTER ARTISANS

**Serge AMORUSO
Emmanuel BARROIS
Christian BONNET
Fanny BOUCHER
Roland DARASPE
Lison DE CAUNES
Gérard DESQUAND
Jean GIREL
Michel HEURTAULT
Nathanaël LE BERRE
Sylvain LE GUEN
Laurent NOGUES
François-Xavier RICHARD
Nelly SAUNIER
Pietro SEMINELLI**

WONDER LAB

WONDER LAB, the first museum exhibition dedicated to French Master Artisans, is presented at the National Museum of China.

Bringing together 15 of the most talented French artistic craftsmen and women, the WONDER LAB exhibition offers a fresh perspective on contemporary creation.

From silversmithery to ceramics, artistry with feathers, tortoiseshell glass, leather, straw, paper and textile, the excellence and diversity of French fine crafts are put on view outside of France for the first time.

The curator of the exhibition H  l  ne Kelmachter, a specialist of contemporary art, has chosen to highlight creators with unique personalities, who combine tradition with innovation.

Resolutely contemporary, the WONDER LAB exhibition stems from the confluence of 15 Master Artisans who have been recognised for their level of excellence. It embarks visitors on an unparalleled aesthetic journey that intersects expertise, mediums, life journeys, and men and women who are determined to expand, reinvent and transmit their skills, to combine vocation with tradition and innovation.

Japan was the first stop for the WONDER LAB exhibition, at the Tokyo National Museum in 2017.

Exhibition initiated by: Ga  lle Dupr  , HEART & crafts

Curated by: H  l  ne Kelmachter

Scenography: Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture

From 12 January to 17 March 2019, the exhibition will be presented at the National Museum of China in Beijing, in partnership with the National Museum of China and Beijing Sen Ying Culture Media Co., Ltd, and with the support of the French Ministry of Culture, the French Embassy in China, INMA (Institut Fran  ais des M  tiers d'Art), and Institut Fran  ais.



Vase in tortoiseshell and gold by Christian Bonnet and Roland Daraspe

EXHIBITION

Whether they are raising volumes from a plane, transmuting feathers into blossoming flowers or capturing a galaxy in the bottom of a ceramic bowl; whether they are coppersmiths or feather-artists, tortoiseshell artisans, glass-makers or leatherworkers, these master craftsmen and women transcend their medium, create emotions and enchant the world.

Whether they consider themselves artists or artisans, they practice an art that they have mastered to perfection, shattering the notion of categories, boundaries and genres. Always exploring their medium further, questioning what it means to 'create', producing unique and singular objects that convey beauty, these men and women are the grantees of knowledge that they have the responsibility to develop and the noble duty to transmit.

Custodians of an intangible heritage and of ancient – often endangered – techniques, they are above all creators of their time who are tirelessly perfecting their craft, reinventing tools, travelling uncharted territories, revealing that techniques are nothing without creativity, skills are nothing without perfect knowledge of the medium, purpose is nothing without intuition, tradition without innovation, memory without renewal, excellence without passion, perfection without audacity.

Each has embarked on a unique human and artistic journey, on an endless quest for beauty, enhancing raw materials provided by nature. With the ambition of revealing a field of contemporary creation that engages with art and design, all the while affirming its singularity, the exhibition intersects craftsmanship, mediums, life journeys and creators who combine vocation with tradition and innovation.

HÉLÈNE KELMACHER



Nelly Saunier, *Butinage*, feather sculpture 2017

DIALOGUE

An encounter with exceptional know-hows, the WONDER LAB exhibition brings together the works of contemporary master artisans who have chosen to push further the exploration of their medium in order to produce unique and extraordinary objects that elicit emotion.

Custodians of an intangible heritage and of – often endangered – ancestral skills and techniques that they have the responsibility to push forward and the noble duty to transmit, they are foremost the creators of their time, who combine techniques with creativity, skills with perfect knowledge of their medium, tradition with innovation, memory with renewal, perfection with audacity. They are narrating the story of a unique human and artistic journey, an endless quest for beauty, enhancing raw materials provided by nature.

Finding an echo from one craft to another, from lacquer to tortoiseshell work, from engraving on wood to embossing, and many other disciplines, the exhibition correlates the works French master artisans – distinguished for their level of excellence, notably through the title of Master of Art created in 1994 by the Ministry of Culture –, and the works of Chinese master artisans, chosen especially by Florence Zhu, Director of the Centre of Cultural Industry at the National Museum of China.

This Franco-Chinese dialogue will carry through as the exhibition continues its travels, enriching itself with numerous artistic encounters and finding in each city a new singularity.

China was already an inspiration for some of the fifteen French artists presented here – indeed for some, China was even the source of their artistic vocation. There is no doubt that the country will now resonate in each and every one of them, feeding their imagination, expanding their curiosity, opening new avenues, making appearances in their works, and opening new collaboration prospects for years to come.

A tribute to the talent of our French and Chinese national living treasures, the WONDER LAB exhibition celebrates their skills and creativity, highlighting the way these master artisans are redefining their art and today's world, while inventing the practices of tomorrow.



Work by Sylvain Le Guen in dialogue with a work by Chinese fan-maker Wang Jian

SCENOGRAPHY

WONDER ROOMS. Drawn on a bright red backdrop, the scenography of this new exhibition takes us into the heart of an enthralling dialogue between cultures. An unprecedented spatial discovery of the skills and artistry of these French and Chinese master artisans.

We walk amongst the spatial geometry of the Forbidden City, traces of which can be found in the architectural sketch of the exhibition. The memory of the heart of the Chinese capital beats in the depths of the National Museum of China. Here, the exhibition spaces follow each other in a controlled tempo, foreshadowed by a perspective of porticos. We discover more than twenty intimate rooms, in graduating hues of red. From bright red to Bordeaux red, each space tells the story of the works exhibited there. Earth, nature, sky, sea, works in bronze, metal, tortoiseshell, leather, are burrowed in the wall partitions, where white sculpted notches welcome each creation. In their rimless cases, a vase, icons, a feather dragon appear as though they are suspended in a heavenly space. They come to us from another realm, thanks to the ancestral Chinese culture.

The design of this scenography constantly celebrates a profound and obsessive relationship to materials. Each creation finds its individuality in a bespoke frame. By a play on light and shadows, our time here stands still, light transforms into materials and our conscience becomes a gateway to our dreamworld.

Unavoidably, with this work on space, we enter into the workshop of the imaginary.

LINA GHOTMEH

Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture (LG—A) is an international and multidisciplinary agency comprising of a multicultural team of architects, designers and researchers. Based in Paris, it was founded by architect Lina Ghotmeh, who is renowned internationally for emblematic projects such as the environmental tower made entirely of wood, 'Réalimenter Masséna', winner of the Reinvent Paris Prize, or the National Museum of Estonia, winner of the 2016 AFEX Grand Prize and nominated for the 2017 Mies Van Der Rohe Prize.

Her creations, both innovative and poetic, reveal a sensitive and environmental approach to architecture. The projects undertaken by LG—A, which are a mix of urban conception and object creation, express a quest for a sustainable and ecological future. These unrelenting narratives lead to continual dialogues; their aesthetic born from a 'circular economy' and a close relationship with nature.

Lina Ghotmeh was named by 'The European Architects Review' as one of ten most visionary architects of the decade. Involved in teaching architecture around the world, she regularly gives conferences and seminars in France and abroad.

Exhibition design and Art direction:

Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture, Paris

Architect: Lina Ghotmeh

Project Leader: Caterina Cicognan ; **Team:** Federico Mannino, Zoe Zaoui, Augusto Garcia, Makoto Mizotani

Graphic design for texts: Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture

Lighting: Abraxas, Paris

Fanny Boucher, *Memoriam*, 2018



François-Xavier Richard, *Orbi/folds*, 2017



Laurent Nogues, *Bouclier*, 2018

15 EXCEPTIONAL CRAFTSPEOPLE 15 DIFFERENT CRAFTS

The WONDER LAB exhibition offers a fresh perspective on contemporary creation and reveals the excellence and diversity of French fine crafts.

The public will have the opportunity to meet the creators of today, who, by constantly experimenting and pushing the boundaries of their craft, are questioning and enchanting the world.

Selection criteria for the fifteen French creators participating in the WONDER LAB exhibition:

- Mastery and excellence in an artistic craft
- Capacity to innovate (develop new skills and techniques, tools, processes; work outside the usual limits of their crafts etc.)
- Dedication of the artists to evolve, reinvent and entrench their crafts for the future

Serge AMORUSO

LEATHER WORKER

A leather worker, Serge Amoruso first worked at Hermès, creating high-end leather goods. In 1995, he opened his own atelier in Paris, where he creates unique hand-sewn custom-made objects. He uses the most unexpected leathers – galuchat, shark, iguana or hippopotamus skin–, which he dyes in colours that go from the most shimmering to the subtlest tones. On his quest for innovation, experimenting with new combinations, he uses titanium or carbon fire, or adds mammoth ivory or meteorite fragments to beautify a clasp. ‘The most important feature of an object is that emotion takes precedence over everything else’ – this is Amoruso’s credo for each of his creations, whether it is small leather goods or the most ambitious compositions.



Emmanuel BARROIS

GLASSMAKER

Glass is for Emmanuel Barrois a way of life, a space for creation, a vocation. He collaborates today with the most renowned international architects, from Kengo Kuma to Frank Gehry. He has worked in China a number of times, notably with Paul Andreu for the Beijing Opera, and other projects are under way with Sou Fujimoto in Hong Kong and Jean Nouvel in Shanghai. For each of these projects, he invents specific conceptual, aesthetic and technical solutions, making each new building truly exceptional. Alongside his work in dialogue with the world of architecture, he continues to research new glass techniques. Combining traditional artisanal techniques and the most advanced industrial techniques, he puts human beings at the centre of everything he does, never erasing the mark of the hand. He shares this notion of a 'contemporary traditional hybrid' with Pritzker-Prize winning architect Wang Shu, who invites traditional Chinese building techniques and aesthetics into contemporary architecture.



Christian BONNET

TORTOISESHELL ARTISAN

Christian Bonnet is one of the last tortoiseshell artisans in France. The successor of a family tradition that spans three generations, he learnt to work this noble and natural material from the age of 14, before taking over as head of Maison Bonnet in 1980. He may be recognised internationally for his bespoke tortoiseshell spectacles, but his art and virtuosity best express themselves through the creation of exceptional objects that reveal the magic of the transparencies and richness of colours that sets tortoiseshell apart. Furthermore, he takes advantage of the organic specificities of this unique material, which presents the surprising characteristic of being able to graft itself. This makes it possible to use very little tortoiseshell for each object, an essential condition of the survival of this craft, which has been regulated by the Washington Convention since 1970, prohibiting the use of protected species such as the loggerhead turtle or hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), which holds the rarest and noblest shell.



Fanny BOUCHER

HÉLIOGRAVEUR

In the atelier Héliog, which she founded in 2000 at the age of 24, Fanny Boucher perpetuates, questions and reinvents the héliogravure technique. She collaborates with the most prominent photographers and contemporary artists from around the world, who, from Yayoi Kusama, Willy Ronis or Zao Wouki, entrust her with the task of interpreting their work and enhancing it. A unique reproduction process, héliogravure results in the transfer of an image – drawing, painting or photography – on a copper plate, using photosensitive gelatine. The copper matrix is then covered in a thick layer of ink, which the engraver wipes off with a cloth, as the plate is put through the hand-turned intaglio press. Alongside this traditional craft, Boucher innovates by working her copper plates as if they were integral works of art, treating héliogravure not as a reproduction process but as a creative process. She opens héliogravure to unprecedented perspectives, ushering it into the world of design, interior decorating and visual arts.



Roland DARASPE

SILVERSMITH

Roland Daraspe had always worked with metal, but it is as an autodidact that he decided to dedicate himself to silverwork at the age of 28. The commissions he receives from collectors, museums and French institutions give him the freedom to push his craft further, developing shapes, experimenting with new techniques, combining metal alloys and coupling silver leaf with snake wood or hard stones. He likes to create facets on the surface, to hammer in delicate impacts or double his pieces with silver-gilt. He lives in the vineyards of Bordeaux – among nature –, which is often an inspiration, influencing the shapes of his objects. He is not only attentive to beauty and craftsmanship, but also to function, designing the shape of his objects according to their use, forging every detail that makes each of his creations an exceptional piece of work. Perpetuating an ancestral knowledge in the profound respect of the tradition of silversmiths in France, he is nonetheless very attached to innovation, whether it be in the creation of new shapes or the alliance of materials.



Lison DE CAUNES

STRAW MARQUETRY

With straw marquetry, Lison de Caunes revived a family passion inherited from her grandfather, the famous decorator André Groult. It is first by restoring ancient pieces – from private collections or museums–, that she learned the skills, the subtlety and precision of this technique. Thereupon, she was able to resurrect a craft commonly used in the decorative arts between the 17th and 19th centuries. Having become one of the rare specialists of straw marquetry, she regularly works in collaboration with famous designers and interior decorators, as well as for different luxury houses. In 2015, she launched her own furniture line in straw marquetry, offering 21st Century creations that reinvent this ancient French tradition.



Gérard DESQUAND

HERALDIC ENGRAVER

A son and grandson of engravers, Gérard Desquand opened his own atelier in 1972, where he first specialised in intaglio engraving and embossing – notably for luxury houses –, before switching to heraldic engraving in 1992. He engraves the infinitely small, inscribes into metal, with precision and minutia, the memory of genealogy, and designs the coats and arms that tell the story of a family. Committed to the preservation of memory and history, Desquand considers himself as a transmitter whose preferred medium is time. He perpetuates, with hollow engraving in metal, skills inherited from the heraldic tradition of the Middle Ages while also exploring the possibilities of imprinting on new mediums, bringing his craft into the realm of artistic creation. Since 2006, he has been creating cylinder-shaped seals, engraved with figurative motifs, which he rolls onto fine sheets of porcelain that retain its delicate imprint. Inspired by the cylinder-seals created during the 4th Century BC in Mesopotamia, these narrative friezes highlight the deep link between the engraved symbol and time.



Jean GIREL

CERAMIST

First starting his career as a painter, Jean Girel decided to dedicate himself to ceramics in 1973 after coming across Chinese stoneware from the end of the Song dynasty (13th Century) at the Guimet Museum in Paris. Since then, he has never stopped trying to share through his ceramics the emotion that he feels in front of a landscape. Considered today as the greatest living French ceramist, he was first recognised for his work on celadon. Leading an unrelenting quest to explore the techniques of pottery, he prepares his own pastes, conceives his enamels, and invents new kilns – he has designed about twenty so far. For the past forty years, he has been on a passionate journey, an exceptional human and artistic adventure: to rediscover the technique, which had been lost since the Jian potters of the Song Dynasty, of the Jian ware of the Fujian province – bowls whose outside glaze takes on astounding iridescent hues, while inside, a galaxy of round and oval patterns evokes ‘a starry night sparkling in the sky’.



Michel HEURTAULT

CREATOR AND RESTORER OF UMBRELLAS AND PARASOLS

Michel Heurtault was first a costume designer, creating costumes, corsets and parasols for the cinema, the theatre and the biggest couturiers. A passionate collector of umbrellas and parasols – there are more than 2000 in his collection –, he has an encyclopaedic knowledge not only of the object and its history but also of its styles, fashions, shapes and materials, which allows him to restore or recreate ancient pieces with materials from their original period, or to bring back into fashion forgotten styles. In 2008, he opened an atelier in Paris, where he creates contemporary umbrellas and parasols, and where every piece is crafted in a desire for perfection that associates tradition and modernity. In a constant quest for beauty and harmony, he designs each umbrella like an object of the highest order, a unique piece that will withstand the test of time. The only craftsman in France to create bespoke umbrellas and parasols, whether it is for haute-couture or an international clientele, he takes his creations into the most surprising directions, experimenting with materials.



Nathanaël LE BERRE

FREEHAND METAL WORKER

After studying stained glass, Nathanaël Le Berre chose to dedicate himself to metal, and in particular to the ancient technique of freehand metalwork, which creates volumes from a sheet of steel, tin, brass or copper. In 2004, he set up his own workshop and started to expand his repertoire of shapes and to widen his range of patinas. Defining himself as a sculptor who uses the traditional and artisanal techniques of metalwork, Nathanaël Le Berre combines the discipline of the craft with freedom of expression, taking his creations into new directions, – between sculpture and decorative arts. From the physical work that goes into hammering a metal sheet, he is able to create emotions. From the tension of volumes, the way they bend and unbend, the circulation of energy through vacuums and solids, emerges a sensation of serenity, infusing each piece with an invitation to meditate on nature, humanity, metal and time – all of which feed his creative process.



Sylvain LE GUEN

FAN-MAKER

Sylvain Le Guen created his first fan when he was ten, before learning all the different fine crafts that come into the creation of this object – from marquetry to embroidery and feather-artistry. Passionate about the history and symbolism of the fan, he dedicated himself to restoring ancient pieces, furthering his knowledge of the styles and fabrication techniques. In his atelier, he alternates between the restoration of ancient fans, commissions for collectors or the cinema and collaborations with artists and creators, all the while developing his personal creations. Experimenting with materials, from the most traditional to the most contemporary, he undertakes innovative and unexpected combinations, whether it is for the the mount, for which he uses wood, bone, ebony, mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell or metals, or for the leaf, for which he uses weaving, silk, feathers, paper, leather or snake skin. He invents new shapes, imagines surprising volumes that allow delicate pop-up flowers to appear in the folds of a fan or reveal origami designs.



Laurent NOGUES

EMBOSSER PRINTER

Laurent Nogues chose to embark on the path set by his father, a printer, while fostering his own explorations on the art of embossing, paper inlaying and hot stamping. In 1994, he founded the atelier Créanog. To meet the expectations of luxury houses, who expect nothing less than perfection and creativity, he is always developing new ways of working with paper, exploring new technical and aesthetic avenues. A true laboratory, Créanog is a place where innovation and technical revolutions are at the service of excellence. Enabling creations that are more audacious every time, these mechanical inventions and technological advances complement perfectly the irreplaceable work of the hand, which gives the object its exceptional singularity. Nogues delights in exploring the most sophisticated or contemporary graphic scripts, elaborating complex products to question the possibilities of his craft and imagine new developments.



François-Xavier RICHARD

HAND-BLOCK WALLPAPER CREATOR

A painter, sculptor and engraver, François-Xavier Richard decided in 1997 to focus on hand-block wallpaper printing, an 18th Century tradition which had been completely abandoned since the mid 20th Century. In 1999, at the age of 27, he founded the Atelier d'Offard, an artisanal manufacturing company specialised in the restoration of ancient wallpapers for the Monuments Historiques (Historical Buildings society), and the creation of bespoke wallpapers for luxury houses, designers, decorators and artists. In a spirit of experimentation and innovation, he combines traditional processes with new technology – using natural pigments and glue, printing paper one colour at a time, applying motifs on blocks that are passed through hand-operated presses, while at the same using computers to print the blocks digitally or even inventing specific tools for exceptional orders. A heritage to reinvent, wallpaper is also for Richard a stage on which to create and invent, either by designing new motifs for his own collection, or by collaborating with contemporary artists.



Nelly SAUNIER

FEATHER ARTIST

Fascinated by nature and birds since her childhood, Nelly Saunier decided to become a feather artist at the age of 14. She is one of the last people to hold this ancient knowledge, which in France, dates back to the 13th Century. Using her intimate knowledge of feathers, she is able to give life to them, to express emotion through them. In accordance with international regulations and to ensure the protection of species, she uses ancient stocks bought from antique dealers and feather workers, retrieves the moult of rare birds or beautifies the feathers of farmyard birds. Enhancing the beauty of this ethereal and delicate material, with its sumptuous and shimmering colours, she has lent her talent to couturiers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier and Chanel. Today, with great care and precision, she creates pieces for fine jewellery and luxury watchmaking, but it is probably through her personal creations that her art and rich poetic world best expresses itself. Transforming feathers into poetic trompe-l'oeil illusions, she beautifies her medium and enchants the world.



Pietro SEMINELLI

MASTER OF PLEATS

A cabinet maker and an interior designer by training, Pietro Seminelli chose to dedicate himself to the art of pleating, pioneering a method that is today used in haute couture, interior design and the arts. After setting up ateliers in Paris and Normandy, in 2013 he opened an office in New York to fulfil the numerous orders commissioned from the other side of the Atlantic. His creations have caught the eyes of the biggest architects and couturiers, from Peter Marino to Yohji Yamamoto. Unique pieces that are both the result of precise calculations and a poetic vision, his 'pleated sculptures' reveal the magic, sophistication, dramatic quality and diversity of his art. An inventor of shapes, Seminelli is always exploring, whether it is the infinite possibilities of the sequencing of pleats, the creation of new textiles, or ways to apply pleating techniques to different mediums, from paper to ceramics. Fascinated by the Far East, he likes to surround himself with Chinese objects or to experiment with miao fabrics from Guizhou province.



Works of Gérard Desquand, Roland Daraspe and Jean Girel



Works of Lison de Caunes, Michel Heurtault and Serge Amoruso

HEART & crafts

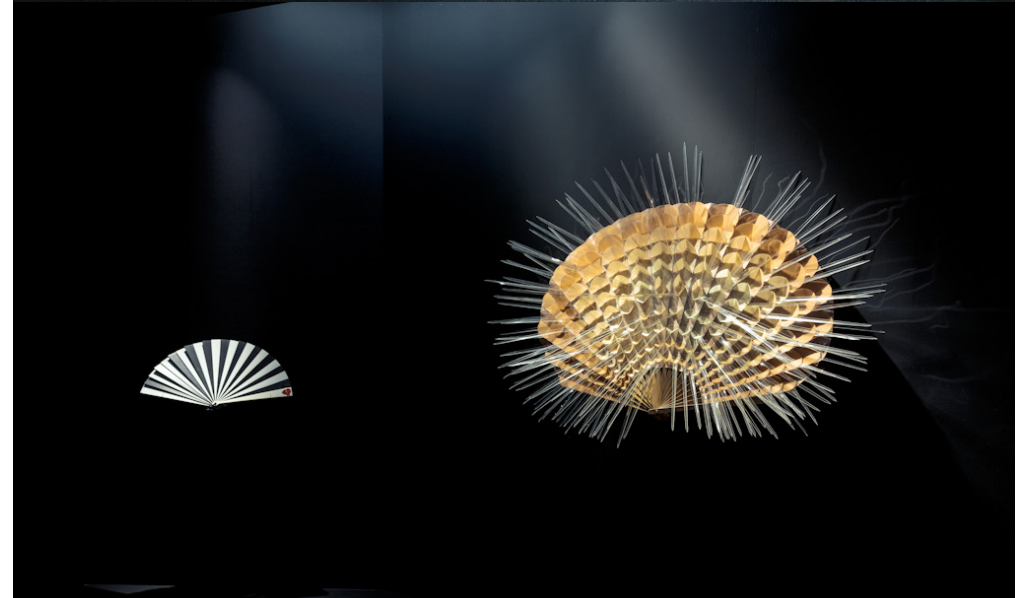
HEART & crafts was created in 2012 to promote the work of Master Artisans in France and abroad through unique projects and prestigious encounters.

By placing human beings at the centre of its mission, HEART & crafts champions more than know-hows, it highlights the passion, talent and commitment of men and women with singular and ground-breaking journeys, the diversity and scope of their expertise, the mastery of ancestral skills and techniques that question and reinvent the world. Our mission is:

- To contribute to the prestige of France and the promotion of French fine crafts abroad
- To foster an inter-cultural dialogue on the common issues facing the preservation of know-hows and the future of the fine craft sector
- To build public awareness about these know-hows, show their high skill level, but also the human aspect, the perfect relationship between mind and artistry
- To foster cultural exchanges between French and international Master Artisans

<http://heartandcrafts.com>

Works of Pietro Seminelli at the National Museum of Tokyo



Works of Sylvain Le Guen at the National Museum of Tokyo

National Museum of China

The second most visited museum after the Louvre, with more than 8 million visitors in 2017, the National Museum of China in Beijing is also the largest museum in the world.

Created in 2003 from the merging of the National Museum of Chinese History and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution, it is considered as one of the most striking buildings in Beijing.

On the east side of Tien'anmen square, the museum spans 192,000m² of exhibition space spread out on three floors. More than one million objects – decorative arts, fine crafts, documents and artworks retrace the country's history from the 1.7 million year-old Man of Yuanmou, to today.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PRESS VIEWING: 11 JANUARY 2019

1:30pm: press conference

2:35pm-3:45pm: exhibition visit

ACCESS

Please note: ID is mandatory for entry

16 Avenue Chang'An Est
Dong Cheng District
Beijing

(On the eastern side of Tien-an-men square)

Subway: Tian-an-men (Line 1) or Qian men (Line 2)

Bus: Tian-an-men Dong or Qian men stops

OPENING HOURS

9-5pm (last entry 4:30pm)

Closed on Mondays and public holidays

More information: <http://fr.chnmuseum.cn>

PARTNERS

Exhibition co-organised by:

The National Museum of China
HEART & crafts



With the support of:

the French Ministry of Culture
the French Embassy in China
INMA (Institut des Métiers d'Art)
Institut Français



And Beijing Sen Ying Culture Media Co., Ltd



Works of Jean Girel at the National Museum of Tokyo



Works of Michel Heurtault at the National Museum of Tokyo

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PHOTOS for press use:

<http://bit.ly/WONDERLABphotos>

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PHOTOS CREDITS

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L'infini, Nathanaël Le Berre

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Vase by Christian Bonnet and Roland Daraspe

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Fan, Sylvain Le Guen

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Tulip glasses, Roland Daraspe

Bowls, Jean Girel

Chest of drawers, Lison de Caunes

Parasol, Michel Heurtault

Keops bags, Serge Amoruso

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Pietro Seminelli at the National Museum of Tokyo

Sylvain Le Guen at the National Museum of Tokyo

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National Museum of China © Dong Qing

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Jean Girel at the National Museum of Tokyo

Michel Heurtault at the National Museum of Tokyo

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