Welcome to The Louvre and the Masterpiece



Giuseppe Castiglione, *The Salon Carré at the Louvre*, about 1861, Musée du Louvre

Photo: © Jean Shormans / Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

When Louis XIV moved his court from Paris to Versailles in 1672, the old Louvre palace became a place to display the royal collections. Members of the Royal Academy were assigned apartments in the Louvre, where they could study the work of great masters of the past. During the French Revolution (1789–99), the National Assembly decided the Louvre would become a public museum, displaying the nation's masterpieces for all. It opened in 1793 and has been one of the world's great museum's ever since.

The buildings and collections of the Louvre continue to grow, attracting over eight million people each year. While "Louvre" and "masterpiece" may seem synonymous, this exhibition illustrates how the definition of "masterpiece" has changed over time. The large panels in each gallery introduce aspects of the masterpiece debate—issues ever-present for museums and visitors.