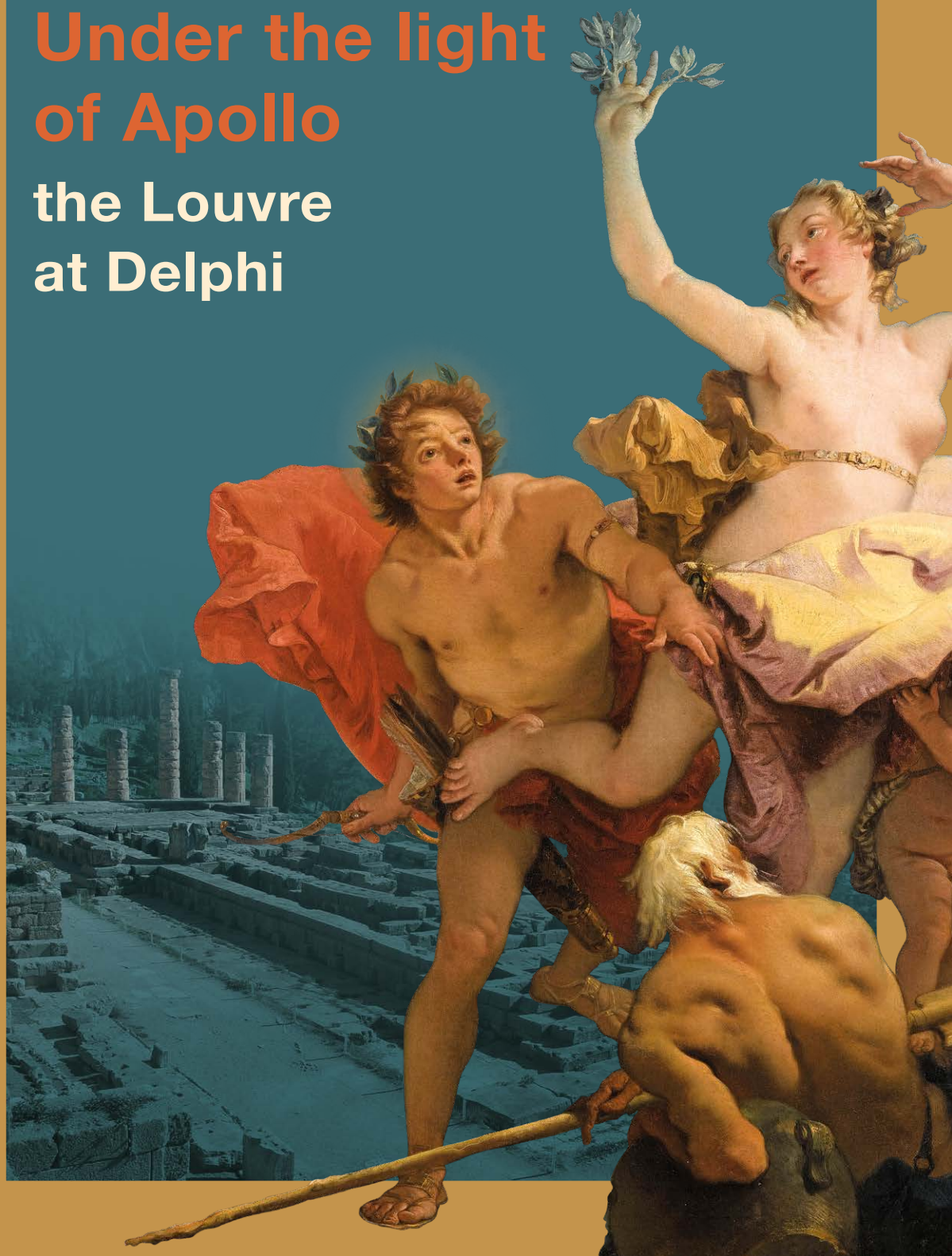


**Under the light
of Apollo**
the Louvre
at Delphi



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Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Apollo and Daphne. Oil on canvas. 1741. Musée du Louvre.

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HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Ministry of Culture and Sports

General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage

Direction of Archaeological Museums, Exhibitions and Educational Programs

Ephorate of Antiquities of Phocis



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Under the light of Apollo

the Louvre at Delphi

21/9/2021 - 31/1/2022

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF DELPHI



Introduction

The exhibition “Under the Light of Apollo: the Louvre at Delphi” is a scientific collaboration of the Louvre Museum, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Phocis and the Directorate of Museums of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.

The panhellenic sanctuary of Pythian Apollo at Delphi, where the renowned Oracle operated from the 8th century BC to the late 4th century AD, was undoubtedly a point of reference not only in ancient times, but also during post-Renaissance and Modern times, when classical antiquity was re-discovered by Europe and became the subject of systematic study, as well as a source of inspiration for the Arts, Science and Letters.

The exhibition includes twenty-eight

Louvre masterpieces, dating from the 14th century BC to the 19th century AD, which converse with exhibits from the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Delphi in an original dialogue. The aim of this approach is a communion between present-day visitors to the oracle and a contemporary reading of issues related to the Delphic archaeology and the hypostasis of Pythian Apollo, who was worshipped in ancient Greece in a most spiritual and humanistic manner.

The following sections of the exhibition provide new insight into the significance of Delphi and an opportunity to personally reflect on the vital role of the “Apollonian light” in shaping the ancient past, today’s present and, even more so, the uncertain future. The exhibition is part of the celebrations for the bicentennial of the Greek Revolution of 1821.



◀ 1

Odilon Redon. The *Chariot of Apollo*, after the ceiling painted by Eugène Delacroix in the Louvre. 1868. Musée du Louvre / Musée National Eugène-Delacroix.

Links with the East

The Delphic oracle was already highly renowned during the 8th century BC, as manifested by the Homeric epics and the artefacts that have come to light, most of which were offerings by Greeks and foreigners. One characteristic example are the votive offerings of eastern origin or those which were appropriations of eastern prototypes.

The “Cypro-Phoenician” phiale of Delphi is part of a larger group of vessels that were transported during that period from the Near East as far as Etruria, and reveal the frequent commercial and cultural exchanges taking place throughout the Mediterranean basin. Made of precious materials, such as copper and silver, they were relief-decorated with elaborate and varied representations: hunting and battle scenes, Egyptian deities, animals (bulls, lions, horses, birds, cows), griffins and, on many occasions, sphinxes.

In Egyptian art, the sphinx with a male head and the body of a lion was a common theme, symbolizing the pharaohs. On the contrary, in the Near East and Cyprus, sphinxes were winged creatures with a female head, similar to those later depicted by ancient Greek artists.



3 ► Ivory furniture plaque: egyptianizing sphinx. From Arslan Tash (now Syria). 8th century BC. Musée du Louvre.



▲2 Bronze cypro-phoenician phiale, depicting a siege (detail). End of the 8th c. BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.



▲4 Phiale made of electrum, decorated with mythological battles and sphinxes. Idalion (Cyprus). 750-600 BC. Musée du Louvre.

Delphic theology - *Gnothi Seauton* (Know Thyself)

The demonic Sphinx, a monster with the head of a woman, the body of a lion and outstretched wings, was a loan from the East to ancient Greek art and a highly popular image in ancient Greece. It is connected to funerary monuments and votive offerings, such as the colossal statue of the Sphinx of Delphi, offered by the Naxians in the 6th century BC. This was the monster that Oedipus had to face upon his return from the Delphic oracle, when trying to escape from what the gods had decided upon. By solving the riddle that the Sphinx presented to each traveller, he became the new king of Thebes and married his mother Jocasta, thus unknowingly committing the sin of incest.

The tragic end of Oedipus, when the truth was revealed, served as the ultimate lesson of *Gnothi Seauton*, which was the cornerstone of Delphic theology. It means that all humans should live a life of virtue, knowing that their fate has been predetermined by the gods; this is something that even Socrates, the wisest of men according to Pythian Apollo, admitted in Plato's *Apology*, just before meeting with his own end.



▲5
Red-figure stamnos: Oedipus and the sphinx. Attributed to the Menelaus Painter. Circa 440 BC. Musée du Louvre.



▲6
The Sphinx, votive offering of the citizens of Naxos to Delphi. Circa 500 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

The power of the prophecies

The dispute between Heracles and Apollo for the Delphic tripod was a very popular illustrated theme in ancient times, a fact that underlines the gravity of the Delphic oracle and its prophecies.

In fact, Apollo is recognized as the most important oracular god, who responded to the inner need of humans to know their future and make the right decisions. At Delphi, consultations took place once a month in the temple's adyton, where the god's will was expressed through the inarticulate cries of Pythia, which the priests then interpreted and most probably put into verse.

Six hundred and fifteen prophecies have been saved in literary sources and on a very limited number of inscriptions. They were in answer to various questions of a military, religious, state-related or personal nature, such as forming a family, winning at the games etc. The interpretation of these prophecies (oracles) was always ambiguous, which meant that they could

be interpreted by the person asking the question; this is why Apollo was also known as *Loxias*, which meant oblique or ambiguous.



▲7

Red-figure stamnos: the struggle over the Delphic tripod between Apollo and Hercules. Attributed to the Siren Painter. Circa 480 BC.



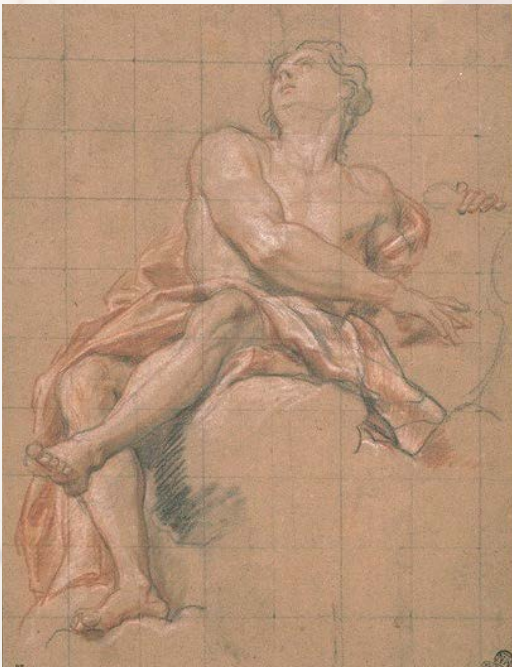
▲8

The east pediment of the Siphnian Treasury in Delphi. The struggle over the Delphic tripod between Apollo and Hercules. Circa 550 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

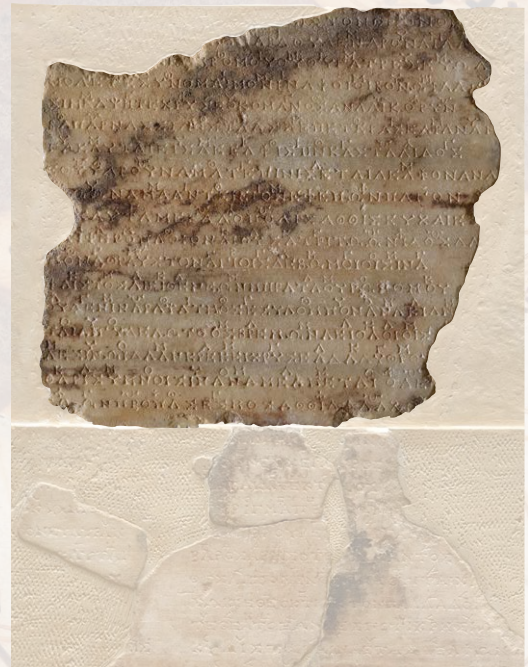
Apollo Mousagetes

In ancient Greek mythology, Apollo is presented as the patron of musical creation, poetry and the arts, a representative of moderation and harmony. According to Hesiod, singers and guitarists originated from Apollo himself, just like kings did from Zeus. Apollo accompanied the song and dance of the Muses with his lyre, which is why he was called *Mousagetes* (Leader of the Muses). It is also why Apollo is often depicted as a *Kitharoidos* holding his lyre with seven strings, both in the art of ancient Greece and western Europe.

Delphi was inextricably tied to music. According to the tradition, when Apollo returned from the north in spring, he was serenaded by the song of the cicadas, nightingales and swallows, and nature was appeased. Very important musical contests also took place at the sanctuary; evidence of those games consist the inscribed verses of two hymns to Apollo from the Athenian Treasury, considered to be the oldest surviving “musical compositions” of classical antiquity, dating back to the 2nd century BC.



▲9
Antoine Coypel. Apollo holding a lyre. 17th-18th century. Musée du Louvre.



▲10
Marble inscription, with hymns dedicated to Apollo. Circa 128 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

Victories (*Nikes*) for Apollo

In antiquity, the winged goddess Nike was considered to be the one who expressed the will of the gods: she announced, rewarded and glorified the victors. We often encounter the figure of Nike in the plastic arts, pottery, coroplasty and goldsmithing. The *Nikes* found at the sanctuary of Delphi come from public buildings, where they were used as symbols of victory in literal or metaphorical battlefields.

The topic of the founding myth behind

the Delphi oracle was the slaying of the dragon, namely the victory of Apollo against Python, son of the first goddess of the sanctuary, Gaea. In memory of this victory, panhellenic festivals were held in Apollo's honour, the infamous Pythian Games. Every four years, crowds arrived in Delphi from every corner of the ancient world, since the games constituted an excellent opportunity to interact socially, to practice diplomacy and to exhibit political power. Their focal point were the music and athletic games, which conferred unprecedented fame and glory upon the winners and their cities.



▲ 11

Fragment of a terracotta winged Nike, that decorated the temple of Athena Pronaia in Delphi (*akroterion*). End of the 6th century BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.



12 ►

Red-figured neck-amphora: winged Nike. Attributed to the Berlin Painter. Circa 480-470 BC. Musée du Louvre.

Apollo and ancient drama

In order for Apollo to be acknowledged as the one who purifies (*Pythian*) and an oracular god (*Loxias*), he first had to go into self-exile in order to be redeemed for the murder of Python. In memory of this voluntary retreat, Apollo left the oracle each winter and Dionysus took his place. The connection between these two seemingly incompatible hypostases, the Apollonian harmony and the Dionysian frenzy, clearly symbolized the balance that Pythian Apollo

provided by imposing justice instead of self-redress.

The scene in *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, where Orestes seeks sanctuary at the Delphi oracle and embraces the omphalos stone, asking for atonement for the murder of his mother Clytemnestra, constitutes the ultimate poetic rendition of this new moral perception.

This scene is repeated on a large number of red-figure vessels of the 4th century BC from South Italy, and has been linked to philosophical issues and political notions of that time. It is also directly related to the religious dominance and power of the Delphic oracle during the same period.



▲ 13

Red-figured bell krater: purification of Orestes by Apollo. Attributed to the Eumenides Painter. Circa 380-370 BC. Musée du Louvre.



▲ 14

A marble omphalos, with a representation of the *agrenos* (woolen net). 330 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

Apollo of Europe

The Delphic column with the three dancers emerging from acanthi is a well-known example of female figures being associated with vegetation and nature in classical antiquity. There is also the characteristic example of the nymph Daphne, whom Apollo fell in love with and pursued; in trying to escape him, she was transformed into a laurel tree (*daphne*).

This myth became a favourite subject of western European art. The strong emotions felt by its protagonists and the moment of transformation gave to the artists the opportunity to exhibit their mastery, in a scene imbued with a powerful symbolism, the futility of Apollo's pursuit.



Classical antiquity has been a source of inspiration and a point of reference for western European art, both from an aesthetic and thematic perspective. Apollo, god of light and the arts, has been portrayed in a multitude of works created by artists, from the Renaissance and Baroque period to the neoclassicism of the early 19th century.



▲ 15
Théodore Chassériau. Apollo and Daphne. 1844-1845. Musée du Louvre.

◀ 16
The column with the "dancers". 330 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

Mortal Apollos

Antinous, the beloved companion of the Emperor Hadrian, who drowned in the Nile in 130 AD, was viewed since Roman times as the archetype of youthful beauty and the symbol of one who died prematurely in the prime of his life. Following his death, Hadrian himself arranged for statues and portraits of Antinous to be placed at numerous sanctuaries and cities of the Roman empire, while cults and games were established in his honour. The heroised dead youth was also granted the attributes of deities linked to rebirth and the afterlife, such as Osiris, Dionysus and Apollo, in the case of Delphi.

Hadrian, a philhellene, felt a special connection to Delphi: he visited the temple on two occasions, reorganised the Amphictyonic League and the Pythian Games, and ordered for certain buildings to be restored and new ones to be erected. In this way, he preserved the reputation of the ancient oracle, which experienced a new period of prosperity during imperial times, namely from the 1st century BC to the 2nd century AD.



▲17
Bust of Antinous, called Antinous Ecouen. 1700-1800. Musée du Louvre.



▲18
Bust of Antinous as Osiris. Circa 125-150 AD and 1800-1900. Musée du Louvre.



19▶
The Antinous of Delphi. 130-138 AD. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

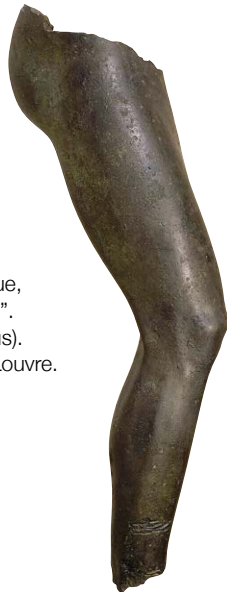
The Program for the Study of the Charioteer of Delphi

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Phocis, the French School at Athens and the Louvre Museum in collaboration with the C2RMF have signed a convention to study the Charioteer of Delphi with the goal of better understanding the technical innovations of the period of the *Severe Style* (480-460 BC) when large-scale bronze statuary developed in Greece.

A first mission, carried out in 2017, used X-ray fluorescence to reveal the sculpture's subtle polychromy, due to the bronze's high tin content and its inlays of tin and copper.

Future objectives are to understand the lost-wax process used for the seven or eight cast pieces, as well as the soldering techniques holding them together.

The Louvre Museum's bronze leg of Apollo makes it possible to see the inside of a cast bronze piece from the same period and thus to compare the processes used.



20 ▶

Fragment (leg) of a bronze statue, probably of "Apollo Chatsworth". Discovered in Tamassos (Cyprus). Circa 475-450 BC. Musée du Louvre.



21 ▶

The Charioteer of Delphi. Part of the offering of a tyrant of Sicily, for his winning at a chariot race. 480-460 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

European Apollo: Louis XIV

Several European monarchs have been associated with Apollo; most characteristic is the case of the king of France Louis XIV (1643-1715). The Bourbon kings associated their reign more with the hero Hercules, half-god, half-man.

Louis XIV developed a solar myth about his person. The appropriation of the figure of Apollo in particular illustrated the

monarch's taste for the arts and for peace, as well as the solar aspect of his person. The realm revolved around the "Sun King": like the sun's, his morning rising and evening retiring (the ceremonies of *lever* and *coucher* in the royal bedchamber) were to be observed by all.

Many artists in the French court developed an iconography associating Apollo and Louis XIV. The Hercules myth endured; however, in Versailles and the Louvre, in garden fountains, in paintings and furniture, the reign of Louis XIV was marked by an Apollonian vocabulary.



▲22

Nicolas Coustou. Apollon, God of Health, shows France the Bust of Louis XIV, King of France. 1693. Musée du Louvre.



▲23

Marble head of a bearded Hercules, part of a colossal statue. Roman imperial period, copy of a statue of the 4th c. BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

**Exhibition organized by the Musée du Louvre
and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports**

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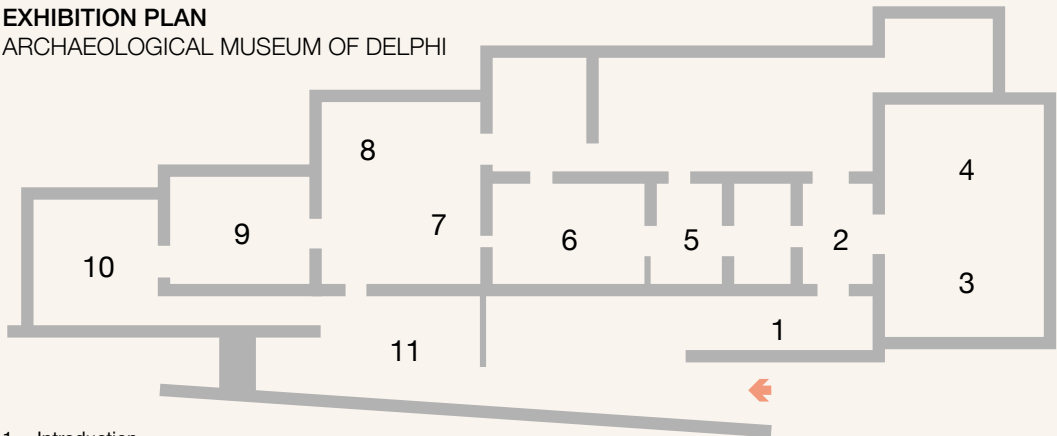
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EXHIBITION PLAN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF DELPHI



1. Introduction
2. Links with the East
3. Delphic theology - Gnothi Seauton (Know Thyself)
4. The power of the prophecies
5. Apollo Mousagetes
6. Victories (Nikes) for Apollo
7. Apollo and ancient drama
8. Apollo of Europe
9. Mortal Apollos
10. The Program for the Study of the Charioteer of Delphi
11. European Apollo: Louis XIV



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