



# Architecture

Louvre

Paris, France

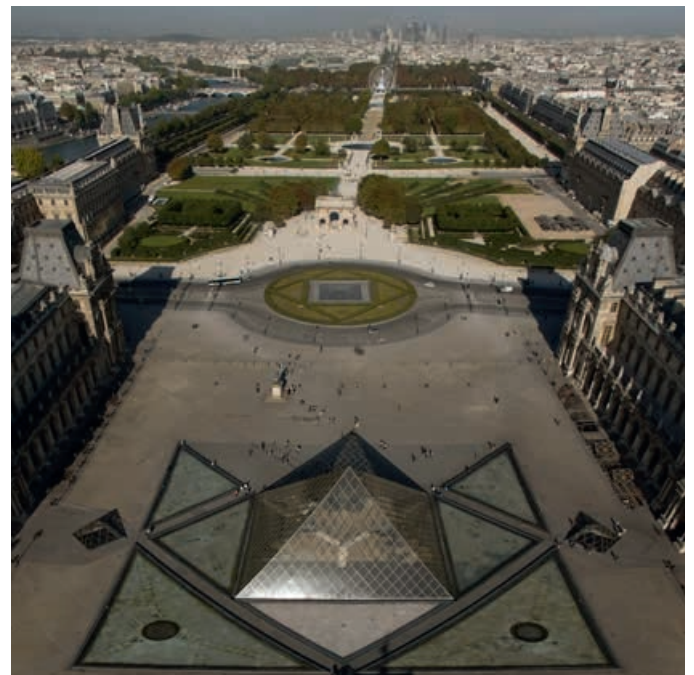




Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I. M. Pei © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/Olivier Ouadah

## The Louvre

The Louvre, in its many different forms, has dominated the city of Paris since the late 12th century. Today it is the most visited museum in the world, renowned for famous works of art such as da Vinci's Mona Lisa, as well as the building's spectacular Renaissance to Modernist architecture.



Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I. M. Pei © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Phodia



© Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Olivier Ouadah



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# History

## *From Fortress to Museum*

The original Louvre was a fortress built in the late 12th century to protect the city of Paris. Located on the western edge of the city, the structure was gradually engulfed as Paris grew. The dark fortress from the Middle Ages was continually altered and expanded, before being transformed into a Renaissance-style royal palace from 1546 onwards.

When Louis XIV moved his royal court from the Louvre to the recently enlarged Palace of Versailles in 1678, much of the royal art collection remained at the Louvre. A number of national cultural institutions and scholarly societies moved into the Louvre, which also became a residence for artists. In 1699, the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) held its first public exhibition in the building's Grande Galerie (Great Gallery).

The transformation of the Louvre into the museum we know today began with the French Revolution. In 1791 the new National Assembly declared that the Louvre should be "a place for bringing together monuments of all the sciences and arts", and when Louis XVI was arrested in 1792, his royal art collection became national property. The Louvre Museum officially opened a year later, giving free public access to a collection that included works by da Vinci, Raphael, Poussin and Rembrandt.

Throughout the next 200 years, the Louvre would witness the restoration and abolishment of the French monarchy, the Napoleonic era, plus the establishment of five new French Republics. The museum's collection increased throughout this turbulent period and by the early 1980s, it was clear that a major renovation was needed to improve the displays and provide better amenities for the increasing number of visitors.



# Renovation

## *When New Met Old*

When President François Mitterrand came to power in 1981, he launched an ambitious program to create a series of modern architectural monuments in Paris that would symbolize France's role in art, politics, and economy. The best known of these Grands Projets (Grand Projects) would be the redesign and expansion of the Louvre.

The committee in charge of overseeing the project visited museums in Europe and the United States, and were particularly impressed with the East Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Its architect, I.M. Pei, was invited to Paris and asked to lead the comprehensive renovation project.

The biggest challenge Pei faced was the lack of space. The physical layout of the Louvre had remained the same since 1874: two wings attached to the oldest museum building, forming a rectangular structure around the Cour Napoléon plaza.

Pei's solution was to hollow out the central courtyard, place the main entrance in its center and construct a series of underground connections to the various wings. Visitors would descend into a spacious lobby and quickly access the main Louvre buildings. At the same time he also proposed reorganizing and redistributing the collection, as well as covering several smaller courtyards to create more display space.



© EFGI, Patrice Astier 1987

However, Pei's proposal for a glass and steel pyramid to cover the new entrance would cause great controversy. To Pei, the shape not only provided the new lobby with the best natural light, it was "the most compatible with the architecture of the Louvre". Many disagreed, with one opponent describing the proposed pyramid as a "gigantic, ruinous gadget".

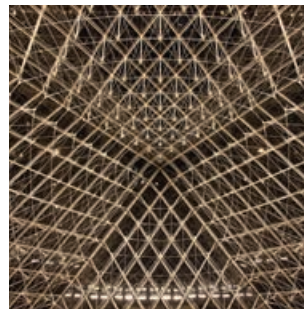
The criticism eased somewhat after Pei placed a full-sized model of the pyramid in the courtyard. The new entrance, with its famous pyramid, was inaugurated in March 1989 and became an instant architectural icon for the whole of the newly renovated Louvre Museum.



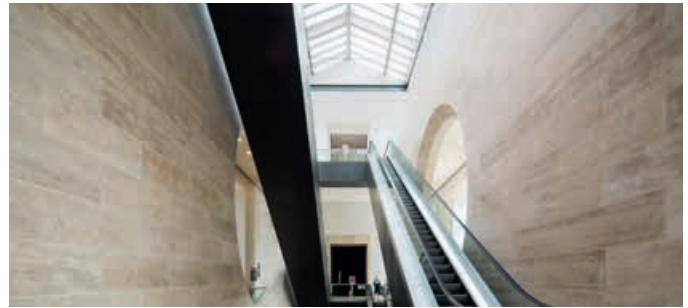
Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. PEI © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN/Olivier Ouadiah

# The Louvre Today

The renovation of the Louvre was completed in 1993 and proved a great success, with the number of visitors to the museum doubling within the first year. With an area of 60,600 m<sup>2</sup> (652,300 sq ft) and over 400,000 works of art in its collection, it remains one of the largest and most impressive museums in the world. With close to 10 million visitors each year, the Louvre has also become the world's most visited museum.



*Pyramide du Louvre:*  
original work of I.M. Pei  
© Musée du Louvre,  
Dist RMN/ Antoine Mongodin



© Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Franck Bohbot

*[ It signifies a break with  
the architectural traditions  
of the past.  
It is a work of our time. ]*

*I. M. Pei*



*Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. Pei © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Stéphane Olivier*

# The Architect

*Ieoh Ming Pei*



© EPL. Patrice Astier

Ieoh Ming Pei was born in China in 1917 and travelled to the USA at the age of 17 to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Inspired by the work of Le Corbusier and the new International Style of architecture, he continued to Harvard's Graduate School of Design, where he met Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, two leaders of the European Bauhaus movement.

In 1955, after working for the New York firm of Webb & Knapp on a variety of large-scale structures across the USA, Pei established his own firm, I.M. Pei and Associates. Pei and his team worked on a number of major projects, including the Kennedy Library in Boston, Dallas City Hall in Texas and the new East Building of Washington's National Gallery of Art. It was this last building that would bring him to the attention of those in charge of the Louvre renovation project.

Pei would be the first foreign architect to work on the Louvre, and many in France were skeptical that such a prestigious national project had been given to an architect with a reputation as the "master of modern architecture". He himself was acutely aware that 'the history of Paris was embedded "in the stones of the Louvre". Though his suggestions—not least the glass pyramid—initially received much criticism, the renovation was a great success and the Louvre's pyramid would become his most famous structure.

*[ The glass pyramid is a symbol that defines the entry to the Louvre. It is placed precisely at the center of gravity of the three pavilions. ]*

*I. M. Pei*

# Facts about the Louvre

Location: ..... Paris, France  
 Construction Period:..... 1190 to present  
 Area covered: ..... 60,600 m<sup>2</sup> (652,300 sq ft)  
 Architectural style: ..... A blend of Renaissance to Modernist

For more information about the Louvre please visit:  
[www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)



Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. Pei © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Antoine Mongodin

## Facts and Statements



The name Louvre refers to the word "loup", meaning wolf in English, as the place was supposedly occupied by these predators.

© Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Paul Maurer



Remnants of the original 12th century fortress are still visible in the crypt.

© Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Olivier Ouadah



The pyramid is 21.6 m (71 ft.) tall. The four sides of its base are each 35 m (115 ft.) long. It contains 603 quadrilateral and 70 triangular pieces of glass.

Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. PEI © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Olivier Ouadah



Archaeological excavations were undertaken before work began on the new spaces beneath the Cour Napoléon and the construction of the Pyramid.

© Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Paul Maurer



Pei designed a smaller inverted glass pyramid to act as a skylight for the underground spaces in front of the museum.

Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. PEI Louvre, Dist RMN/ Olivier Ouadah



To minimize the visual impact of his structure, Pei used a special glass production method that ensured clear panes.

Pyramide du Louvre: original work of I.M. PEI © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Olivier Ouadah



When the museum opened in 1793, the original collection consisted of 537 paintings.

The Grand Gallery of the Louvre Museum between 1794 and 1796. Hubert Robert, RF 1948-36 © Musée du Louvre, Dist RMN/ Stéphane Maréchal

# LEGO® Architecture

– then and now

There has always been a natural connection between the LEGO® brick and the world of architecture. Fans who build with LEGO elements instinctively develop an interest in the form and function of the structures they create. At the same time, many architects have discovered that LEGO bricks are the perfect way of physically expressing their creative ideas.

This connection was confirmed in the early 1960s with the launch of the LEGO 'Scale Model' line. It matched the spirit of the age where modern architects were redefining how houses look and people were taking an active interest in the design of their new homes. These sets were designed to be different from the normal, brightly colored LEGO boxes; they also included a book on architecture as a source of inspiration.

Decades later, architect and LEGO fan Adam Reed Tucker, revived the idea of expressing architecture using LEGO bricks and in partnership with the LEGO Group, launched the LEGO

Architecture line that we know today. His first models, and the original sets in the current LEGO Architecture series, were interpretations of famous skyscrapers from his hometown of Chicago. Since then LEGO Architecture has developed and evolved, first with well-known buildings from other cities in the United States, and now with iconic structures from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The introduction of our LEGO Architecture Studio set echoes the ambitions of the earlier LEGO 'Scale Model' line and widens the potential of the LEGO Architecture series. Now you can enjoy building and learning about specific landmark buildings, or create exciting architectural models from your own fantasy. An inspiring 270-page book, featuring a number of renowned architects from around the world, guides you through the principles of architecture and encourages you in your own creative building.





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LEGO Architecture Studio

## References

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