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MuCEM, a cultural bridge across the Mediterranean, opens its doors

The Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCEM), a flagship project of the Marseille-Provence 2013 European Capital of Culture operation, has opened its doors to the public. It is the first museum worldwide dedicated to Mediterranean civilizations. The brand new museum, an ambitious project housed in a building of exceptional architecture, is a hotspot of cultural diversity and a forum for dialogue and sharing. It aims to forge ties with



all the countries of the Mediterranean.

As a high point of the “Marseille-Provence European Capital of Culture” year, MuCEM opened to the public on 7 June 2013 after three years of work. The total cost of the operation amounts to €167 million. It is recognized as one of the most beautiful museums in the world and is already seeing genuine success. MuCEM’s director, Bruno Suzzarelli, emphasizes the human and cultural aspects of the project with the goal of receiving 300,000 visitors per year.

The Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations is located by the sea, in a resolutely audacious building. It inherited all the Parisian collections of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions, which closed in 2005. Some pieces also came from the Museum of Man, in addition to 20,000 other acquisitions. It boasts in total 44,000m² of exhibition space split over three sites, allowing visitors to contemplate the extraordinary cultural, social and political blooming of the Mediterranean, from the prehistoric time to the present.

The centrepiece of MuCEM, the J4, is a building representing a perfect square, created by architect Rudy Ricciotti, in association with Roland Carta. The emblematic edifice is linked by a footbridge to Fort Saint-Jean, a 12th century historic monument which has been superbly restored. The visitor can enter through the port or cross the footbridge, 135m long across the sea, onto the roof of the J4. The experience is both intellectual and physical. *“It’s one of the most original projects of the decade, installed within the walls of the Fort Saint-Jean, which makes it a top-level tourist attraction. It is a clear asset for the national and global outreach of our town and the whole of Provence”*, says the Mayor of Marseille, Jean-Claude Gaudin, enthusiastically.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

At MuCEM, a genuine contemporary space at the heart of Marseille, French and foreign audiences meet through dynamic programming. *“MuCEM is open to light and open over the sea, open to all the Mediterranean basin's artistic and cultural expressions. It is far more than a*



museum; it is a bridge between the maritime façade of Marseille, Rhodanian Provence and the civilizations across the Mediterranean”, according to a local political official. “What we wanted to build here was somehow all the souls of the Mediterranean. With the aim of allowing the freedom to stroll through, imposing nothing”, continues architect Rudy Ricciotti, who also created the new Department of Islamic Art at the Louvre Museum.

The depth of inside views is immense. There is full communication, between the spaces and the architecture. *“MuCEM is a museum of civilizations, of diversity of perceptions and of historical, anthropological and artistic conceptions”, notes Suzzarelli. This multidisciplinary ethos is expressed through the exhibitions that are presented, such as Noir et bleu, un rêve méditerranéen (Black and blue, a Mediterranean dream). And then there is a very dense cultural programme, with cinema, talks, debates, concerts, and more...*

It is as a crossroads between the Mediterranean and European worlds that MuCEM carries out its international action. It thus aims to implement strong cooperation projects based on reciprocity with museums and institutions in the Mediterranean and Europe, including in Istanbul, Morocco, Alexandria, Brussels and Berlin. MuCEM is also a forum for the exchange of knowledge and expertise, through the meeting of professionals focused on shared issues. This dimension is extended through an original initiative aimed at artists from Athens, Madrid and Rome.

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Website:

www.mucem.org: Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCEM)
www.mp2013.fr: Marseille-Provence 2013 – European Capital of Culture