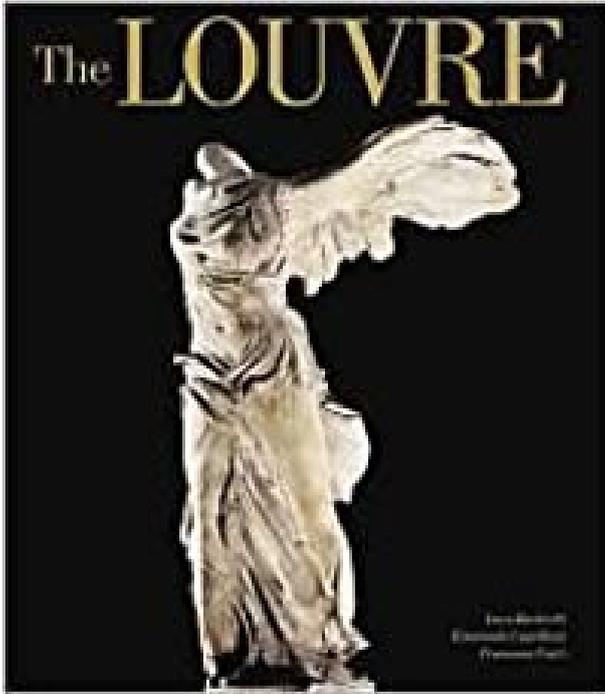


The Louvre



ISBN13:	9780760794401
Genre:	Art
Published:	October 4th 2007 by Barnes & Noble
Pages:	316
ISBN10:	0760794405
Author:	Emanuele Castellani, Francesca Curti, Luca Bachechi
Goodreads Rating:	4.57

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A genuine universal receptacle of artistic knowledge, the Louvre houses an extraordinary cross section of the most important works of art created over a period stretching from antiquity to the early decades of the 19th century. Through analysis of the individual works and their comparison with other masterpieces from the history of art, this book provides stimulating cues of interpretation and reflection that allow the reader to make a true journey of exploration into the history of humanity's figurative culture. At the same it reflects the didactic intent that is inherent in the arrangement of the collections and the layout of the museum, conceived, in its new organization, as an immense manual of the styles and schools of every age. The process that has led to the creation of the Grand Louvre has lasted various centuries. To the first important nucleus consisting of Francis's collections were later added the acquisitions made by Louis XIV, the Sun King, besides the collections of Cardinal Mazarin and the banker Everhard Jabach.

Louis XV began to think of the Louvre as a "palace of the Muses", in which masterpieces would be systematically assembled, conserved and displayed to the public. But only with the French revolution the Louvre became a true museum, a "national gallery", receiving a considerable quantity of new acquisitions, fruit for the most part of the wars fought first by the republic and then by napoleon. With the restoration, the looted countries regained possession of some of the stolen works, but many of them remained in Paris. From this time on there was no further letup in the policy of expansion of the museum, and when the Louvre was made the national museum in the 19th century its greatness was universally recognized.