Over the last fifty years, museum professionals and academics have paid increasing attention to the question of display and placement in museums and collections. A number of museums have proposed innovatory displays. Others have turned to the past, offering more or less exact reconstructions of important early temporary exhibitions. In 2006, the Orangerie in Paris recreated Les peintres de la réalité, a show curated by Paul Jamot and Charles Sterling in 1934, while in 2013, Germano Celant, Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas revisited in Venice Harald Szeemann’s iconic When attitudes become form (Berne, 1969). Some museums have decided to reconstruct some parts of their earlier presentation of the permanent collections, such as the Musée Joseph Denais de Beaufort-en-Vallée (reorganised in 2011) which includes an evocation of its early curiosity cabinet, or the Musée des Beaux-arts et d’archéologie de Besançon, which decided to include some of the brutalist scenography of the 1970s when it was revamped recently. A number of research projects have analysed how display techniques have influenced viewing practices in the museum; others have tended to concentrate on the history of museum displays over the course of time, identifying the main currents of thought at work. The 1970s were marked by debates opposing ‘traditional’ museology and ‘new’ museology; the advocates of the ‘new’ museology worked closely with concepts drawn from the humanities and the social sciences, more particularly sociology, semiology and Visual studies. Nowadays this has extended to encompass new theories from the field of the neurosciences as well as virtual reality.

The Louvre Museum has contributed to the debate over the years, particularly since the important transformations carried out at the end of last century and the construction of the pyramid in 1989. The French Ministry of Culture has encouraged ambitious architectural schemes for museums during this same period; these schemes aim to provide spaces that facilitate the display of art and artefacts and thereby make them more accessible to the wider public. Accompanying these important changes there has been another significant development – architects and scenographers have become increasingly important partners in exhibition conception and design. New tendencies and theories are constantly emerging. The time has
come to step back and take stock of these various debates and discussions of the last fifty years and then to encourage debate and reflexion on new perspectives for museums and collections in the years to come.

The conference will address issues surrounding the display of objects in a variety of museums and collections drawn from many disciplines, traditions and countries, including (but not restricted to) museums of archaeology, fine arts, contemporary art, decorative and industrial arts, natural history, ethnography, civilisations and societies. Modern and contemporary art have radically modified exhibition practices: their role in the development of new styles of presentation will be examined, as will visitors’ changing attitudes towards objects, display, the museum setting, and the museum visit.

By means of several case studies – of national and international museums and collections, ranging from traditional to more experimental institutions – we hope to identify and analyse a number of important theoretical and practical approaches that have influenced thought about and work in museums and collections over the last fifty years. Permanent or temporary? – the question of time is often an important factor when defining display strategies. Other factors – be they economic, technical, spatial or others (for example security) – must also be taken into account by both designers and project managers when planning an exhibition. These and other questions will be addressed during the conference.

Communications on one of the four following themes are invited:

1. **Objects and discourses: articulating the display.**
   What do we mean by display? Should we understand it as being no more or less than a series of (aesthetic) strategies that facilitate the exhibition (ostension) of one or more objects? In French the word ‘dispositif’ is often used. How does this relate to the English word ‘display’, and how should we exploit the linguistic differences in order to deepen our understanding of the exhibitionary model? Should we understand the word ‘dispositif’ as signifying the result of a combination of various parameters (in terms of scientific programmes, studies etc.) which are employed in order to present a series of works of art or artefacts on a given theme or subject? Should we rather consider it part of an intellectual process that attempts to classify, organise and establish a hierarchy between objects, according to the theories and conceptual apparatus of the exhibition’s organiser(s)? At the centre of our discussions about display lies the notion of narrative (storytelling). It is always – whether intentional or not – an essential part of the display. But how does narrative invest and occupy display techniques? Which solutions does it impose? Which choices does it imply?

2. **The different actors involved.**
   Over the last thirty years the question of “who does what in the museum?” has been asked more and more regularly and with ever increasing force. Without attempting to establish a catalogue of all the professions involved, we shall highlight some of the major changes that have occurred over the last half century. Exhibition-makers, curators, architects, museographers and scenographers: the list is long, and clear definitions are not always easy to come by. The role of each professional can vary from one institution to another, from one country to another. Furthermore, museum educators work with the various other professionals throughout the exhibition planning process.
3. **Going beyond words: the art of exhibiting.**
   How can we understand the different exhibition techniques and strategies that are employed in order to present objects and works of art in a range of different contexts and situations? Does the museum question its work and attempt to understand its exhibitionary model? Although we often believe that there is an infinite variety of permanent or temporary exhibition settings, with subtle differences in the fittings and furnishings employed, the colours used, etc., there are in fact a number of constraints on what we display and how we display it. Precise boundaries frame the relationship between the object and the argument it is supposed to represent, present, identify, interpret, evoke...

4. **The visitor and the show.**
   Museum spaces have been changing very rapidly over the last few years, and are increasingly in demand, often for economic or organisational reasons, which in turn has an impact on museum practice. The relationship between welcome spaces, spaces used for commercial activities and exhibition spaces has become an essential element in all plans. The need to manage visitor flow, allied with the need to ensure optimal security for visitors and objects have an important role to play in display choices. In several museums, exhibition spaces have to compete with spaces used for commercial purposes or events that generate revenue. A wide range of factors always has to be taken into consideration when planning museum spaces.

   The organisers’ aim in planning this conference is to encourage the renewal of the critical discourse concerning the museum, its public role and the constraints within which its directors and curators have to work.

   As far as possible, the organisers should like to encourage contributions from and debate between professionals who deal with exhibitions and display in the course of their work and theoreticians who are working on the subject. Case studies, analyses of the working relationship between architects and museographers, curators and exhibition makers are welcome, as are studies, research or field reports relating to and analysing the principal issues of the conference’s four main sections. The main period under consideration is the last half-century, but historical studies that shed light on our contemporary practices will also be welcome.

   Contributions from students and young researchers interested in museums are encouraged.

   **Deadline:**

   Please send proposals (400 words max.) for a 20-minute paper in English or French to:

   cecilia.hurley-griener@ecoledulouvre.fr or colloques@ecoledulouvre.fr before December 16th 2019.

   Travel and hotel costs will be met by the organisers.

**Organisers:**
Scientific committee:

Bruce Altshuler (Director, Museum Studies Program, New York University)
Laurence Bertrand-Dorléac (professor, art history, Sciences Po; professor, Ecole du Louvre)
Blandine Chavanne (conservatrice générale du patrimoine; professor, Ecole du Louvre)
Octave Debary (professor, Paris Descartes)
Cécile Debray (conservatrice générale du patrimoine, director, Musée de l’Orangerie)
Cécile Degos (scenographer)
Philippe Durey (conservateur général du patrimoine, former director of the Ecole du Louvre)
Dominique de Font-Réaulx (conservatrice générale du patrimoine, director of mediation and cultural programming, musée du Louvre)
Jérôme Glicenstein (professor, Paris 8)
Thierry Leviez (head of scenography, ENSBA)
François Mairesse (professor, Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle; professor, École du Louvre)
Néguine Mathieux (conservatrice du patrimoine, director of research and collections, musée du Louvre)
Marielle Pic (conservatrice générale du patrimoine, director of the Oriental Antiquities department, musée du Louvre)