

PRESS RELEASE

**Launch of a New UNESCO Chair Hosted by the École du Louvre
“Sensitive Cultural Artefacts, Provenance Research and International Issues”**



Participants in the Winter School 2026 on sensitive cultural property, provenance research and international issues © Stéphane Richard

Paris, 17 March 2026 – The École du Louvre is establishing, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a Chair entitled **“Sensitive Cultural Artefacts, Provenance Research and International Issues.”** This international recognition firmly anchors the institution within an academic and scientific framework that brings together universities, cultural institutions, public decision-makers and civil society in order to address the contemporary challenges related to cultural heritage. The Chair will be officially launched on **Monday, 22 June 2026**, at the École du Louvre.

The Chair addresses issues that have become central for museums and the art market: combating illicit trafficking, reassessing collections originating from colonial contexts, demanding responses to restitution claims, and the need to harmonize international standards. Its objective is to develop—within a framework of cooperation, notably but not exclusively between Europe and Africa—a shared methodology for provenance research that includes source countries and supports the implementation of international normative instruments.

The aim is to train a new generation of professionals and researchers equipped with the tools necessary to oversee acquisitions, document provenance, combat illicit trafficking, and support restitution policies.

The Chair was prefigured by the creation, as early as **2023**, of a dedicated Master's program and, in **2025**, of a "provenance research" axis within the École du Louvre Research Centre. It brings together training, research and professional practice through expert networking, open-access resources, collaborative projects and intensive programs.

The partners of the Chair are: École du patrimoine africain, Porto-Novo (Benin); Instituto de Artes, Universidade de Campinas, São Paulo (Brazil); Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin (Germany); Musée des Civilisations, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire); École française d'Athènes (Greece); Service des musées de France, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture; Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris (France).

"The Chair aims to enrich art history and archaeology through the new methods and perspectives made possible by provenance research, to better structure practices related to the circulation of cultural property, and to contribute to reflection on the ethical and legal frameworks governing them."*Claire Barbillon, Director of the École du Louvre*

Launch Conference of the Chair

The first conference organised by the UNESCO Chair of the École du Louvre, "Towards a Global History of Provenance Research – Historical, Methodological, Legal, Political and Philosophical Dimensions," will offer a retrospective perspective on the conditions that led to the emergence of provenance research and on the reasons for its essential role today—both in the management of museum collections and in research in art history and archaeology, as well as in international relations.

It will take place at the École du Louvre on 22 and 23 June 2026.

ABOUT THE ÉCOLE DU LOUVRE

Founded in 1882, the École du Louvre is a public higher-education and research institution under the authority of the French Ministry of Culture. It offers courses in art history, museology and archaeology, complemented by teaching in epigraphy and anthropology. Located in the heart of the Palais du Louvre, it trains hundreds of students each year for careers in culture and heritage through a distinctive pedagogy based on close visual analysis and the direct study of works of art within their historical context. The school also opens its courses to auditors and pursues a policy of accessibility for all.

<https://www.ecoledulouvre.fr/fr/formations-etudiantes/deuxieme-cycle-master/master-2>

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