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Headline: Greek is good

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Travelling display of Greek sculptures drew record numbers to the National Museum

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SOME 87,354 people saw the travelling exhibition of classical Greek statues from Paris' Louvre museum at the National Museum, exceeding targets.

The show, featuring 130 sculptures and artefacts, ended its three-month run on Sunday.

National Museum director Lee Chor Lin, 45, said: "Our target was 70,000 and we are glad to have exceeded that. On some days like the open house days, close to 4,000 people went through the gallery and this is very, very good for Singapore."

But this is not the first time that an exhibition has drawn visitors in such numbers.

The Asian Civilisations Museum's most well-received show, Journey Of Faith: Art And History From The Vatican Collections, attracted more than 133,000 visitors between June and October 2005.

Then there was the 2½-month exhibition of the works of Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero at the Singapore Art Museum, which drew 75,000 visitors in early 2005.

The National Museum's exhibition featured marble statues of gods such as Apollo and Venus, and there were also rare decorated urns on display. Together, they told the story of ancient Greece.

Ms Lee said visitors of all ages came to view the exhibition, and some even re-created the Louvre ambience by sketching the statues and busts on the spot.

The exhibition was a special one as the Paris museum rarely lends out more than a couple of items at one go. The 214-year-old museum made an exception because the wing which houses these and other artworks is being refurbished.

So, rather than being kept in storage, parts of the collection have made their way around the world. They have

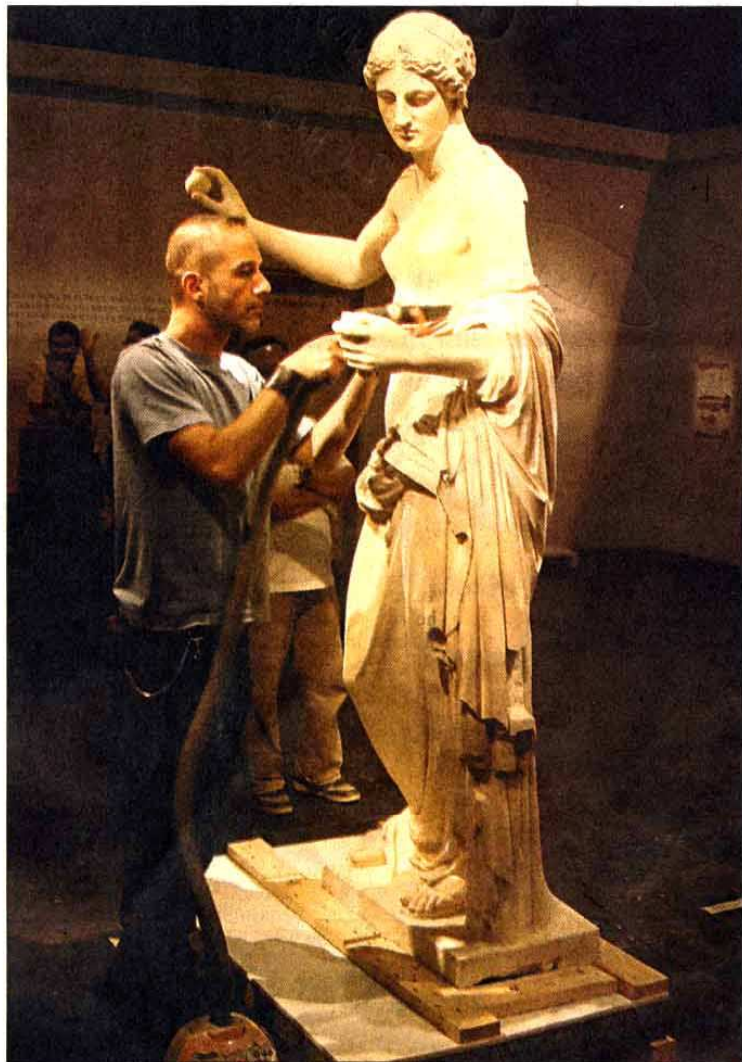


PHOTO: JASON TOH, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE

OH VENUS, HEY VENUS: Mr Christophe Piccinelli, registrar of the Greek and Hellenistic Department at the Musee du Louvre, vacuuming one of the travelling Greek statues before it is packed for the next exhibition stop.

been shown in Japan and China, and after Singapore, will move on to Macau.

Among those who visited the exhibition was literary agent Jayapriya Vasudevan, 40, who took her nine-year-old daughter Miel along.

She said: "I found the exhibits stunning. The exhibition was very well curated and was really spectacular."

Miss Nor Jumaiyah, 27, a media relations executive, visited the exhibition on the second day of its opening and recalls seeing people of different ages sketching at the gallery.

"It was interesting to see that sort of engagement. It wasn't passive viewing. I think the way it was presented and curated, both chronologically and

thematically, helped. It provided a comprehensive overview of the culture of that period."

While the museum will not say how much it spent bringing in the sculptures, the show is probably one of the most expensive ones ever mounted.

After the Greeks, the museum's next blockbuster exhibition is likely to feature Egyptian treasures. Negotiations are now on and if all goes according to plan, the exhibition will be staged at the end of next year.

Ms Lee said: "Following the success of the Greek masterpieces, we have had requests to bring in more exhibitions of this calibre."

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