

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**18 July 2016**

***Power, passion and the palace: Versailles at the NGA this summer***

The NGA has revealed details of the sumptuous treasures from the Palace of Versailles, which will be on show in Canberra this December. *Versailles: Treasures from the Palace* is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see and experience a mesmerising period in French history here in Australia. For the first time ever, the treasures will travel from France to entice visitors into a world of power, passion and luxury through this epic exhibition.

More than 130 paintings, intricate tapestries, gilded furniture, monumental statues and other objects from the Royal gardens, and personal items from Louis XIV to Marie-Antoinette, will bring to life the reigns of three kings, their queens and mistresses in a fascinating and tumultuous period of French history.

‘We are delighted to bring the grandeur of the culture of Versailles exclusively to Canberra and make it possible for all Australians to access and appreciate the social, political and cultural aspects of this unique phenomenon. If ever absolute power can be expressed through unbridled opulence, this is it,’ said Gerard Vaughan, NGA Director.

The exhibition will celebrate the lives, loves and passions of the people of Versailles through a full program of activities including music performances, children’s programs and public events.

‘Along with astonishing treasures, like the marble bust of Louis XIV, or the glamorous formal portrait of Marie-Antoinette, we are bringing to Australia the entire 1.5 tonne statue of *Latona and her children* from one of the main fountains of the Palace of Versailles,’ said Dr Vaughan. ‘The authenticity of this cultural experience will leave a lasting imprint on all our visitors.’

The exhibition contrasts small personal items, such as the precious golden reliquary which belonged to Louis XIV’s mother, or Marie-Antoinette’s hand-crafted chair and harp, with huge works including six-metre tapestries from the most important Gobelins series ever produced for Louis XIV, and a monumental conversation piece of the Souches family which requires individual freight.

‘Versailles is at the heart of French cultural expression as much as the NGA is the heart of Australian visual expression and we are very excited to bring this historic exhibition to Australia,’ said Catherine Pégard, President of the Public Establishment of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles.

‘The opportunity to send such important French treasures has been made possible because of the major restoration program at Versailles and we are thrilled to see that the outcome of the work will be the enjoyment of thousands of Australians,’ said Christophe Lecourtier, Ambassador of France to Australia.

‘The NGA is bringing to Canberra yet another spectacular show, which will attract people from all over the country and the world this summer,’ said Andrew Barr, ACT Chief Minister. ‘These shows are important to the local tourism sector and I’m confident that this show will be another success for the Gallery.’

*Versailles: Treasures from the Palace* opens Friday 9 December 2016 until Monday 17 April 2017.

Tickets go on sale today.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

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