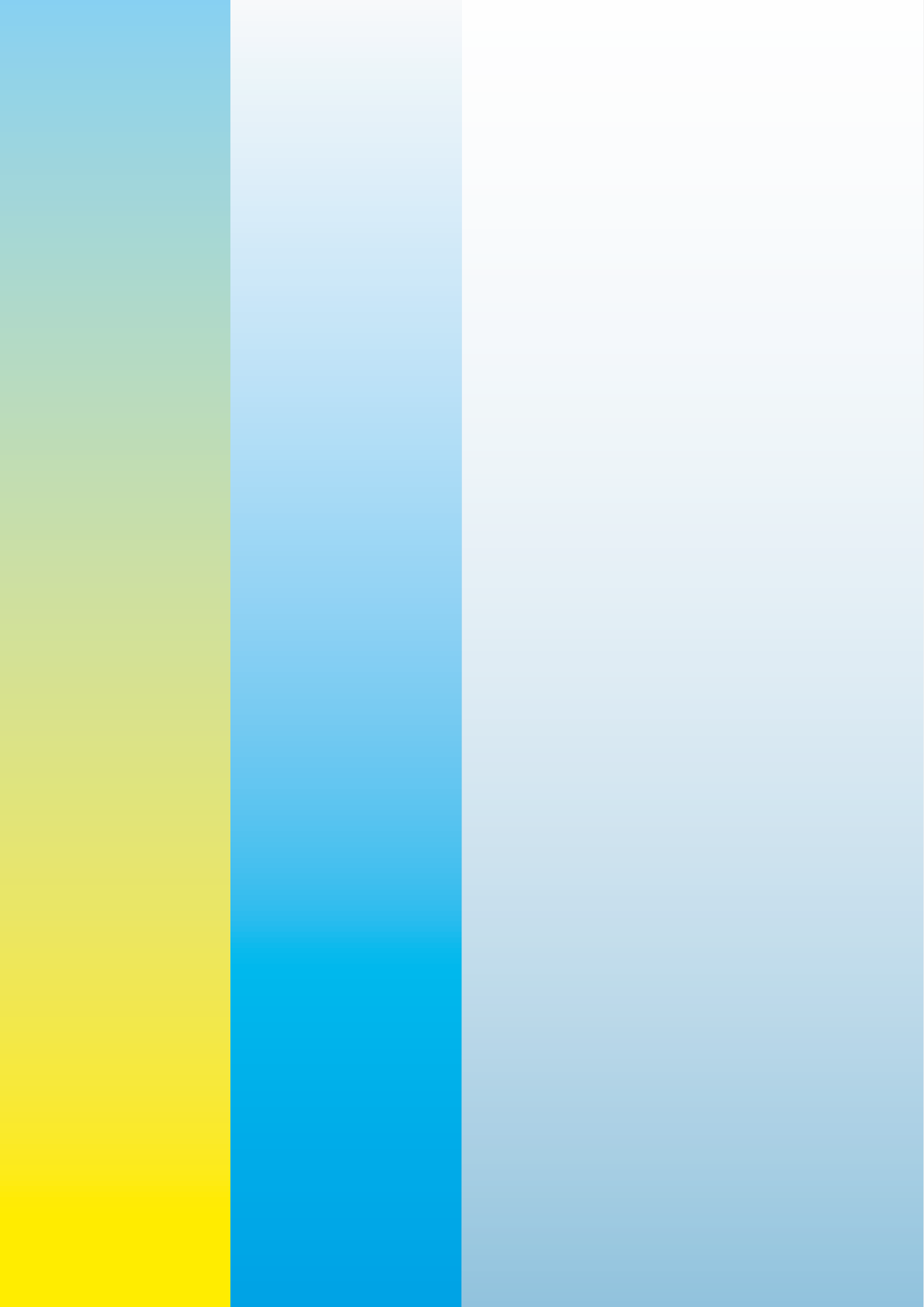


Guimet research plan 2026-2030





Guimet research plan 2026-2030

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Introduction to the Research Plan

Founded in 1889, the Musée Guimet placed research at the heart of its mission from the very beginning. In this spirit, its founder, Émile Guimet, established within the same building a museum, a library, and a lecture hall, intended for a wide audience of scholars and enthusiasts, with the goal of promoting cultural dissemination. For him, the museum, the library, free public lectures, and both scholarly and popular publications—addressed to the general public as well as to foreign researchers—formed an inseparable whole. This approach remains at the core of the museum’s identity today.

Thanks to the expeditions of Victor Collin de Plancy and Charles Varat (Korea), as well as the donations of Gustave Dumoutier (Vietnam), Étienne Aymonier (Cambodia), Jacques Bacot (Tibet), and many others, the museum’s collections expanded considerably in its early years. They often benefited directly from discoveries made during field research.

In the 1920s, under the leadership of Joseph Hackin, the Musée Guimet took a major turn by dedicating itself to the ancient arts of Asia. Many key figures in Oriental research have marked the museum’s history, including several curators who spent most of their careers within the institution and opened new fields in the history of Asian art. One may think, for example, of Philippe Stern’s pioneering work on the arts of India, Khmer art, and the art of Champa, or of the research carried out by Madeleine David and Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt on Chinese and Japanese ceramics. In the field of international collaborations, Jean-Paul Desroches contributed to the growth of temporary exhibitions (China, the Philippines, Portugal...), Jean-François Jarrige advanced studies on the Indus civilization, and Jacques Giès furthered research on the arts of Chinese Central Asia. This tradition continues to this day, confirming research as a fundamental mission of the institution.

These studies, produced and directed by curators in charge of the museum’s various collections, long reflected more the individual activity of the institution’s specialists than a truly coordinated research policy within a national establishment. As museums are now called to fully engage with global scientific dynamics and structured partnerships, formalizing a research plan for the Musée Guimet had become a necessity.

This first document, conceived as both a strategic vision and an operational tool, marks a decisive step. It expresses a central ambition of the project led by the President since November 2022: to place research at the very heart of institutional policy.

This ambition takes shape with the creation of the “Villa Guimet,”¹ an international research center to be located on Avenue d’Iéna in the Hôtel Heidelberg. This welcoming and working space will embody our vision: a museum rooted in its collections, yet fully engaged in contemporary scientific debates.

As an innovative center for research on Asian arts in France and abroad, the Villa Guimet will implement its program over a five-year period (2026–2030), carried forward by the museum’s scientific team. It will be built upon—and around—the collections and the vast documentary and archival resources that constitute both the *raison d’être* and the exceptional wealth of the museum.



Historical Library of the musée Guimet. © musée Guimet, Paris /Vincent Leroux.

The Musée Guimet’s research plan is based on two complementary priorities. The first is the development of innovative research themes in the field of Asian arts, focusing on the materiality of works, the contextualization of their creation, the history of the collections—particularly their provenance— and finally on the mutual perceptions of Asia in Europe and of Europe in Asia, including an analysis of the evolution of museographic discourses and narratives.

The second priority focuses on strengthening research resources through an active digitization policy, notably of the rich archive holdings of one million items and the collection of 700,000 photographs on various media. It also aims to expand access to the library’s collections both online and for on-site consultation within the inspiring setting of the Villa Guimet. This resource strategy also takes shape in a major project to make the collections more accessible and available online, on the one hand, and in the organization of hosting researchers in this privileged location in the heart of Paris, on the other.

This plan thus sets out the challenges and ambitions for research that the institution wishes to develop, as well as the resources that will need to be devoted to it. It enables our administrators, supervisory bodies, and partners in France and abroad to contribute to this ambitious project founded on scientific excellence and the sharing of knowledge. It will also help to convince potential patrons, eager to support the Guimet Museum’s in its position as a central player in international research on Asian art.

1. The creation of the Villa Guimet was approved and unanimously by Board of Directors on December 10, 2024, and implement on March 1, 2025.

The structuring axes of research at the Villa Guimet



The Facade of the musée Guimet in 2024.
© Frédéric Berthet

Part 1

Axis 1 Materiality

The first axis of research defined by the museum's curator team focuses on the pieces' materiality. This analysis of the material, from its constitutive nature to its sources of supply and its implementation, is, in itself, a fundamental aspect of the study and understanding of the museum's collections, as well as for all the institutional and private collections conserved throughout the world.

Among its areas of excellence, the Musée Guimet has been able to forge an international reputation for their skills on the study of ceramics. From the very beginning of the institution, Émile Guimet himself was interested in these specific questions. Familiarised with the chemistry of materials through his work as an industrial entrepreneur and head of the "Bleu Guimet" factories, the founder of the museum had, from his trip to Asia in 1876, made sure to gather a large collection of ceramics from Japan and China. His choices were less based on aesthetic criteria than on technical considerations linked to his interest in the use of colours in the firing process of terracotta, stoneware and porcelain. In the galleries on the ground floor of his "museum of religions", there were two spaces, one devoted to China and the other to Japan, in which the collections were brought together according to technical criteria and, and, for Japan, according to contemporary potters' kilns.

The work of Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt and Madeleine Paul-David in the analysis and characterization of Chinese and Japanese ceramics, their constituent materials and the vocabulary related to their nature and their technical implementation – work relayed by Christine Shimizu for Japan (ceramics and lacquerware) – has since been milestones to which current research is still heir. The most recent technologies, used by specialized laboratories, first and foremost by the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF), also allow for much more precise and detailed analyses than in the past. They will obviously offer prospects for interesting investigations.

Study of stucco and unfired clay from Afghanistan, of the 3rd – 8th centuries of our era discovered in an archaeological context



The Flower Genie, Tapa Kalan, Hadda (Afghanistan), 3rd–4th century, stucco, MG17190. © musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/Thierry Ollivier.

The choice to study the materiality of the works was, first and foremost, focused on the Afghan collection of stucco and various unfired clays, dating from the 3rd century to the 8th century AD. Resulting from excavations carried out by the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA) in the 1920s and 1930s, these sculptures benefit from a perfectly identified archaeological provenance thanks to the framework of the Franco-Afghan Convention of 1922, set for the disclosure of discoveries between the two states. Their authenticity is indisputable.

Although the term "stucco" is generally used in scientific literature about the modelling of the Hadda site, it is clear that the exact composition is unknown. Similarly, the use of green clay, stated in some of Hadda's works, is not chronologically dated. In contrast, in Bamiyan and Futekstan, unfired clay modeling was the norm, with the use of red clay overshadowing beige clay in the late 7th century.

Therefore, knowing the composition of the "stuccoes" and unfired clays of the Musée Guimet's collection should allow us to, on one hand, specify the timeline of occupation of the various Buddhist monasteries of Hadda, and, on the other hand, to compare these models with those of other sites such as Tepe Sardar in Ghazni, Tepe Narenj in Kabul, or works without any verified

archaeological origin. As for the unfired clays of Bamiyan and Futekistan, the same shift in the colour of clay, from beige to red, is found in Ghazni and the Kabul region. Alike analyses are currently being carried out in various foreign museums. Comparative studies with the stuccoes of the ancient Gandhara region, from Peshawar to Taxila in present-day Pakistan, could also be taken into consideration. In addition, beyond the refined knowledge of the materials, these studies ought to allow for the identification of production and circulation routes, craftsmen travelling to embellish the chapels and stupas of Buddhist monasteries in eastern Afghanistan. The results of these analyses will be the subject of scientific publications and conferences, such as the one co-organised, in Naples on the 16 and 17 September 2025, by the Università degli studi l'Orientale in Naples, the Università degli studi La Sapienza in Rome, and the Università degli studi in Bologna.

Fakes and Forgery in Chinese Antiquities

Unlike the Afghan collection, which is proven to be authentic, some artwork corporuses require an in-depth study of their materiality in order to distinguish fakes from authentic pieces. This is especially true in the field of Chinese antiquities, and in particular bronze dishes found in funerary settings. These objects have fascinated Western collectors and museum-like institutions since the 19th century, while they have been appreciated in China itself since antiquity. This success has led to a massive proliferation of counterfeits, often of remarkable quality.

The objective of the study is to map out the history, techniques and impact of the counterfeiting of Asian Chinese bronzes. The analyses will focus on the composition of the materials and the techniques employed: use of old materials to simulate patina, chemical treatments to imitate aging, imitation of mint marks and inscriptions, faithful reproduction of styles and decorations. These investigations should enable to identify authentic works, but also to document fakes, which are themselves part of one art history, in the same capacity as copies are in European pictorial art. In this logic, some museums now exhibit these counterfeits, fourth casted as such, in order to suggest their history. Cooperation with the Centre for Research on East Asian Civilisations (CRAO) and the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF) is, in this case, taken into consideration.



Tripod, China, Western Zhou Dynasty, 10th century BCE, bronze, MA 13006.
© musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Mathieu Rabeau.

Chinese Neolithic ceramics: a technical study



Handled Jar with Geometric Decoration, Majiayao, China
2300 BCE, terracotta, MA 5866.
© musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Thierry Ollivier.

The Musée Guimet is in charge of about fifty Chinese ceramics dating back to the Neolithic period – from the fifth millennium BCE to the Bronze Age. These pieces, originally often placed in tombs alongside other furniture (jades, shells, or copper alloy objects), are still rarely studied from the point of view of the material in which they are made, as well as their manufacturing process, their context of creation, their function or their iconography.

Thus, a series of analysis of said ceramics should contribute to understanding the development of kilns, firing techniques and to better regionalize their origins; polishing the dating of these works should also help to track the development of this craft which would lead, some time later, to the creation of the first bronze vases made by casting using ceramic molds, in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Carried out in partnership with St Hugh's College (Oxford) for technical analyses, and with the support of the Beishantang Foundation for the publication of a catalogue raisonné. This research program on the materiality of Chinese Neolithic ceramics could also bring together other under-documented European collections.

Joint project for the analysis of bronze objects from Liyu, between the Musée Guimet and the Shanghai Museum



Water Ewer for Ritual Ablution, yi, Shanxi, China, 5th–6th century BCE, bronze, AA78. © musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/Jean-Yves and Nicolas Dubois.

Another corpus identified regarding the study of the materiality of the artworks is the bronzes discovered in Liyu, in the province of Shanxi in northern China. The analysis of these objects, found in 1923 in a cache and now split between the Shanghai Museum and the Musée Guimet, could verify a close link with the famous foundry workshops of Houma, an archaeological site further south of Liyu, discovered in the 1950s. This vast metallurgical production site, located in what was the state of Jin, active as early as 585 BCE, is the largest bronze foundry complex of antiquity unearthed to date. It used, in particular, the cast iron technique using refractory moulds. However, the Liyu bronzes have decorations similar to those of Houma, hinting at the use of common molds for casting, and the fact that they were produced in these workshops.

This is why the Shanghai Museum is proposing a collaborative project with the Musée Guimet, in partnership with the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF), for a laboratory study (in France and in China), in order to better

understand the manufacturing techniques, the origin of the alloys as well as the identification of the various foundry workshops in Houma. In addition, this cooperation could result in an exhibition at the Musée Guimet of certain bronzes from the Shanghai museum's collection, as well as seminars.

Study of bronze art in Southeast Asia



Drum, Sòng Đà, Vietnam, Mid-1st millennium BCE, bronze, P243.
© musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Mathieu Ravoux.

Initiated in 1995 with the National Museum of Cambodia and the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF), studies dedicated to the art of bronze in Cambodia—within the context of pre-Angkorian (7th–8th centuries) and Angkorian (9th–15th centuries) Khmer art—were carried out in preparation for the exhibition *"Angkor and Ten Centuries of Khmer Art"* (Galleries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1997). This study of copper alloys, their sources of supply and their technical implementation within the foundry, has taken a great leap forward with the collaboration undertaken with the C2RMF and the French School of the Far East (EFEO) as part of the exhibition *"Royal Bronzes of Angkor"* (Musée Guimet, 2025). Far from complete, they are part of a long-term scientific collaboration with the EFEO, the C2RMF and the National Museum of Cambodia, whose medium-term goal is the publication of an in-depth study focused on the image of the reclining Vishnu from Western Mebon.

A second side of this study concerns the field of bronzes from the Dong Son culture (Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, 5th centuries BCE) in the Red River Delta (North Vietnam) for which an ongoing study with the C2RMF, the Cernuschi Museum and IRCAM allows us to deepen our knowledge of the use of bronze drums and the technical choices involved in their casting. Characterization of cast iron,

analysis of the resonance of materials and the study and deciphering of decorations are the major axes of this study, which should be part of a broader perspective involving, in the long term, the Vietnam History Museum in Hanoi.

Conservation and restoration programs for: paintings of Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese paintings, Indian textiles

Some of the Musée Guimet's non-archaeological collections must also be included in this axis devoted to the materiality of artworks. Analyses of these works will have to be carried out as part of vast conservation-restoration campaigns aimed at highlighting works that are currently not on view because of their poor state.

The collection of Tibetan paintings at the Musée Guimet, considered one of the most beautiful collections of this kind preserved in Europe, and consisting of about 450 remarkable pieces ranging from the 12th to the 20th century, will be part of this project.

An essential step will consist in providing each painting, or *thangka*, with a frame for its material specificities (presence of a more or less voluminous textile assembly). In addition, a restoration of the pictorial layer and its support, as well as a refurbishment of the existing or reconstituted textile montages, will allow us to promote these works to the public and thus to diversify the thematic and stylistic programs to be deployed in order to do justice to the originality and beauty of the paintings of Tibetan Buddhism.

This work will also be the opportunity for a academic study on pigments and preparation layers to inform the palette used and provide valuable insight on the provenance of the pieces as well as on the trade routes of said pigments in Upper Asia.

Finally, the Chinese and Japanese paintings mounted on scrolls, and the museum's Indian textiles, although presenting different conservation and restoration issues, make up other bodies of study and restoration belonging to this ambitious project.



Mandala of the Five Deities of Amoghapaśa, Gansu, China, Tang Dynasty (618–907), Mid-8th century, silk (Ink, Light Colors), Pelliot Expedition (1906–1908), MG26466. ©musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Thierry Ollivier.

Axis 2

Context of création

Art history, as a discipline for interpreting the evolution of forms and contexts of creation, is one of the scientific approaches adopted by museums and will be one of the major axes of this research plan. While Western museums hold many Asian works of art – whether ritualistic and religious objects, paintings, sculptures, textiles or everyday objects, they cannot be fully understood without reference to their original context.

Therefore, placing these works in their geographical, historical, social and cultural "terrain" allows not only a better anthropological and historical understanding, but also a critical reflection on the circumstances of acquisition, conservation and exhibition of these objects. This is fundamental to restore the meaning, function and initial value of the art pieces.

This is why cooperation with French and international archaeological missions, historians, epigraphers and specialists is essential. They make it possible to re-evaluate and transform the way we perceive, tell and transmit knowledge of these objects in museums.



Musée d'Ennery. © musée Guimet, Paris/Vincent Leroux.

New Technologies for a revised chronology of the Indo-Iranian frontiers (7000 to 2600 BCE)

The emergence of agropastoralism at the end of the 10th millennium BCE deeply transformed the prehistoric societies of Southwest Asia. However, in the regions between the Zagros Mountains (Iran) and the Indus Valley (Pakistan), our understanding of the spread of this way of life remains partial, due to the lack of set chronological markers of the temporal links between settlements.

This project aims to fill this gap by conducting a series of analyses on ceramic samples from the ancient Mundigak and Amri levels, in particular by radiocarbon dating (C14) on lipid residues, and on samples from Mehrgarh and the Makran sites, preserved by the CNRS in Nanterre. This study of the ceramic material from the Indo-Iranian borders, dated from 7000 to 2600 BCE, should also allow to establish a comparison with the federal collections of Pakistan (National Museum in Karachi) and the corpuses of sherds kept by CNRS teams.

This research program is part of a partnership agreement with the Laboratory of Archaeology and Sciences of Antiquity (UMR 7041 – ArScan) but also the Laboratory of Climate and Environmental Sciences (LSCE) and the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée (MOM). The funding for this project is provided by the European Research Council (ERC), under the title AGROCHRONO, for a budget of €1.6 million between 2025 and 2029.

Understanding the trade routes between China and Central Asia (5th century BCE – 5th century CE)



Belt Buckle in Steppe Style, Northern China, 1st-2nd century, Gold Leaf, Chased, Hammered, MA 12089. © musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Thierry Ollivier.

In the same process of understanding the interactions between different geographical areas, the period between the 5th century BCE and the 5th century saw the structuring of vast empires in Central Asia (Achaemenids, Seleucids, Kushana, Qin, then Han), remarkable for the intensity of their material and commercial interactions. This is why the attention of historians and archaeologists has been particularly focused on these empires, as well as on the manifestations within the elites of the multiculturalism created by these exchanges. Unfortunately, the peripheral areas (passes, high valleys, deserts) have often been neglected (with the exception of the Taklamakan Desert in China) and are, therefore, an area to be explored. Indeed, the expansion of empires implied a territorial anchorage to be built intellectually and materially, through diplomatic, political, and

religious means, with control of trade and migration routes. In addition, the trade networks and communication routes in the valleys of the Vakhsh/Surkhob/Kyzyl-Su, the Zeravshan, through the Pamirs, north and south of the Taklamakan Desert to the Gobi Desert, are characterized by the presence of humans, permanent or intermittent, in order to ensure control of a territory.

As part of the ANR "Imperial borderlands in Central Asia: first results of the archaeological surveys as part of the ANR 'FRONTIER' project", the archaeological or prospecting missions conducted by the team of the ArScAn-CNRS research

center in Xinjiang (North-West China), Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are compared with the studies of fortified sites located between the Chinese province of Gansu and Central Asia, as well as the study of official Chinese histories are confronted with those that have been preserved in Central Asia and with the administrative documents of the Han dynasty, discovered between the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts. Therefore, these crossed views will make it possible to reassess the notion of cultural border by mapping archaeological sites via Geographic information system (GIS), and also to document the trade and circulation routes of this region of Central Asia. It should be noted that the documentary corpus is composed of more than 300 archaeological sites (including bibliography and prospecting), about 600 Chinese texts and nearly 6,000 petroglyphs, for which a selection will be made. This corpus studied should make it possible to propose a material and spatial analysis of the phenomena of border interactions at the regional and global levels, but also to improve our knowledge of these ancient periods and, consequently, to refine the understanding of the works of the Musée Guimet. This study will be enhanced through publications and conferences, and may enrich the mediation tools offered to visitors in the permanent exhibition of the collections.

“Resonating with the gods” in China. Communication objects and divinatory interfaces

Following an archaeo-museum approach, the research conducted at the museum is also interested in the link between objects of worship and religious practices, since it concerns a large part of the collections of ancient China. In this regard, she will study the relationship between the ritual and the funerary furniture deposited in the tombs, in order to show the public how essential it is to link the collections, from High Antiquity to the Qing, to its original religious context (whether shamanic or Buddhist or Taoist) and social.

It will therefore be relevant to bring to it what is often set aside, such as the analysis of texts, the archaeological site or the functioning of the ritual. It will also be necessary to analyze the choice of materials used to communicate with the gods (bronzes, jades, ceramics, lacquerware, textiles, etc.), to study the relationship between ritual object and worship in order to understand the function of the object in the context of ceremonies and its place in a temple, a tomb or on an altar, to study the relationships between texts (oracular bones, manuscripts) and images depicted on objects. This research project is also planned in cooperation with the ArScAn-CNRS research center but also with the University of Lyon-2 and the LESC-CNRS research center.

Study of a corpus of Chinese ceramics: Dehua white porcelain

Another research project, in this fundamental axis of the study of the history of Asian art, aims to document and publish the exceptional collection of monochrome Chinese ceramics of Dehua or Blancs de Chine, i.e. nearly 150 objects kept at the Musée Guimet. It is one of the most important collections in the world, alongside those of the Dehua museums in the Chinese province of Fujian and the English and German museums. This corpus, produced from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to the



Statuette of He Xiangyu, Dehua Kilns, Fujian, China, 17th century, porcelain, EO2133. © musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/Thierry Ollivier. Photograph taken in 2019 with the support of the Michelin Corporate Foundation.

Presence and representation of foreign plants in Chinese culture: introduction, reception, acclimatization and integration in the Ming and Qing dynasties



Imperial Bowl with Passionflower Decoration, Jingdezhen Kilns and Imperial Workshops, Beijing, China, Reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661-1722), 18th century, porcelain, G 5250. ©musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Michel Urtado 2022.

present day, has certainly been studied in depth by the researcher Yongsong Zheng, as part of his doctoral thesis on Dehua porcelain and its reception in Europe.

Therefore, the study, by this researcher, of the collection of the Musée Guimet as part of a partnership with the CREOPS-Université Paris-Sorbonne research center, should allow a valorization of the collection and a notable enrichment of the documentation relating to the Whites of Dehua.

In addition, this in-depth research may also link the collections of the Musée Guimet to those kept in other foreign museums – or French if an extension of the study is carried out. This project will make it possible to produce high-definition photographs of the collection as well as an online publication and in the form of a printed catalogue.

Finally, still with regard to the Chinese collections of the Musée Guimet, and the period of the Ming and Qing dynasties, this plan provides for the study of the presence and representation of foreign plants in Chinese culture, their introduction in China, their acclimatization and their integration. This research work will be carried out by the doctoral student Weici Yan (CREOPS) and will consist of studying the representation of foreign plants on all artistic media. Indeed, the Musée Guimet has a very rich collection of three-dimensional works but also books and paintings, which is why the student will be led, during her thesis, to question this collection in order to identify representations of foreign plants in the graphic arts, Chinese objects and books. It will also examine the major European collections of Chinese art as well as the works kept in the main museums in Asia, mainly in China and Taiwan. These very diverse plants, which may have originated in South America, Europe or the

Orient, were the object of admiration on the part of the emperors of China and sometimes of acclimatization in imperial gardens, or even in the countryside for certain species of agronomic interest.

This research will lead to the identification of foreign plants within the museum's Chinese collections from the Ming and Qing periods, resulting in a publication.

The Musée d'Ennery's collections in context

As part of the axis on the history of Asian arts, a project will also be dedicated to the collections of the Musée d'Ennery, attached to the Musée Guimet. They include about 8 000 objects of various typologies, mainly from Japan, but also from China and Vietnam. In the past, they have mainly been studied from the point of view of their formation in the light of the historical context of the late 19th century and the networks of sociability (in particular with the work of Elisabeth Emery). This is why this project will focus on the study of the objects themselves. Given the size of the collection, we will confine ourselves, to begin with, to coherent groups of relatively modest size: kakiemon porcelain – intended for export in the 18th century – whose importance of those in the collections of the Musée d'Ennery has recently been recognized; *nanban* chests, which their early reunion by Clémence d'Ennery makes remarkable as such; decorative masks inspired by the theatre and the so-called Kobe dolls, objects considered negligible because they were produced in a commercial context and therefore ignored by research; the objects of the Chinese scholar. It will be a question of placing these collections in their historical context of creation, of documenting them as well as of approaching them with renewed questions, specific to each corpus.

This long-term project can be the subject of a regular research workshop, with 6 to 8 sessions of 3 hours per year. It will require the cooperation of various European and Japanese specialists depending on the corpus, and partnerships with universities or with the École du Louvre will be possible within the framework of master's degrees. It can also be enhanced by regular study days and mediation tools offered to the public visiting the Ennery museum.

It should also be noted that, as part of a vast project to renovate and enhance the Hôtel d'Ennery, a new collection will be installed from the end of 2027 and for a period of 50 years in the spaces on the ground floor (not occupied today) and in a newly created museum basement: the collection of Japanese *ukiyo-e prints* from the Edo period by Georges Leskowicz.

This collection, initiated in the early 2000s, now rivals in its richness and excellence the largest private collections of prints in the world. Indeed, the masterful works of Hiroshige and Hokusai rub shoulders with those of Utamaro and Sharaku, among the outstanding artists of this period. The complete series of *Mirrors of Japanese and Chinese Poetry* by Hokusai or the very first prints of the series of *69 stages of the Kisokaido road* by Hiroshige and Eisen are some of the treasures of this set, which has nearly 4000 pieces.

The coexistence, on the same site, of two collections, that of Clémence d'Ennery and that of Georges Leskowicz, as exceptional as they are complementary (one essentially composed of decorative arts, the other of graphic arts) will open up new and fruitful perspectives of research around themes as varied as Japonism in France, the reception of Japanese arts in our country, their influence on the artistic movements of the second half of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, etc.

Between text and image: the written word as a contextual source

In a broader context, there has always been a deep interconnection between image and text in Asian art. Indeed, in many Asian cultures, the written word is not only a means of communication; it is an art in itself, a bearer of aesthetics, philosophy and spirituality. Writing became a visual language, often inseparable from painting, architecture, and even decorative objects. Thus, in traditional Chinese paintings, the written word is often integrated into the visual composition. Similarly, poems or maxims are frequently inscribed directly on the painted scrolls, as an extension or interpretation of the landscape depicted. In Indian art, particularly in the museum's collection, inscriptions and calligraphy pages in Persian appear on the back of Indian miniatures, all schools combined. However, these have not been sufficiently studied and translated so far.

This is why the research project entitled "Between text and image" will aim to better understand the place of the written word in the collections of the Musée Guimet. In particular, it will endeavour to complete the database of the museum's Japanese art collections by transcribing and translating the inscriptions on the works into French. Specific care will be taken with the "related texts", for example the documents accompanying the scrolls such as the certificates of authenticity (*kiwamegaki*) that allow them to be documented. Collaborations with various specialists will therefore be necessary.

Moreover, in Buddhist paintings, the text reveals crucial information to indicate the place where they were to be presented, and the names of the donors. This fusion of text and image thus reflects an aesthetic thought in which the boundaries between disciplines are blurred. From then on, the written word enriches the meaning of the work, while bringing an additional graphic dimension. The corpus of this study will therefore consist in studying the set of miniatures acquired by Émile Guimet in 1891 (MG 9110 to MG 9195) bearing on the back fragments of unidentified and untranslated texts in Persian (India), as well as Buddhist paintings (Himalayan area, China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Laos) and the lapidary (Cambodia, Vietnam).

Similarly, a number of Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese ceramics present a vast corpus of inscriptions that contribute to the decoration of these works: dedicatory inscriptions, poems, auspicious formulas. Their translation will help to clarify the nature of these works and to better place them in the historical and intellectual context in which they were born.



Handscroll Depicting the Legend of Saigyô, Japan, Edo Period, 17th–18th century, paper, MA 1365-02.
© musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Raphaël Chipault, Benjamin Soligny.

The study of these inscriptions, which will involve researchers from different sources (universities, IFEO, CRCAO, EFEO, Inalco and other research centres), may lead to a more refined dating of the works, enrich their documentary file, and, more broadly, to the sharing of this new information via the computerised database of the collections.

Study of movable Uyghur printing characters brought back from the Pelliot mission

Particular attention will also be paid to Uyghur movable printing characters, of which the museum has some 950 items, brought back by Paul Pelliot's mission to Central Asia between 1906 and 1909. Although they were the first known in the world, they have only been studied in a very synthetic way. This is why an in-depth study of the use of these characters seems more than necessary. It should be noted that they do not constitute a complete "font" allowing the publication of a work, but that they have probably been used for the writing of certain types of texts.

After a restoration of the corpus with photographic shots and marking, a classification by typology and an identification of the types used, a database will be built, integrating movable characters of the same origin preserved in other institutions working on this corpus.

This research project will be carried out in partnership with the Centre for Research on East Asian Civilizations (CRCAO) with the help of Alice Crowther, ATER in Methods of Philology at the Section of Historical and Philological Sciences of the École Pratique des Hautes Études-PSL. It is scheduled from September 2025, over 15 half-days.

Research avenues for contemporary art

The Guimet Museum is not only a museum dedicated to the Asia of the past. It is also interested in contemporary Asia, in all its diversity and vitality. Consequently, research projects concerning the contexts of creation of artworks cannot exclude contemporary art.

In France, the exhibition *Magiciens de la terre*, conceived by Jean-Hubert Martin in 1989 for the Centre Pompidou, symbolically marked a decisive turning point. From the 1990s onward, what is called contemporary art has been perceived, exhibited, and collected on a global, planetary scale.

By nature devoted to one part of the globe—the Asian continent—the Guimet Museum unquestionably has a leading role to play in this field, from which it must reflect, sketch out the contours of a policy, and implement various initiatives.

In this perspective, a first step will consist in drawing up an inventory of the museum's contemporary exhibitions and acquisitions, whose study is inscribed within the history of the collections. This will involve identifying the assumptions that have guided these choices, such as their inscription within the long term (a continuous historical perspective) or their passage through Paris (an ethnocentric perspective). Rethinking these approaches will allow for a better account of the richness of contemporary Asian art scenes.

Research must also address a gap. In fact, during the 1990s, most institutions progressively included artistic productions created precisely at the time of their realization that broadening their geographic scope was necessary. As a result, the contemporary artistic avant-gardes of the second half of the 20th century have

been little considered in this expansion, just as the modern avant-gardes of the first half of the 20th century.

Thus, a major challenge for the Guimet Museum will be to retrace these largely ignored and little-known historical contexts in France (and beyond), to import and revisit the history of modern and contemporary Asian artistic avant-gardes of the 20th and 21st centuries, with the production of dedicated documentation and archives.

Accordingly, the research project concerning contemporary art may follow several paths. For instance, the study of a corpus of Chinese photographs (1995–2000) produced by the second generation of contemporary Chinese artists (the so-called "1989 generation") around the "Beijing East Village" community, based on a donation by Caroline Puel and Xindong Cheng. Another path would be to study the first contemporary Chinese generation (1976–1979), known as the "Stars generation." Among its members is Huang Rui, a central figure still little studied in France. A third avenue may be devoted to *Dansaekhwa*, the Korean avant-garde movement of the 1950s–60s, often reduced to its formal dimension (monochromy). This study could be linked to the donation of Philippe Tirault. The recent donation of polaroid photographs by Nobuyoshi Araki opens the way to an exhibition on radical Japanese photography around the Provoke group (with Moriyama, Fukase...) and to a rereading of postwar Japanese avant-gardes. Finally, *Mono-ha*, a Japanese movement of the 1960s–70s close to minimalism or *arte povera*, still little known in France despite its major influence in Asia, also has its rightful place in this research. These various research directions form part of an ambitious policy of acquisition, scholarly valorization, and exhibition. They aim to fully establish the Guimet Museum within the global history of contemporary art.



Studio of HUANG Rui, painter, photographer, visual artist, performer.
© Cécile DAZORD, 2025 ; Atelier et œuvres © HUANG Rui, 2025.

Axis 3

History of the collections

The history of the collections at hand, their provenances and their acquisition methods have always been the subject of a heightened attention and vigilance within museums and specifically in the musée Guimet. However, in recent years, the questions regarding the object's origins have taken on a specific prominence, following the renewed views and mindsets on the sensitive subject of the colonial past and, more generally, on the presence of non-European collections in Western museums. Indeed, if the musée Guimet has always taken into account the history of its collections for which it is responsible as a major aspect of the research surrounding them, it is certain that this renewed look and the complex questions it now raises implies a more in-depth consideration of the historical, economic and relational contexts in which these acquisitions were made and their primary motivations. Recent work in this field and communications aimed at the countries from which the works originate have already been set up with Afghanistan (DAFA Collections), China (Pelliot collection in Dunhuang), Cambodia (Delaporte, Aymonier and EFEO collections), Vietnam (Carpeaux photographic collection, Champa art), sometimes in the context of institutional cooperations (DAFA, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia, Dunhuang Academy). These exchanges and scientific research on these fundamental matters will have to be further strengthened in the years to come.

These research projects into origins and provenance makes it possible to gather information for the inventory and documentation of objects, but also to reconstruct their historical trajectories and to unpack the relationships and chains of ownership involved, hence its essentiality today. This work requires a proactive and methodical approach. It involves cross-referencing the most diverse sources and documented results in the most rigorous and exhaustive way possible. This is why, over the next five years, a sponsorship contract will be dedicated to provenance research, a priority and fundamental axis of the museum's strategic research plan.

Research program on the history of the Chinese collections circulating on the art market in the 20th century through the study of C.T. Loo's / Frank Caro's collection

The research program on the history of collections will focus first on Chinese collections that circulated on the market in the 20th century, in particular those from the dealer Ching Tsai Loo (1880-1957), Lu Huan Wen (his real name), better known in the West as C.T. Loo. Settled in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century, C.T. Loo was one of the most important importers of Asian (and particularly Chinese) art, enriching museums with first-rate works. The thousands of flexible or glass plate negatives, along with hundreds of cardboard cards and handwritten letters donated to the musée Guimet by the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, bear witness to how the world's major Asian art collections were assembled between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The objectives of this research program are multiple – and absolutely fundamental – for the knowledge and study of the Musée Guimet's collections: to find and establish the provenance and chain of ownership (local and Western dealers) of each work in the Musée Guimet that has been acquired from the New York gallery; to compare these archives with other collections and documents concerning the works acquired in Paris from other influential art dealers of this year. period (Langweil, Bing...); to deepen the knowledge of the history of the Asian art market at the beginning of the twentieth century; to define the modalities of the exit of these works from Chinese territory (illicit exit, legal purchase, etc.) and to study the relations between C.T. Loo, Émile Guimet, Paul Pelliot and Joseph Hackin. The works concerned by this program come from several sections of the musée Guimet – China, Vietnam, Japan, the Himalayan world, India – and are of a diverse nature: statuary, textiles, furniture, ceramics, bronze, jade, painting.



Ching Tsai Loo (1880-1957), an influential dealer of Chinese art objects
New York Times Archives. © Loo Family Photographs/Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian.

This research project will be carried out in close collaboration with the Provenance Prefiguration Mission led by the Service des musées de France and will give rise, as it progresses, to promotional actions: scientific articles, study days. It will require a major project to be carried out on the collections: digitisation, dusting, partial restoration, reconditioning by restorers and classification by an archivist or a researcher under contract in conjunction with the Archives division of the Villa Guimet.

Valorisation of the textual and photographic archives of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA)



Excavations at Lashkari Bazar © musée Guimet, Paris.

The second part of this research program on the history of collections focuses on the study and enhancement of the archives of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA), an institute founded in 1922, active continuously until 1982, then between 2003 and 2021. For nearly a century, DAFA has worked alongside Afghan partners to research, safeguard and disseminate the country's archaeological heritage. The DAFA's archival collections are extremely rich but still under-exploited, due to a lack of classification and complete digitization. They document the archaeological context of the objects in the Afghan collection of the musée Guimet, resulting from the sharing of archaeological discoveries made by the DAFA. They bear witness to the evolution of excavation techniques, prospecting and restorations used from the 1920s to the 1980s and, more generally, to the political history of Afghanistan in the 20th century. Afghanistan's closure to field research makes this fund an essential resource for the sustainability of French research in this field.

The works concerned by this study are the DAFA's photographic collection (prints, negatives, slides,

glass plates), as well as the paper archives of the archaeological missions (correspondence, notebooks, drawings).

In partnership with the DAFA, preliminary studies will be carried out in 2025 to identify the components of the collection, its structure, its volume, the dimensions of the phototypes and their state of conservation, and to define packaging recommendations. In a second phase, it will be necessary to proceed with the dusting, reconditioning, classification, inventory and marking of the collection studied, then its digitization by series and indexing.

To serve this ambition, a large-scale scientific cooperation accompanies this project: DAFA, ENS, ArScAn, Collège de France, Société Asiatique with funding envisaged by the musée Guimet, the DAFA, the CNRS (with ArScAn), the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). The study and promotion of this exceptional collection could, therefore, provide material for a new reference exhibition on Afghan heritage, in the wake of the exhibition *Afghanistan, Shadows and Legends. A century of archaeological research* – which was held at the Musée Guimet in 2022.

Axis 4

Perceptions of Asia in Europe / Perceptions of Europe in Asia

The collections and archives of the musée Guimet are centred around Asian art history and its iconographic, aesthetic and technical evolutions, but also bears witness to an array of European viewpoints of Asia and, also, the perceptions, cultivated in Asia, of the rest of the world including Europe. These contingent, crossed, sometimes biased or idealized visions remain essential to understanding the relational history between the Asian and European continents, whether cultural, artistic, technological or political. This is why this axis is fully in line with the musée Guimet's five-year research plan. Here, as far as Asia is concerned, it will essentially be a question of a history of gazes, itself nourished and conditioned by the backgrounds or the journey of the works of art.



Collections of the Musée d'Ennery. Detail of a Display Case of Netsuke, 19th century. © musée Guimet, Paris/Vincent Leroux.

Joseon Korea: a "hermit kingdom"?



Studying the history of relations and exchanges between Korea and the West seems relevant, as it is, in many respects, so singular. Indeed, if, today, the *Hallyu* wave has spread widely in all industrial and cultural sectors of the world, the history of this civilization is nevertheless marked by many preconceived ideas. The most flagrant is the fact that Joseon Korea, the royal dynasty that ruled the peninsula between 1392 and 1910, is considered a "hermit kingdom", an expression first used by the American orientalist William Elliot Griffis in 1882. This idea is based on the sources available to him in his time, in particular the account of the Dutch purser Hendrik Hamel (1630-1692). However, the textual sources (Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French, English), ranging from the 15th to the 18th century, relate, on the contrary, to a Korea actively linked to the political and artistic movements that were then developing in Eurasia.

Therefore, this research project will focus on an in-depth study of the artistic, scientific and political relations between the Joseon Kingdom and neighboring powers and will focus, in particular, on diplomatic exchanges and ambassadors' gifts (analysis of exchanges between Ming and Qing China and Joseon Korea; studies of Korean objects offered, exchanged or produced for neighbouring powers between the 15th and the 19th centuries).

More specifically, he will focus on the study of two unique works kept at the Musée Guimet and dating from the 18th century: the oil painting entitled "Korean officials, foreign envoys, seen as a bust behind a balustrade" (MET 2320) and "At the door of the Joseon palace" (EG 2183).

In addition, this research project will also deal with the impact of the Jesuit presence in China and its influence on the Korea of the Joseons in the 18th century (in particular through the application of the Jesuit calendar, knowledge in astronomy, cartography), the organization and reconstitution of royal libraries. The works concerned by this study will be Joseon pictorial productions and ceramics from the 15th to the 19th century.

In order to set up this programme, scientific collaboration is envisaged with research institutes, libraries (BnF, BULAC, Collège de France) and the Centre for Diplomatic Archives. This research is part of the exhibition "The Secret Art of Trompe-l'oeil in the Korean Pictorial Art of the Joseons", which will be held in September 2026 at the Musée Guimet for the "Year of Korea". On this occasion, it is planned to restore, and then present, these two important paintings in order to deconstruct the idea that Joseon Korea was a "hermit kingdom", an expression still used in many publications.

The HikarIa research project

To shed light on our perception of the Asian world and that of the Asian world of the West, the study of the photographic collections of the Musée Guimet is, at the time of the 21st century, a major challenge. The HikarIa research project has the preservation, study and enhancement of photographic collections (restoration, reconditioning, digitization, indexing of collections, online publication of results on a database). The musée Guimet, in fact, has one of the richest collections in the world of old photographs of Japan. The volume of these collections (19,000 items from the important collection of Dr. Joseph Dubois as well as the other collections

of old photographs of Japan) and their temporal and aesthetic unity (Meiji period, 1868-1912; many of them belonging to the "touristic" aesthetics of the "Yokohama School") encourage us to approach them from a statistical point of view, but also raise the question of the mass indexing of these collections.

This is why these considerations make the Musée Guimet's collection particularly relevant for testing and refining artificial intelligence tools with a view to making them automatically describe these old photographs.

From then on, the data obtained during the project (digitizations, existing metadata, metadata produced) will be put online on a platform that brings out new knowledge on the beginnings of photography in Japan: attribution of photographs by association, studio economy, aesthetic evolutions, iconographic circulations, models, accessories, etc. These elements will feed into a broader reflection on the dissemination of images, the mutual influences between Europe and East Asia, the emergence of stereotypes about Japan and tourism practices at the dawn of globalisation. HikarIa will open up new horizons of research at the crossroads of historical, aesthetic, economic and social issues.

Thus, this project will be based on the development of new tools for art history research, by optimizing the automated description by artificial intelligence of old photographs (testing and refining of various AI models). It will eventually enrich knowledge about photography in Japan during the Bakumatsu and Meiji eras (1853-1912), in partnership with external researchers, and disseminate the results of the research through scientific articles, communications, conferences in France and Japan, and perhaps an exhibition project on the beginnings of photography in Japan.

Scientific cooperation is ensured through a partnership with the company TEKLI and associated researchers (Saki Toriumi, Nihon University College of Arts, and Jules Keenan, Toronto Metropolitan University), and funding by the Caisse des Dépôts, France 2030, "digitization of heritage and architecture" and by the Musée Guimet.



KŌZABURŌ Tamamura, Geisha Playing the Shamisen, Meiji Period, early 1890s, Hand-Colored Albumen, print, AP15928 / AP11360. © musée Guimet/RMN-GP, Paris/ Guimet Image.

Diplomatic gifts and the circulation of prestigious objects between Japan and Europe, 1850-1864: a comparative history of the reception of Japanese objects by European courts at the end of the 19th century

Studying diplomatic gifts and the circulation of prestigious works between Japan and Europe (1850-1864) follows an exhibition held at the Château de Fontainebleau as part of the Festival d'Histoire de l'art (2021) and a study day (2022). It can be divided into two parts: a diachronic part internal to France and a comparative part on a European scale. It is important to remember that the Chinese Museum and the Salon des Laques at the Château de Fontainebleau are creations of Empress Eugénie (1862-1864) hosting Siamese and Japanese diplomatic gifts, objects from Vietnam, as well as Chinese objects of various origins (royal furniture storage, art market, objects brought back by the French armies following the looting of the Summer Palace). Over time, the presentation of these collections has evolved: under the Third Republic, the ensemble became the first museum of Asian art created in France, even before the Musée Guimet. Then, in the 1980s, its initial state as desired by Eugénie was restored in a historicist approach.



Pair of Portable Braziers with Hexagon and Circle (shokkō) Design, Maki-e Lacquer on Wood, Gold and Silver Leaf and Powders, Silvered Copper, Gift of Thanks, 1864. Former Collection of the Duke of Morny F1674 C.1 and 2. © GrandPalaisRmn (Château de Fontainebleau) / Adrien Didierjean.

Thus, the project will first aim to conduct a study of the museographic evolution by approaching these Asian collections globally. In doing so, we will question the representation of Asia that this prestigious national institution reflects. The other part will consist of studying the only period of formation of the museum and the salon by focusing on the collection of Japanese objects and comparing them with the way in which the other five European courts (Great Britain, Prussia, the Netherlands, Russia and Portugal) received similar gifts and integrated them, or not, into the palatial decoration or offered them to a museum. For both parts of the study, the museum acts as a major heritage department.

The main objective of this research group will therefore be to study the works, whatever their provenance, and to return them to their original context, in the perspective of and following the work already undertaken by Estelle Bauer – in collaboration with Vincent Droguet and Vincent Cochet and a team of Japanese researchers – and which focused on the diplomatic gifts offered by Japan to France. A first extension of this study could be envisaged on a European scale, in collaboration with curators of museums and royal collections (Windsor, Ajuda Palace in Lisbon, etc.), in order to compare the differences in perception and receipt of these diplomatic gifts received by other European courts around the same period (1850s–1864).

A second extension of the study of Japanese collections could also focus on the Chinese collections (Siamese, or even Vietnamese) gathered at Fontainebleau. This second project, led by Lia Wei (lecturer in Chinese history and archaeology at Inalco) and Estelle Bauer, at Ifrae (French Institute for Research on East Asia), now brings together about fifteen of the best French-speaking specialists in Chinese art history, museum curators (Lyce Jankowski, Pauline d'Abrigeon, Béatrice Quette, Claire Déléry, Michel Maucuer), academics and CNRS (Isabelle Charleux, Kunsam, Alice Bianchi, etc.). In the long term, a major exhibition could be devoted to the history of diplomatic gifts between Asia and France, or even Europe.

The museum as a constitution of knowledge

The museum is a central pillar in the construction of knowledge. From an intercultural comparative perspective, it will therefore be necessary to examine the way in which this knowledge is formed, often from documents taken out of its original context or from limited contacts. This will also imply deconstructing these discourses through a reflexive analysis of the practices and mechanisms that shape them, in order to allow for the essential critique. In this respect, the proposed methodology follows three lines of research: the notion of sacredness (through the Asian and European prism), memory (study of written and iconographic corpora as the foundations of cultures and vehicles for their transmission), and staging (reflection on the way in which objects of religious or memorial veneration are exhibited and the relationship between religious practices and artistic expressions).

This angle of study will therefore aim to initiate and nurture a multidisciplinary and intercultural reflection on these questions with all the museum's curators and Asian colleagues and partners.

Global or local: museographic stakes for Asian art museums past and present

The exhibition is at the same time a strategic tool for attractiveness, one of the privileged forms of research promotion and an essential mechanism for sharing knowledge. In a context of renewed public expectations and diversification of forms of display, particularly in Asia where museums are experiencing considerable expansion, this research axis intends to explore, from a comparative perspective, the practices and issues related to the presentation of Asian arts, in Europe as well as in Asia. Research on the exhibition as an object of study has undergone significant development over several decades, first in Germany and the United States, and then more recently in France. The history of exhibitions, museology and the sociology of the public have contributed to making this theme a booming multidisciplinary field. As a follow-up to the conference "Exhibiting Asian Arts. New Franco-Chinese Perspectives" organized by the Musée Guimet on June 8, 2024, this program proposes to structure a sustainable reflection on the modalities of exhibition of Asian arts, through crossed and contextualized perspectives.

In particular, it will be a question of questioning the narratives and museographic devices deployed according to the cultural, historical and geographical contexts. How are Asian arts shown in Western museums? Is this different from the way these works are presented in an Asian context? How is Western art, in turn, presented in Asian museums? This cross-sectional view, focused on the conception and reception of exhibitions, invites us to think about the question of otherness in museum practices of yesterday and today. Particular attention should also be paid to permanent exhibitions, whose attractiveness issues are widely shared on an international scale.

Several axes will structure this research. First, the analysis of formats, from the spectacular large-scale exhibition to the exhibition of a few carefully highlighted masterpieces, will make it possible to assess the trends at work in Europe and Asia. Then, the issue of narratives – from the definition of the point of view to the structuring of the discourse through the mode of address to the visitor – will offer a framework for understanding how museums transmit the history of Asian art according to cultural contexts and local conjunctures. An axis will be devoted to the question of exhibitions: what do we choose to exhibit in Asia and Europe? Do we show the same objects in different contexts and periods? This axis will make it possible to compare practices in terms of the typology of works, the nature of the objects presented – originals and replicas in particular – as well as to question the place of contemporary art in permanent or temporary exhibitions mainly devoted to ancient art. Museography and scenography will be the subject of another part of the analysis: the study of modes of presentation – contextual reconstructions (period rooms or reconstructions of the context of discovery), refined presentations, dialogues of works from comparable or different periods, techniques or iconographies – will make it possible to grasp the privileged biases and the effects they produce, in different cultural contexts. In addition, mediation mechanisms will be questioned through the intentions of museums and the supposed cultural skills of visitors. Within the framework of this axis, particular attention will be paid to the analysis of the modalities of presentation of Asian works in both Europe and Asia, as well as to the comparative study of exhibitions devoted to Asian art in a Western context and those dedicated to European art on the Asian continent. Finally, a research axis will be devoted to the growing role of digital technology, whose uses, far from being homogeneous, are experiencing contrasting developments in Asia and Europe, carrying specific technological and discursive orientations. Bringing together museum professionals and researchers in the humanities and social sciences in a multidisciplinary and international approach, this research axis aims to identify, in the practices of designing Asian art exhibitions that crystallize many issues in a world crossed by global and local tensions, the changes at work today and the long history of representations between Asia and the West in which they are inscribed.



Chinese Archaeology Gallery on the First Floor of the musée Guimet.
© musée Guimet, Paris/Vincent Leroux.

The Villa Guimet: research tools, resources and partnerships



Part 2

Introduction

Created in March 2025, the Villa Guimet, an international centre for research on Asian arts, marks the museum's ambition to anchor research at the heart of its strategy. Through this five-year plan, the Villa Guimet is positioning itself as an essential place for the production and the sharing of knowledge on Asian arts. After setting out the four main pillars structuring research for the next five years, it remains to present the institution's second priority, which concerns the resources, tools, and partnerships to be established in order to achieve these ambitious goals. One of the key challenges for the Villa Guimet is, first of all, to develop a partnership policy with national and international scientific bodies. Such a policy will make it possible to launch large-scale research programs, create new opportunities for exchange and cooperation, and increase the visibility of Villa Guimet's research in France and, above all, internationally.

In addition, the Villa Guimet is responsible for the institution's archiving policy: the processing of documentary, archival, and photographic collections, their material conservation, as well as digitization campaigns, with the dual aim of preservation and broad dissemination. The policy of enriching the collections must continue in order for the institution to remain a leading reference for knowledge on the arts and archaeology of Asian worlds. To this end, the library pursues an active acquisitions policy for monographs and periodicals. Likewise, the documentation department will organize projects to enrich artwork files and catalogue entries in the collections database. It will also compile documentary files on all donors, collectors, and art dealers, within a prosopographic database of individuals linked to the building of the collections.

Furthermore, a major accessibility and digitization project is expected to anchor the museum in a new dimension. Following the example of major heritage institutions, the Villa Guimet intends to rethink its dissemination strategy, which will now be based on the creation of an online documentary portal, accessible to everyone, everywhere. This portal will be curated to guide both researchers and the general public in exploring the museum's collections. Greater visibility—and accessibility—of the collections and resources should make it possible to share and deepen knowledge of the arts of Asia.

Moreover, since research and its transmission have always been at the heart of the Guimet Museum's mission, the Villa Guimet aims to strengthen its role as a major center for Asian arts by supporting and bringing together a network of French museums that wish to highlight their Asian art collections, but may not always have the means to do so.



Documentation related to the photographic collections.
© musée Guimet, Paris.

Finally, research results, along with the various events that will mark its progress, will be showcased through a regular program of conferences, debates, seminars, and study days. This will help establish the Villa as a privileged and essential venue for welcoming a wide range of researchers and artists in residence for both research and creation.

Partnership policy with scientific institutions in France and abroad

The Villa Guimet is positioned as the nerve centre of research within the museum. Thanks to a restructured organization of documentary and archival resources, it will make it possible to effectively structure scientific programs, by mobilizing dedicated teams, including doctoral students, post-doctoral students and contract researchers. This mode of operation, based on various forms of funding (projects, foundations, sponsorship), should also contribute to forging strategic partnerships with major research institutions in France and abroad.



Yannick Lintz, President of the musée Guimet, signs the agreement with Luis Monreal of the AKTC at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. © musée Guimet, Paris.

Partnership policy with national scientific institutions

With this in mind, the Musée Guimet wishes to strengthen its links with its historical partners, first and foremost the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). Since 1900, these two institutions have worked closely together through the major archaeological missions carried out in Southeast Asia. The desire to strengthen this institutional partnership should be facilitated by the joint will of its current director, Nicolas Fiévé, and the President of the Musée Guimet, Yannick Lintz. In addition, the geographical proximity of these two institutions, on either side of Place Léna, is also an asset for the attractiveness of researchers from all over the world. Finally, the scientific collaboration of the two teams will be strengthened, like the one that gave rise to the exhibition "Royal Bronzes of Angkor" in 2025. Research collaborations on India, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia will be studied. Other university players in the Parisian landscape enrich this partnership dynamic. First of all, the Joint Research Units (UMR) whose fields of study intersect with those of the Guimet Museum: among them, the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale (CRCAO), under the supervision of the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), the Collège de France, and Université Paris Cité; ArScAn, dedicated to Archaeology and Sciences of Antiquity (UMR 7041), overseen by the CNRS, Université Paris-Nanterre, Université Paris 1, Université Paris 8, the Ministry of Culture, and Inrap; as well as the Institut Français de Recherche sur l'Asie de l'Est (IFRAE/UMR 8043), affiliated with the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco), Université Paris Cité, and the CNRS, among others. Within this framework, the Villa Guimet could host doctoral students from these research teams to contribute to the museum's scientific programs.

Partnerships with major French museums and heritage institutions must be based on a possible complementarity of corpus, such as the collaboration with the Bibliothèque nationale de France in the field of research on Buddhist heritage from Dunhuang, for example. Other joint projects—exhibitions, publications—will thus be considered: for example, with the Cernuschi Museum, the Museum of Asian Arts of the City of Paris, or the Museum of Decorative Arts.

Finally, the Musée Guimet wants to intensify research on materiality of the collections by studying both the composition of the materials and the technologies, as presented in the first part of this plan. To do this, the projects will rely on the expertise of specialized laboratories, first and foremost the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF), such as the collaboration carried out for the study of the Angkor bronzes in 2024/2025. For certain materials such as textiles, other laboratories will undoubtedly be called upon in France or abroad.

These national partnerships will be aligned with research programs related to the museum's collections. To strengthen this network with institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Guimet Museum has become a member of the GIS Middle East and Muslim Worlds. It covers complementary themes related to our collections and the archives kept at the Musée Guimet, and in particular those of Afghanistan, Mughal India, or more generally those of Eurasian trade routes. The upcoming accession to GIS Asia should also strengthen this dynamic. Participation in the congresses regularly organized by these two bodies will allow meetings and dialogue with new researchers, especially young talents, and to open the museum to new perspectives.

Partnership policy with international scientific institutions

At the international level, multi-year partnerships are being developed with scientific foundations and institutions. Over the next five years, several partnerships will be prioritized with the Dunhuang Academy, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Foundation, and the National Museum of Tokyo.

The first associates the museum with the Dunhuang Academy, one of the most prestigious research centers in China, with two main offices, one located on the site of the caves in Mogao and the other in Lanzhou. The Academy is dedicated to the conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Mogao Grottoes near Dunhuang in Gansu, research on Dunhuang manuscripts and murals, and the training of specialists in the field. It has a team of researchers (documentary engineers, chemists, photographers, and curators) and a digital reference documentation on the Mogao Caves. The Musée Guimet, with its Pelliot collection (more than 250 paintings, a hundred textile fragments and sculptures), wishes to structure common research on the contextualization of works and on experiences of digital immersion and enhancement. A programme could also be developed around the chemical and technical analysis of paintings from our collections and other samples from the collections held by the Dunhuang Academy and partner institutions (British Library, British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Hermitage Museum, Humboldt Forum in Berlin, etc.).

Another partnership has been established with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Foundation. This association works in favour of the restoration and rehabilitation of historic sites in areas common to the collections of the Musée Guimet, such as India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The collaboration will focus on the promotion of the archives of the Villa Guimet linked to these geographical areas and the Foundation's contribution to exhibitions on India and Pakistan. A series of public conferences will also be able to discuss the current state of archaeological and heritage research in these countries.

Another form of international collaboration will be, subject to funding, the establishment of the Villa Guimet as a place of residence for museum curators from all over the world. These grants should make it possible to welcome professionals for stays of one to six months, so that they can conduct research from the museum's resources or be associated with scientific projects included in the five-year research plan. The Villa Guimet will thus become a real place of exchange and museum cooperation, conducive to the sharing of visions and practices around research on Asian arts.

Finally, as part of its digital project, the Villa Guimet will collaborate with partner institutions in France and abroad. After an inventory of the digital humanities platforms corresponding to the themes of the Villa Guimet's resources, a strategy will be put in place to define the resources to be shared, whether they are resources from other platforms to be found on the Villa Guimet digital portal, or resources produced by Villa Guimet to be disseminated on other platforms.

The structuring of these partnerships will give visibility to the research carried out within the Villa Guimet, a place for dialogue, synergy, and the production of knowledge on Asian arts.

Enrichment of the library, documentation and archives

Villa Guimet aims to create a real synergy between its textual and visual resources – archives, documentation, photographs – by federating them within a dynamic digital portal. Thanks to the interoperability of the data, researchers will be able to easily cross-reference information from these different media through a simplified search.

The creation of the Villa Guimet is a rare opportunity to reflect on digital resources that are essential to research today because they are fully integrated into the professional practices of curators and researchers.



Work preserved in the library. © musée Guimet, Paris/Stéphane-Ruchaud.

Collections

The library's collections, at the heart of the scientific project of the museum's founder, Émile Guimet, who saw it as "the brain of the museum", reflect the evolution of the museum's raison d'être, initially devoted to the comparative history of religions and becoming, since the 1920s, an institution devoted to the arts and civilizations of ancient Asia. This orientation has structured a dynamic documentary policy, enriched over time by purchases, donations and exchanges. Gradually specialising in Asian art, the museum and library collections have followed the interests of the curatorial directors, in line with the diversification and professionalisation of research on Asian art and archaeology.



Juliette Séjourné, researcher and artist in residence for research and creation at the Villa Guimet, in the documentation center (2025). © musée Guimet, Paris.

Today, these resources – more than 100,000 books and 2,500 titles of living or closed periodicals – bear witness to these developments and cover a vast disciplinary field centred on Asian art and archaeology, from High Antiquity in India and China to the edge of the contemporary world.

The archives, on the other hand, shed light on the provenance of the works, their journey, and the people who acquired, sold, collected or passed on to the museum in one way or another. The photographic collections offer a complement to the history, whether it is a question of views of exhibitions, the different states of a work (before or after restoration or pedestal, etc.) or the archaeological context. The documentation is also a source of valuable information on the life of the works, from restorations to loans for exhibition.

A document classification plan

In the Villa Guimet project, it is planned to develop a plan for classifying the documentary collections into thematic files that will be accessible on the collections portal and in the resource centre. An essential management tool, this plan guarantees a consistent classification, an easier search, and compliance with legal obligations.

The funds will be divided into different categories:

- Work files, archival sources including scientific analysis (iconographic, stylistic, etc.), the history of the piece, its provenance, elements of comparison, the presentation of the work at exhibitions, photographic documentation, correspondence, scientific analyses, condition reports or information related to the movements of the works. More than 65,000 files (i.e. 300 linear metres), currently scattered between the documentation centre, the offices and the conservation corridors, will be collected, rationalised and made accessible to researchers.
- Files of personalities (collectors, donors, archaeologists, artists, photographers, architects, dealers, art historians),
- Files of archaeological sites,
- Files on the history of the collections.

This documentary grouping, designed on the scale of the museum, aims at a global rationalization of information, in the service of research, conservation and enhancement of the collections.



The research library of the musée Guimet. © musée Guimet, Paris.



Cabinet holding the catalog cards of the research library of the musée Guimet. © musée Guimet, Paris.

Documentation policy

The museum's documentary policy is anchored in the current archaeological research carried out from Afghanistan to Japan via Central Asia, China and Korea, and from India to Southeast Asia, in collaboration with institutions such as the École française d'Extrême-Orient. The acquisitions follow the particularities and strengths of each conservation section, such as the art of printmaking and illustrated books in Japan, or Indian miniatures, Buddhist and Hindu iconography, painting and decorative arts from these countries, as well as research on Central Asia, particularly around Afghanistan and China. The Chinese, Japanese and Korean ceramics collections, the textile collections, photography, are also the subject of numerous publications. The museum is also committed to a policy of acquiring modern and contemporary art. It is essential to offer a selection of recent and relevant works on these disciplines, with a focus on interdisciplinary research.

Particular attention is paid to recent and interdisciplinary publications, related to major cultural areas, visual arts and historical contexts. Transversal themes such as religions and philosophies – the founding disciplines of the museum's identity – represented in statuary and ritual objects, remain at the heart of the enrichments. The rise of publications illustrated in colour has increased interest in exhibition catalogues, which are essential for deepening the study of works and collections and offering comparative perspectives. Despite increasing digitization, these exhibition catalogues remain essential references.

Thus, the museum's documentary policy is constantly adapting, combining strategic acquisitions, editorial monitoring and in-depth analysis of objects, in order to ensure a better understanding and optimal enhancement of Asian heritage.

Towards dematerialized documentation for broader sharing

The complete dematerialization of the work files, which will be part of this documentary policy, will allow remote accessibility, cross-research and simultaneity in the consultation of data. But digitization will above all promote the enrichment of data, without limitation of space and the sharing of documentation on the collections. This tool will thus open up the field of possibilities, which paper does not allow.

Of course, a study on the composition of the files, the methods of enrichment and the mode of organization and consultation of digital substitutes will have to be carried out in detail in order to provide the necessary resources to link each digitized work file to the work on which it depends within the museum collections management system, and to carry out relevant indexing.

In addition, the complete digitisation of the collection of work files can be carried out within a reasonable time in relation to the project (the files being generally made up of A4 sheets) and at a relatively low cost. Paper files will therefore be outsourced to the museum's reserve with possible derogatory consultation.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into this dematerialization process will make it possible to optimize the processing and indexing of 65,000 files of digitized works. These tools, trained by the documentalists, will effectively automate the classification and structuring of data, accelerating their integration into the database. Thanks to advanced text and image recognition algorithms, they will facilitate the search, identification, indexing of information and the evaluation of its communicability. This evolution represents a major challenge for museum institutions, which must combine preservation, accessibility (to researchers and the general public) and the valorization of data.

This necessary and fundamental dematerialization of work files is now at the heart of the overall research strategy.

Enhancement of the collection

The documentary policy of the Villa Guimet is based on four complementary axes. A first aspect is to continue to enrich the heritage collections by monitoring sales and donations – particularly in vernacular languages.

The second involves enriching the documentary offer for funds dedicated to research through editorial monitoring both on publishing houses and on the scientific production of listed researchers or laboratories.

The third axis of this policy consists of the institution's ability to adapt, which must support the evolution of research by participating in conferences, study days and other scientific events in order to establish relationships of trust with the key players in production.

Finally, at a time when the publishing offer is very broad, cooperation with other libraries (Collège de France, BULAC, EFEO, research centers on Asia) seems essential to cover the entire field as well as possible (complementarity of acquisitions, sharing of resources or that of acquisition lists). It will also be important to sign agreements for the sharing of digital resources at the French and foreign levels.

Thus, a clear documentary policy, relevant acquisitions, cataloguing and the rapid availability of monographs and periodicals essential to daily life, require a sufficient number of staff, trained and specialized in vernacular languages and aware of the stakes of research.

With regard to the enrichment of the archives' holdings, acquisitions and exhibitions in contemporary art offer the unique opportunity to meet the artists, their beneficiaries or those responsible for their works, as well as historians and critics who have studied their work (or that of related artists), providing a direct understanding of the works and their context.

This is why, as part of a policy of enriching the archives of the Villa Guimet, the museum takes advantage of acquisitions and exhibitions to identify, collect and produce archives in various forms (texts, images, videos), in order to document and preserve the memory of the works.

Thus, this approach seeks to preserve an immaterial memory of the works, by including everything about the artists, their works and their creative context. The objective is to analyze these dynamics, identify their sources of inspiration and understand the influence they exert on their environment.

Accessibility online and offline of the collections

The digital project of the Villa Guimet occupies a central place in its dissemination and accessibility strategy. Like that of the major heritage institutions, it is based on the creation of an online documentary portal, designed to guide both researchers and the general public in the discovery of the collections kept at the museum and to offer better visibility on the works kept in storage. This editorialized portal is therefore an essential tool for carrying out a variety of research and making accessible all the resources and scientific content conserved or created by the museum and its teams.

The ambition is to identify and report on French and foreign documentary resources and scientific and technical literature on Asian arts. This project will thus make accessible the catalogue of the research library on archaeology and Asian arts (more than 100,000 monograph records and 2500 periodicals), the database of collections of works kept at the museum (or deposited in other institutions), archival research tools and digitized archives (papers, nearly 600,000 photographs), the numerous online resources related to Asian cultures, but also the sound and audiovisual archives preserved or produced as part of scientific activities, conference recordings, videos or digital devices produced during thematic exhibitions. Finally, it will provide access to various publications (catalogues, essays, proceedings, articles, digital exhibitions or thematic tours, etc.)

This digital portal will offer many features allowing you to carry out a search, save it, export data and images, or monitor the latest research news at the Villa Guimet.

The musée Guimet and its role as a great department of asian art

The musée Guimet, a pivotal role

Since its creation, the Musée Guimet has occupied a central position in the study, conservation and transmission of non-European civilizations, and in particular Asian civilizations. Initially conceived as a museum of religions, it quickly became the recipient of archaeological missions carried out by French scholars in the field: from Étienne Aymonier and Louis Delaporte in Cambodia to Charles Varat in Korea, Jean-Paul Desroches in Mongolia, Paul Pelliot in China, Jacques Bacot in Tibet and Joseph Hackin in Afghanistan. Thanks to its vast spaces, the museum offers a setting conducive to the exhibition of monumental works, becoming the place where field research and museum presentation meet.

However, interest in Asian arts in France is not limited to the Musée Guimet. From the reign of Louis XIV, with the development of the East India Companies, and the influence of the Jesuit missions, objects and stories from Asia fascinated collectors and fuelled a deep craze. Japonism, born on the occasion of the Universal Exhibitions, and the taste for Asia in general irrigated the French arts, touching painters (Rodin, Manet, Moreau), musicians (Debussy), industrialists and patrons (Camondo, Rothschild). Over time, this taste became part of a dynamic of increasing circulation of objects, fuelled by the first archaeological missions and by an art market that had become one of the most flourishing in the world — except for contemporary art, a field in which Guimet also played a pioneering role in the 1990s. Today, these thousands of objects — fabrics, porcelain, prints, bronzes, books, photographs — enrich not only the national collections but also those of regional museums. Major institutions such as the Manufacture de Sèvres, the Cernuschi Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum and the museums of Nice and Biarritz highlight these heritages. However, many Asian collections are still sleeping in the reserves of museums whose primary vocation is not this, without the human and scientific resources necessary for their study. It is in the face of this observation that the coordinating and supporting role of the Musée Guimet takes on its full importance, as a major heritage department of Asian arts.

Developing a structured scientific network

The study of Asian collections requires an in-depth knowledge of the historical, cultural and technical contexts specific to each type of object. To trace their provenance – to identify the successive owners, understand their function, choose the appropriate conservation methods, and even shed light on their original site – it is necessary to mobilise specialised expertise. Out of context, these objects often lose their social significance in favor of a simple aesthetic value. It is therefore essential to reconnect Hindu or Buddhist statues, ceramics, paintings, Tibetan thangkas, bronzes, jades, photographs or illustrated books to the origins of their creation.

In this perspective, the Musée Guimet, with its curators who are experts in Asian arts, is at the centre of a national and international scientific network as a major department of Asian arts. It supports museums, which are sometimes limited in resources, in the study of their Asian collections, by providing methodological support and pooling of skills.

This network benefits works as much – through the authentication or identification of forgeries, the search for provenances, the study of sources in the original language, the function of the work, or the study of a regional craze for Asia and an art market – as well as the search for an enriching dialogue between Asia and France.

These exchanges make it possible to develop research into mutual influences, as well as to compare the social, artistic and technical responses that each cultural area tries to resolve (architecture; landscape painting; funerary rituals; palatial art; formation of artistic movements; restoration of ceramics). Contemporary art, a field for which the Musée Guimet has been developing a global strategy for several years, will also play a role in these dialogues between works of art and the view of society.

Federating, supporting, strengthening the dialogue around the Villa Guimet

In this way, the Villa Guimet will contribute to federating and animating a national network around Asian collections. Solid links have already been established with many museums as part of the museum's territorial strategy (exhibitions and loan and deposit policy), in particular with the recent deployment of the "Guimet +" in the regions. The exhibitions, which have been organized since 2024, lay the first foundations of these scientific cooperations, by making it possible to study the collections in museum reserves and to propose a meeting of Asia around four predefined cultural areas: China, Japan, the Indian World and the Himalayan World. The desire, in the long term, to have "Guimet +" simultaneously in different French cities and to circulate the contents, by presenting masterpieces from the national collections, accompanied by ambitious mediation tools, represents the keystone of the Musée Guimet's role as a major department of Asian arts and constitutes the most visible part of it at the national level.



Yannick Lintz, President of the musée Guimet, at the inauguration ceremony of Guimet+ in Clermont-Ferrand on December 13, 2024. © musée Guimet, Paris.

Regional and scientific development strategy

Regional initiatives, lacking a structured national vision, often struggle to reach their full scientific, economic or cultural potential. To remedy this, the Villa Guimet is embarking on a global strategy aimed at better understanding the Asian collections present throughout France, developing a solid museum network, and offering concrete support to institutions, by providing them with the expertise of its scientific team as well as resources and actions accessible from the Villa Guimet.

This strategy will be deployed in three areas:

- Study Asian collections in museums. This includes the study of the collections in relation to those of the institutions that have received them, the analysis of databases (when they are accessible), exchanges with curators, *in situ* visits to study the works, the understanding of local dynamics (temporary exhibitions, permanent exhibitions, links with the artists). This should make it possible to map these collections and to develop a first document of the distribution of Asian collections in France.
- Define and activate the scientific role of the Musée Guimet. The aim here is to play a leading role in the organisation of seminars, training in the study of Asian collections, the enrichment of the East-West dialogue around Eurasian arts and civilisations (conferences, publications, catalogues), the identification of themes to be developed with each institution (study of forgeries, questions related to provenance, material, archives, etc.), the networking of French and international researchers with Asian museums, the preparation of the next Guimet+ in the region or any other project involving the collections of the Musée Guimet in the region.
- Identify the role of the Musée Guimet in the cultural programme. The aim is to support East-West cultural dialogues (dance, music, calligraphy, approach to matter, philosophy, poetry), to develop tools to immerse the public in an Asia in motion, and more generally, to make Asia more accessible to different audiences.

Research valorisation

Supported by an exceptional collection, a library and reference archives, research at the Musée Guimet is based on its curators and a wider scientific community, welcomed within its walls from the beginning. The creation of the Villa Guimet marks a turning point, attesting to the museum's desire to adopt a structured, coherent and ambitious scientific dissemination policy. This will be manifested through scientific events (meetings, conferences, etc.), through publishing (publication policy) and online (digital policy). The offer will therefore be shared between the Villa Guimet for the academic public and the programming and public department (in conjunction with the Villa Guimet) for the general public. This policy is designed for the next five years (2026–2030), in line with the museum's missions, the expectations of academic and non-specialized audiences, and international standards for research in art history.



International symposium as part of the "Guimet China 2024" year: "Exhibiting asian arts: new franco-chinese perspectives". © musée Guimet, Paris.

Strategic Objectives

The objectives of this research dissemination policy are to strengthen the position of the Musée Guimet as an international reference institution in the field of research on Asian arts; to promote the circulation of the knowledge generated by the museum and its collections to the community of researchers, heritage professionals, students, and the general public; to encourage multidisciplinary and international collaboration in fields related to the history of Asian art and to promote the unique heritage resources of the Musée Guimet through publications, events and innovative digital formats.



Hôtel Heidelberg, set to house the Villa Guimet by 2030. © musée Guimet, Paris/Vincent Leroux.

Scientific events: seminars, symposia, conferences

The Villa Guimet will set up a coherent annual scientific programme, structured around three formats: monthly seminars open to the academic public, where residents (doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, visiting researchers) will present their work; conferences for a wider audience (organised by the Programming and Public Directorate) on current research (by curators, restorers, resident or external researchers) related to the life of collections or exhibitions; international conferences organized or co-organized every two years, with publication of the proceedings. Depending on their format, the Pelliot Salon and the Jean-François Jarrige auditorium will host these events, with systematic video recording and deferred online posting.

The museum will also establish research and dissemination partnerships with academic institutions (Sorbonne, Inalco, EHESS, EPHE), research centers (EFEO, CNRS, Collège de France) and major museums in the field of Asian arts (Cernuschi Museum, Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, British Museum,

Victoria & Albert Museum, Rijksmuseum, Östasiatiska museet, etc.). Humboldt Forum in Berlin, National Museum of Asian Art Washington, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, Taipei Palace Museum, Tokyo National Museum, Dunhuang Academy Museum, Shanghai Museum, etc.). These collaborations will take the form of joint conferences, shared publications or cross-residencies of researchers.

Dissemination through the written word: enhancing the museum's scientific visibility

The Musée Guimet will continue its role as co-editor, alongside the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) and the Cernuschi Museum, of the journal *Arts Asiatiques*, a peer-reviewed scientific publication. A multi-year development programme will be implemented jointly by the three institutions, with the aim of strengthening the visibility of the deferred open access journal (*Persée*), as well as the promotion of articles resulting from the research carried out by the museum's curators and the resident researchers of the Villa Guimet and the gradual integration of thematic files coordinated by the curators and/or associate researchers.

At the same time, the Villa Guimet's digital portal will publish online the proceedings of the conferences, the residents' research notebooks, documentary portfolios or critical editions of archives. This portal will be interoperable with HAL and OpenEdition to enhance the visibility of the work.

Online dissemination: towards an open and shared science

The Musée Guimet, through its library, archives and photographic collection, is committed to an active policy of digitization and dissemination of research resources via an enriched digital catalog of works, the gradual online publication of its photographic collections, as well as the publication of corpora of manuscript archives. All these essential resources for research will be accessible in open access under an open license.

The scientific conferences, organized in the auditorium or the Pelliot room, will be captured, broadcast online and available as podcasts. A series of scientific podcasts, produced in partnership with an audio studio, will highlight the work of the curators, researchers and restorers of the Villa Guimet.

Finally, to reach a wider audience, short scientific mediation content (video clips, interviews, infographics, educational discussion threads, thematic files) will be produced for social networks, in conjunction with the communication department and the programming and public department, in order to broaden the audience and strengthen the dissemination of knowledge to new audiences. The cultural mediation and public department will be in charge of content accessible only outside the museum, while the museum and signage mediation department will manage the mediation content to which the museum wishes to give access from the institution.



International symposium as part of the "Guimet China 2024" year: "Exhibiting asian arts: new franco-chinese perspectives". © musée Guimet, Paris.

The Villa Guimet: a catalyst for scientific dissemination

The Villa Guimet is the epicentre of the museum's research policy. Its mission is not limited to welcoming researchers but is intended to become a place of reference for the dissemination of knowledge. Eventually, the Villa Guimet will organize an annual residents' day, open to the public, for the presentation of the work in progress; methodological workshops on the history of Asian arts (epigraphy, iconography, materials, etc.), for young researchers and students and an online publication bringing together each year a selection of the works of its grantees, in the form of notebooks of the Villa Guimet.

Governance, evaluation and resources

Finally, a scientific advisory committee created to consolidate the bridges between academic research and the museum's scientific team, chaired by the museum's management and made up of the management of the Villa Guimet and the Directorate of Collections and Conservation, the head of the research department of the Villa Guimet and the partner institutions and the academic world, will be responsible for validating the annual major orientations, evaluating editorial projects and scientific events and guaranteeing the quality and scientific integrity of the content disseminated.

The museum will devote a specific part of its budget to this policy, with cross-funding (subsidies from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, ANR, scientific sponsorship, European funds), coordinated by the Research Department of the Villa Guimet. The museum intends to actively contribute to the production, circulation and sharing of knowledge, in a spirit of excellence, openness and innovation. This policy is based on unrivalled heritage resources, on the recognised competence of its curators, and on the dynamics of the Villa Guimet. Through the richness of its publications, the high standards of its scientific events, the conferences for the general public – which allow the dissemination of research news in a form accessible to as many people as possible – and the accessibility of its digital formats, the Musée Guimet intends to promote research on Asian arts to the most diverse audiences in the years to come.

Conclusion of the research plan

This document, we hope, will have shed light on the five-year trajectory of the Musée Guimet and its Villa. As you can see, the aim here is to define the strategic axes of research in its thematic perimeters in connection with the collections. Associated with this challenge, it was also appropriate, in this first five-year plan set up by the museum, to set the first stages in the organization of research resources (documentation of collections, scientific archives and tools for access to these resources).

In order to enable the Villa Guimet to become this place of scientific influence, a real crossroads for meetings, gestation and dissemination of research on Asian arts, it is also essential to organize the implementation of the partnership policy, as well as the reception of researchers at the Villa (call for applications for research contracts from 6 months to 3 years) and residencies of international curators and researchers (from 1 to 3 months).

Finally, in order to promote the results of research, through the organization of public seminars, colloquia and publications, the Villa Guimet gives itself the first year to propose a clear and visible policy to all types of audiences.

This ambitious plan requires appropriate funding. We are indeed in the logic of a contract of objectives to which it is necessary to associate human and financial resources. The public establishment, through its annual operating budget, already contributes to this, through its human resources, its work to put the collections online and through the restoration and digitisation of certain collections.

In addition, the development of research programmes, the hosting of researchers, the digitisation of documentary collections and photographic collections, as well as the promotion of research will also necessarily be based on patronage, whether it wishes to promote and encourage knowledge in the field of Asian arts, or whether it is a question of foundations dedicated to this field. The Villa Guimet will also respond to calls for projects, if necessary international, to finance operations related to its program.



Salon Pelliot, overlooking the Japanese Garden. © musée Guimet, Paris/Vincent Leroux.

As with any contract of objectives and means, the Villa Guimet will equip itself with a tool for programming and monitoring specific projects in the five-year vision of its strategic axes. This tool will allow the management of the Villa Guimet, and all the members of the scientific advisory committee, to ensure that each of the projects is managed within the planned time and within the budgetary means. Some projects will evolve according to opportunities, others may be adjusted in one direction or another.

Finally, the period 2026–2031 will also see the installation of the Villa Guimet in the prestigious setting of the Hotel Heidelberg, thus fully concretizing its strategic role in the large-scale research policy implemented by the public establishment of the Musée Guimet.

Annexes

Villa Guimet: resources, tools and spaces

The Villa Guimet, an international centre for research on Asian arts

Launched by Yannick LINTZ, president of the Musée Guimet, the Villa Guimet aims to transform the Hôtel d'Heidelberg, one of the museum's three sites, into an international research centre. The research carried out within the framework of the Villa Guimet benefits from documentary and scientific resources as well as from the network of researchers already largely constituted.

The missions

The Villa Guimet will have three priority missions:

- to preserve and enhance the exceptional collections of the Musée Guimet;
- to develop research on Asian arts at the international level by hosting researchers and conducting innovative research and creation programmes for artists;
- to promote and disseminate the results of research through an ambitious programme of conferences, seminars and cultural activities.

Holdings

The Villa Guimet makes available the exceptional collections of the library, archives, scientific documentation and photographic collections of the museum. Among the important collections are the collections of Émile Guimet, Paul Pelliot, Joseph Hackin, C.T Loo and Hippolyte Frandin. In order to promote the activities of researchers, the Villa Guimet will make the following collections accessible:

- 65,000 files on the works kept at the museum,
- 100,000 literary and social science research works, thousands of catalogues, more than 1,500 periodical titles,
- 600,000 unpublished old photographs of archaeological sites, regions and little-known eras

in Asian countries,

- 1000 linear metres of historical and scientific archives,
- 25 TB of digital archives,
- 4,000 sound and audiovisual archives.

Team

The Villa Guimet, under the direction of Lise Mész, chief curator of heritage and archaeologist, is composed of five poles: Archives, Documentation, Library, Photographs and Research. It works closely with the Collections and Conservation Department and the Programming and Audiences Department to promote the enhancement of the collections and the dissemination of knowledge.

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Access

The Villa Guimet is located at the Musée Guimet, 6 place d'Iéna, 75116 Paris

Metro → Line 9, Iéna station; Line 6, Boissière station

Bus → Lines 32, 63 and 82, Iéna stop; Lines 22 and 30, Kleber-Boissière stop ; Line 32, Albert de Mun stop

RER → Line C, Pont de l'Alma station

Future space

By 2030, the Hôtel d'Heidelberg, an annex of the Musée Guimet located at 19 avenue d'Iéna in Paris, will undergo a profound transformation to accommodate the Villa Guimet. Its renovation will provide an exceptional setting for the reception of researchers and artists in residence as well as the general public interested in Asian arts.

The Villa Guimet will include:

- consultation and reading rooms as well as offices for researchers and collective workspaces;
- a conference room in addition to the museum's auditorium;
- storage rooms and a workshop for the conservation, treatment and management of the collections, as well as a treatment and conservation room for the preservation of the collections;
- convivial spaces to enhance this exceptional working environment: a Japanese garden with a tea pavilion, rest and dining areas.

These initiatives will enable the Villa Guimet to constitute a living space for dialogue and culture, heritage and creation to preserve and enhance the exceptional collections on Asian arts, to welcome researchers and innovative projects, to promote and disseminate the results of this research through a programme of conferences, seminars and cultural activities in the future.

Resources

In addition to documentary resources, the Villa Guimet uses new technologies to serve heritage. For example, the Hikar!A project (2023-2026), led by the Musée Guimet in partnership with Teklia and funded by the France 2030 plan, is an innovative program that uses artificial intelligence to analyze the Dubois collection (19,000 photos), other Japanese collections of the museum (2,000 photos) and similar collections. AI models will be trained to analyze visual elements and reveal never-before-seen data on colors, image sequences, and iconographic patterns. All this information will be accessible via a digital platform, designed for the general public and researchers. This project will enhance the photographic collections of the Musée Guimet and enrich knowledge of Japanese photography before 1912, while exploring new approaches to automated indexing.

The digital dimension of the Villa Guimet project is fundamental. The digital dissemination strategy of the collections is based, like other major heritage institutions, on the creation of a documentary portal accessible online and editorialized in order to guide researchers and the general public in research around

and on the collections kept at the museum.

This documentary portal will allow a variety of research to be carried out and will make accessible all the resources and scientific content conserved or created by the museum and its teams.

Its objective is to identify and report on French and foreign documentary resources and scientific and technical literature on Asian arts:

- access to the catalogue of the Research Library on Archaeology and Asian Arts, which includes more than 100,000 monograph entries and 300 periodicals,
- access to the database of collections of works held at the museum or deposited in other institutions,
- access to archival finding aids and digitised paper archives and photographic collections, numbering 600,000,
- access to a wide range of resources and links to digital platforms related to Asian cultures, but also
- access to sound and audiovisual archives kept or produced in the context of scientific activities, conference recordings, videos or digital devices produced during thematic exhibitions,
- access to various publications (catalogues, essays, proceedings, articles, digital exhibitions or thematic tours, etc.).

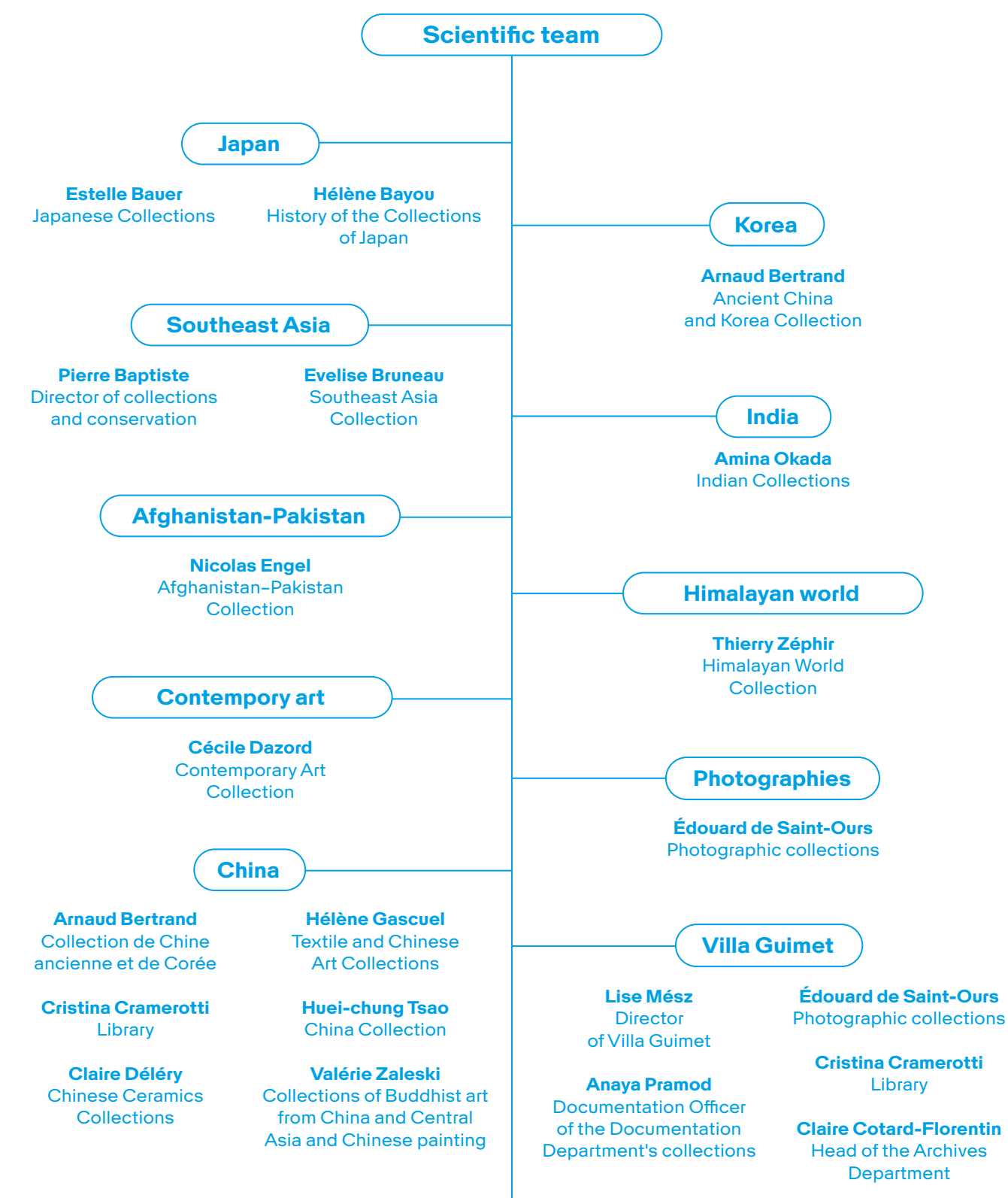
It will offer many features to carry out a search, save it, export data and images, and monitor research news at the Villa Guimet.

Networks of researchers

The research policy of the Villa Guimet is also based on the mobilization of eminent researchers. The scientific team of the Villa Guimet is composed of 14 specialists and researchers (see Appendix 1) of the museum's conservation and collections, specialized in all fields of Asian art and archaeology. In addition, Villa Guimet has established research partnerships with leading national and international institutions such as:

- French School of the Far East (EFEO)
 - Agha Khan Foundation for Culture
 - French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA)
 - Dunhuang Academy
 - French Institute for Research on Japan
- The hosting of researchers on long- or short-term scientific stays, the granting of scientific residence grants to doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, or even experienced researchers, and the support for publication are valuable supports for the development of international research on Asian arts.

Organizational chart of the scientific team



Biographies of the curator-researchers



Pierre Baptiste
Director of collections and conservation

Director of Collections and Conservation at the Musée Guimet, Pierre Baptiste has been in charge of Southeast Asian arts since 1996. An art historian and lecturer at the École du Louvre (Paris) and at the Faculty of Archaeology of the Royal University of Cambodia (Phnom Penh), he directed the renovation of the Musée Guimet's rooms devoted to Southeast Asia (1996-2001) before renewing ties with his colleagues at the museums of Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. Author of in-depth articles on specific subjects related to the arts of these countries, he participated in the writing and scientific direction of several books devoted to these fields (*French Archaeological Missions in Vietnam, the monuments of Champa, photographs and itineraries, 1902-1904 ; Khmer Art in the Collections of the Musée Guimet*) and has been the scientific curator of exhibitions organized at the Musée Guimet on these issues (*Treasures of Art of Vietnam - The Sculpture of Champa ; Dvaravati: The Sources of Buddhism in Thailand ; Angkor, the birth of a myth - Louis Delaporte and Cambodia; The Descent of the Dragon - Royal Art of Vietnam*) which have led to the publication of catalogues of which he is the scientific director. In 2025, he was co-curator of the exhibition *Royal Bronzes of Angkor, an Art of the Divine*.



Estelle Bauer
Japanese Collections

Holder of a doctorate from Inalco and a degree in art history and archaeology, obtained from Paris IV,

Estelle Bauer did most of her studies in Japanese art history in Japan, where she stayed for more than five years. She was successively lecturer and professor of classical Japanese civilization at Inalco from 2001 to 2024. She has also taught at the École du Louvre, the Institute of East Asian Art History at Heidelberg University, and Columbia University. His field of research and publications focus on narrative painting, in particular horizontally unrolled paint rollers (emaki), the portrayal of The Tale of Genji, the evolution of discourses on painting (11th – 17th centuries) and, more recently, the diplomatic gifts offered to European countries in the 1860s. In 2021, she was co-curator of two exhibitions: *Love, War, Party. Wonders of Japanese Narrative Art in the European Collections* (Rietberg Museum, Zurich) and *Japanese Objects from the Château de Fontainebleau. Art and diplomacy* (Château de Fontainebleau). Since 2024, she has held the position of curator of Japanese collections at the Musée Guimet and curates the Manga exhibition. *Quite an art !* scheduled from November 19, 2025 to March 9, 2026.



Hélène Bayou
History of the Collections of Japan

Hélène Bayou has been a curator at the Musée Guimet, in charge of the Japanese Arts section since 1991. In this capacity, she has taught at the École du Louvre and organized several exhibitions on the arts of Japan. She was placed in 2022 as head of the history of Japan's collections.



Arnaud Bertrand
Ancient China
and Korea Collection

Archaeologist and sinologist, Arnaud Bertrand holds a doctorate in history and sinology from the École Pratique des Hautes Études. An in-house researcher in the "Archaeology of Central Asia" team of the ArScAn laboratory, and a member of CREOPS, he has participated in French archaeological missions in Uzbekistan, then in China with the Dunhuang Academy, where he worked for many years on the history of ancient fortifications. His research always articulates the dialogue between civilizations, through a meticulous study of works of art placed in their context of creation, by bringing them closer to texts, and other vestiges of the past. He was executive director of the French Association of Friends of the Orient (2014-2023), then head of cultural programming for the Asian Spring (2022-2024). In 2021, he co-founded the Asia Collections Network – Europe, the first European network that maps Asian collections in Europe, and networks specialists. He is also an author for the Youtube channel "Nota Bene", and a scientific advisor for historical documentaries on China. He has been teaching at the Institut Catholique de Paris since 2018, and has been directing the Asia specialty course at the École du Louvre since 2024, giving the very first course dedicated to the civilizations of Korea. Since September 2023, he has been curator of the Ancient China and Korea departments at the Musée Guimet. In 2024, he co-curated the exhibitions *Golden Ming and Tang China: A Cosmopolitan Dynasty (618–907 AD)*. In 2026, he is preparing two exhibitions dedicated to Korea.



Evelise Bruneau
Southeast Asia Collection

A graduate of the École du Louvre in Art History, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco) in Khmer language and International Studies, and the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in Archaeology, Evelise Bruneau has developed an in-depth knowledge in the cultures of Southeast Asia. She has dedicated much of her career to this region, notably by heading a branch of the French Cultural Center in Cambodia, serving as an advisor to a museum in Thailand, and participating in archaeological missions in Cambodia and Indonesia. In France, she has taken part in numerous preventive archaeology missions and held various positions at the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). She has been the Curator of the Southeast Asia collections at the Musée Guimet since July 1, 2025.



Cristina Cramerotti
Library

A graduate of Inalco and EHESS, a researcher specialising in Asian cultures and arts, Cristina Cramerotti holds the position of library curator at the Musée Guimet. Her work focuses in particular on intercultural networks related to museum libraries, with a particular emphasis on exchanges between Asia and the West. She has published several notable works, including French-Burmese Dictionary, co-authored with Denise Bernot and Yin Yin Myint, *Characters of Asia: Treasures of the Library*, *Vagabond Investigations: Émile Guimet's Illustrated Journey to Asia*, co-authored with Pierre Baptiste.



Cécile Dazord
Contemporary Art
Collection

Cécile Dazord is an associate professor of classics (1994) and a graduate of the National Heritage Institute (2000). After a replacement at the Musée de Vallauris (2000), she was in charge of contemporary art at the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg (2001-2005). In 2006, she joined the Research Department of the Centre for Research and Restoration of the Museums of France (C2RMF) where she developed a program of studies and research on conservation issues specific to contemporary art and more specifically on the phenomena of technological obsolescence. From 2019 to 2023, she resides in Buenos Aires, Argentina where she collaborates with the ex-ESMA museum and memory site (formerly the School of Naval Officers, a former detention and torture center during the dictatorship of 1976 to 1983). Since September 2024, she has been in charge of contemporary art at the Musée Guimet.



Claire Déléry
Chinese Ceramics
Collections

laire Déléry is a Doctor of History and heritage curator, in charge of Chinese ceramics at the Musée Guimet. She also has a degree in the field of laboratory analysis of art objects. She has curated several exhibitions on Chinese ceramics at the Musée Guimet, and has collaborated, with Huei-chung Tsao, on the project of exhaustive study of Chinese porcelain in the Santos Palace in Lisbon.



Édouard de Saint-Ours
Photographic collections

Édouard de Saint-Ours holds a PhD in Art History (University of St Andrews) and Contemporary History (University of Le Havre Normandie) and is a specialist in nineteenth-century photography in Asia. His thesis, defended in 2024, examines the role of photography in the early years of French colonialism in Mainland Southeast Asia (1845-1880). He has also researched the history of early color processes and the Franco-British networks that promoted the development of photography during the 1840s and 1850s.



Nicolas Engel
Afghanistan–Pakistan
Collection

Nicolas Engel holds a master's degree in Afghan archaeology from the EHESS and has been curator of the Afghanistan-Pakistan collections at the Musée Guimet since 2022. He was previously curator at the Cernuschi Museum from 2003 to 2009 before serving as Deputy Director of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA) from 2009 to 2013, contributing to field missions and the preservation of Afghan heritage. From 2014 to 2017, he was the curator of religious and civil artworks (COATC) for the City of Paris, then museum advisor at the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs (DRAC) - Île-de-France from 2018 to 2021. He was co-curator of the exhibition *The Sasanian Persians: The Splendor of a Forgotten Empire* in 2006, curator of the exhibition *Luristan Bronzes: Enigmas of Ancient Iran* in 2008, and most recently of *Afghanistan: Shadows and Legends* at the Guimet Museum (October 26, 2022 – February 6, 2023). He also led the publication of the eponymous book, highlighting Afghan archaeological treasures and the challenges related to their conservation while participating in expert committees with UNESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.



Hélène Gascuel
Textile and Chinese
Art Collections

Doctor in Art History from the Sorbonne University and a specialist in the history of decorative arts and textile craftsmanship in China, Hélène Gascuel is now the curator in charge of the Chinese textile and furniture collections at the Guimet Museum. She has led several major exhibitions, including *Sublime Materials: 5,000 Years of Creation in China* in 2014 and *Ming Gold: Splendor and Beauty of Imperial China (14th–17th Century)* in 2024. Also active in academic research,

she co-authored a study on a China Trade screen held at the French National Archives, published in 2015 in the journal *Technè*, and contributed to eight articles published in *Arts Asiatiques* between 2017 and 2023. In 2023, she defended her doctoral dissertation titled "Norm and Practice: Regulation of Clothing in Qing Dynasty China (1644–1911) Based on the Huangchao liqi tushi 皇朝禮器圖式 (Illustrated Models of Imperial Court Ritual Paraphernalia).



Lise Mész
Director of Villa Guimet

Lise Mész is currently a heritage curator and the director of the Villa Guimet, international research center for Asian arts at the Guimet Museum. As an archaeologist, doctor in archaeology and specialist in ancient Peru, she has participated in several archaeological missions in France and abroad, and has conducted excavations in Peru, Syria, and Bangladesh. She has worked at the Direction for Heritage and Architecture in the Ministry of Culture, the National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research, the National Archives, and the Louvre Museum, where she began conducting research on the history of non-European art collections. At Paris Musées, she was Deputy Director of Collections and Research for the City of the 14 Paris museums. At the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, she held the position of Advisor to the President on the history of collections, responsible for researching the provenance of African cultural property, and Deputy Director of Collections and Heritage.



Amina Okada
Indian Collections

Amina Okada is General Curator of Heritage, in charge of Indian arts at the Musée Guimet. Curator of numerous exhibitions – including *The Golden Age of Classical India*, *The Gupta Empire* (Grand Palais, 2007) and *From the Great Mughals to the Maharajahs, Jewels of the Al Thani Collection* (Grand Palais, 2017) – she is also the author of several books on the art and civilization of India: *Ajantâ* (National Printing Office, 1991), *The Great Mughal and its Painters*, *Miniaturists of India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Flammarion, 1992), *Tāj Mahal* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1993), *A Jewel of Mughal India, the Mausoleum of I'timād ud-Daulah* (5 Continents Editions, 2003), *Hoysala, Gods of India and Celestial Beauties* (Imprimerie Nationale, 2013), *Painting in India* (New Editions Scala, 2016), *Magical Animals in Indian Painting* (Circonflexe, 2017), *La Fontaine's Fables in the Orients* (Orients Editions, 2021). She was also the scientific director of the 7-volume "Râmâyana illustré par les miniatures indiennes du XVI au XIX^e siècle" (Éditions Diane de Selliers, 2011; Hirayama Prize of the Academy

of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres), "The Bhagavadgītā illustrated by Indian painting" (Éditions Diane de Selliers, 2016) and "Leyli et Majnûn de Jâmi illustré par les miniatures d'Orient" (Éditions Diane de Selliers, 2021).



Huei-chung Tsao
China Collection

A graduate of the National Taiwan University and the École du Louvre, Huei-chung Tsao has been a researcher in the China section at the Musée Guimet since 1990. She is also the scientific director of the *Masterpieces of the Grandidier collection of Chinese ceramics* (2000 pieces) website put online in 2004 by RMN-GP in collaboration with the Musée Guimet. She has curated numerous exhibitions on China at the Musée Guimet: *Treasures of Ancient China, ritual bronzes from the Meiyintang collection* (2012); *Splendours of the Han* (2014); *Jade, from emperors to Art Deco* (2016); *A Firmament of Porcelain* (2019); *Tang China* (2024) and Abroad: *Emperor Kangxi and the Sun King Louis XIV*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2011; *West encounters East*, Shanghai Museum, 2021; and contributed to the corresponding catalogues. In addition, she has contributed to a dozen books in French and Chinese, including *L'art de la Chine*, revised and expanded edition, Mazenod, Paris, 1997; *From the forgotten deserts, centuries of dazzling Dunhuang Art*, Taipei, 2005; *Carnets de route, 1906-1908 : Paul Pelliot*, Paris, 2008 ; *The Forbidden City at the Louvre*, Paris, 2011; *Sublimes matières*, Paris, 2014; *Chinese Porcelain from the Santos Palace* (Art Book Prize, 2022), Paris, 2021, co-directed with Claire Déléry; *Glaze and Glory*, Shanghai, 2022.



Valérie Zaleski
Collections of Buddhist art from China and Central Asia and Chinese painting

A graduate of the École du Louvre and a doctor in art history (Paris-Sorbonne), Valérie Zaleski is a specialist in Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist art. She is curator of the collections of Chinese painting and Buddhist art at the Musée Guimet and has curated several exhibitions, including *Tajikistan, in the Land of Golden Rivers* (2021, Musée Guimet), *T'ang Haywen, a Chinese Painter in Paris* (1927–1991) (2024, Musée Guimet), *Kazakhstan, Treasures of the Great Steppe, The Silk Roads* (2024, Draguignan). She is also an associate researcher at the CRCAO and a member of CREOPS (Sorbonne University) and author of articles on Buddhist art in China, Tajikistan and Thailand.



Thierry Zéphir
Himalayan World Collection

Thierry Zéphir is a research engineer at the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques–Guimet in Paris, where he has worked since 1986. He is also a lecturer at the École du Louvre where he teaches the arts of India and the countries of the Indianized world. He has participated in the training of students at the Faculty of Archaeology in Phnom Penh and regularly contributes to the courses given by the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) in London. He is the author of various books and scientific articles, including *L'Art de l'Asie du Sud-Est* (Citadelles et Mazenod) (1994), *L'Empire des rois khmers* (1997), *L'art khmer dans les collections du musée Guimet* (2008). He has also curated several exhibitions devoted to the arts of India and Southeast Asia, both in France and abroad, such as *Royal Bronzes of Angkor, an Art of the Divine* (2025); *Asian Medicine* (2023); *Buddha – The Golden Legend* (2019); *Angkor, birth of a myth – Louis Delaporte and Cambodia* (2013); *Dvaravati – The Sources of Buddhism in Thailand* (2009); *The Golden Age of Classical India – The Gupta Empire* (2007); *Champa Art Treasures – The Sculpture of Vietnam* (2005); *Angkor and Ten Centuries of Khmer Art* (1997).

Synoptic table of research projects

GUIMET RESEARCH PLAN 2026-2030

AXIS 1 MATERIALITY

Projects	Collections studied	Partners	Research objectives	Contributors
Study of the stucco and unfired clay of Afghanistan, the 3rd – 8th centuries of our era discovered in an archaeological context	The Afghan collection of stuccoes and various unfired clays, dating from the 3rd to the 8th century CE	• Università degli studi di Napoli e l'Orientale • Università degli studi di Roma La Sapienza • Università degli studi di Bologna	• Determine the precise composition of stuccoes and unfired clays in order to clarify the chronological occupation of the various Buddhist monasteries at Hadda. • Compare the modeled works from the Hadda site with those from other sites such as Tepe Sardar in Ghazni, Tepe Narenj in Kabul, or with pieces lacking verified archaeological provenance. • Identify production and distribution networks, as artisans traveled to embellish the chapels and stupas of Buddhist monasteries in eastern Afghanistan.	Nicolas Engel
Fakes and forgers in Chinese antiquities	Bronzes, jades, terracottas (mingqi-type figurines)	• CRCAO • C2RMF • ACN-Europe	• Establish a typology of forgeries, identify them, and conduct a study of falsification techniques and methods. • Study the impact of counterfeits as well as their prevention and protection measures.	Arnaud Bertrand
Chinese Neolithic ceramics: a technical study	Around fifty Chinese ceramics dating from the Neolithic period – from the 5th millennium BCE to the Bronze Age.	• Dr. Anke Hein (Peter Moores Associate Professor in Chinese Archaeology – Hugh College, University of Oxford) • Cernuschi Museum (Mael Bellec) • Sèvres – Museum of Ceramics • National Archaeology Museum	• Understand the development of kilns and ceramic firing techniques, and better determine the regional origins of the pieces. • Refine the dating of these works in order to trace the development of this craft.	Arnaud Bertrand Huei-chung Tsao
Joint project for the analysis of bronze objects from Liyu, between the Guimet Museum and the Shanghai Museum	The pieces discovered in 1923 at the Liyu site	• Shanghai Museum • C2RMF	• Study the manufacturing processes • Identify the different workshops • Determine the origin of the alloys	Arnaud Bertrand Huei-chung Tsao
Study of Bronze Art in Southeast Asia	• Bronze art in Cambodia in the context of pre-Angkorian (7th–8th centuries) and Angkorian (9th–15th centuries) Khmer art • Bronzes from the Dong Son culture (Late Bronze Age to Iron Age, 5th–1st centuries BCE) in the Red River Delta (northern Vietnam)	• National Museum of Cambodia • EFEO • C2RMF • Arc'Antique Laboratory • Cernuschi Museum • IRCAM • Vietnam National Museum of History, Hanoi	• Study of copper alloys, their sources of supply, and their technical implementation within the foundry • Publication of an in-depth study focused on the image of the reclining Vishnu from the Western Mebon • Deepen the understanding of how bronze drums were made and the technical choices involved in their casting: characterization of mold casting, analysis of material resonance, and interpretation of the decorative motifs	Pierre Baptiste
Program for the conservation and restoration of works: paintings of Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese paintings, Indian textiles	Works kept in storage due to their poor state of preservation, including 450 pieces from the Tibetan painting collection—ranging from the 12th to the 20th century—along with Chinese and Japanese paintings, and Indian textiles.	Madame Marion BOYER ; Madame Patricia DAL-PRÀ ; Madame Delphine YALA-PIERRE. Cadres Exquis - Madame Pauline DI MASCIO	• Restore the pictorial layer and its support, and repair or reconstruct existing textile mountings • Provide each thangka with a frame adapted to its specific material characteristics • Display works that have not been seen for a very long time—or never exhibited at all—and enhance their value for the public • Combine this project with a scientific study of pigments and preparatory layers to clarify the palette used and provide valuable insights into the provenance of the works and the trade routes of pigments in High Asia	Thierry Zéphir

AXIS 2 CONTEXT OF CREATION

Projects	Collections studied	Partners	Research objectives	Contributors
New Technologies for a revised chronology of the Indo-Iranian frontiers (7000 to 2600 BCE)	- Uninventoried ceramic sherds from the French excavations led by Jean-Marie Casal at the sites of Amri (Pakistan) and Mundigak (Afghanistan) - Samples from Mehrgarh and sites in the Makran region, held by the CNRS in Nanterre	- ARscAN (Research Agreement) - CNRS - Laboratory of Climate and Environmental Sciences (LSCE) - Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée (MOM), Lyon	- Refine the dating of the chronological sequences of Amri and Mundigak, as well as that of the works in the museum that originate from them - Connect these Guimet collections with those held in Pakistan (Karachi Museum) and by the CNRS (Mehrgarh – Jarrige Mission, etc.)	Nicolas Engel
Understanding the trade routes between China and Central Asia (5th century BCE – 5th century CE)	- Over 300 archaeological sites (including bibliography and field surveys), around 600 Chinese texts, and nearly 6,000 petroglyphs (from which a selection will be made) - Archaeological artifacts discovered during missions in Chinese Central Asia - Collections from the Qin, Western Han, Xin, and Eastern Han dynasties in China Buddhist collections from the Han to the Northern Wei periods	- Dr. Arnaud Bertrand (GUIMET et ARscAN) - Dr. Olivier Bordeaux (CNRS, ARscAN) - Dr. Corinne Debaine-Francfort (CNRS, ARscAN) - Dr. Frédérique Brunet (CNRS, ARscAN) - Dr. Christophe Decoudun (ICP, ARscAN) - Dr. Segolène De Pontbriand (ARscAN) - Dr. Ani Danielyan (ARscAN) - David Sarmiento-Castillo (ARscAN) - Maxim Korolkov (Heidelberg)	- Propose a material and spatial analysis of cross-border interaction phenomena at both regional and global levels - Enhance knowledge of these ancient periods and refine the understanding of the Guimet Museum’s collections	Arnaud Bertrand Nicolas Engel Valérie Zaleski
The study of the art of the image and cultural exchanges during the Han and Tang dynasties through the collections of the Musée Guimet	Chinese art collections from the Han and Tang dynasties (coins, religious images, Buddhist and Taoist statuary, and cultural objects, etc.)	Shaanxi History Museum (Yue Minjing)	- Catalogue and classify the Chinese art collections at the Guimet Museum according to their materials and techniques, and analyze the Hellenistic cultural elements present in these works. - Systematically study Hellenistic art within Chinese art, including coins, religious images, and influences on Buddhist and Taoist statues, as well as on other cultural objects.	Arnaud Bertrand
"Resonating with the gods" in China. Communication objects and divinatory interfaces	Objects associated with worship practices dedicated to deities, across all periods—from antiquity to the Qing dynasty—encompassing shamanism, Taoism, and Buddhism alike.	- Corinne Debaine-Francfort and Adeline Herrou (LESC; CNRS) - Claire Vidal (Associate Professor – Lyon 2 University)	- Analyze the choice of materials used to communicate with the gods - Study the relationship between ritual objects and worship practices to understand the function of the object within ritual ceremonies - Examine the relationship between text and image to better understand the organization of rituals - Consider lost or missing elements in processions to reconstruct the rites and better contextualize each historical period	Arnaud Bertrand
Study of a corpus of Chinese ceramics: Dehua white porcelain	Collection of monochrome Chinese ceramics from Dehua, also known as Blancs de Chine, comprising nearly 150 objects preserved at the Guimet Museum.	Dr. Yongsong Zheng (PhD, Paris – Sorbonne), affiliated with the Center for Research on the Far East of Paris-Sorbonne (CREOPS)	- Enhance the value of the Guimet Museum’s Dehua porcelain collection and expand its knowledge and documentation - Carry out high-definition photography of the 150 objects in the collection and publish them in an illustrated volume - Establish connections between this collection and other French and international collections	Claire Déléry
Presence and representation of foreign plants in Chinese culture: introduction, reception, acclimatization and integration in the Ming and Qing dynasties	Representations of foreign plants in graphic arts, objects, and Chinese literary works	Weici YAN, PhD candidate under Professor Antoine Gournay at Paris-Sorbonne (CREOPS)	- List the foreign plants integrated into Chinese art based on the museum’s collections - Publish a catalogue of foreign plants featured in the museum’s Chinese collections from the Ming and Qing dynasties	Claire Déléry

The collections of the Musée d'Ennery in context	6,000 objects of various types, primarily from Japan, China, and Vietnam, including: - Kakiemon porcelains intended for export in the 18th century - Nanban chests (8 trunks) - Masks décoratifs inspirés du théâtre - les objets du lettré chinois, autres à définir	- Fukuoka Museum - Alexandra Curvelo – Professor at NOVA University Lisbon, for Nanban objects - Kazuko Akimichi – PhD candidate in Art History at Paris 1 University Panthéon-Sorbonne - Mr. Kobayashi Koji, researcher at the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties and specialist in lacquerware	Study coherent groups and individual works by placing them in their historical context of creation	Estelle Bauer
Between text and image: the written word as a contextual source	A collection of miniatures acquired by Émile Guimet in 1891 (MG 9110 to MG 9195), bearing on the reverse side unidentified and untranslated fragments of Persian texts (India); Buddhist paintings (from the Himalayan region, China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam); lapidary works (Cambodia, Vietnam)	- ARscAN (research agreement) - Collaboration with universities (Ifrae, IFEO, CRCAO, EFEO, Inalco) - Several research centers to be considered for formal agreements	- Study of inscriptions and dedications on Buddhist paintings - Study of inscriptions and calligraphic texts on the reverse of certain Indian miniatures - Refine the dating of pictorial productions in relation to the study of the texts - Enhance documentation on the artworks and the Japanese art collections database by transcribing and translating into French the inscriptions appearing on the works	Arnaud Bertrand Pierre Baptiste, Thierry Zéphir Estelle Bauer
Study of movable Uyghur printing characters brought back by the Pelliot mission	950 movable printing characters brought back by Paul Pelliot’s mission to Central Asia between 1906 and 1909	CRCAO (Alice Crowther, Temporary Teaching and Research Attaché in Philological Methods at the Historical and Philological Sciences Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études – PSL)	- Have the corpus restored: photography, measurements, individual markings - Study the collection: classification by typologies, identification of reused types - Establish a mini database incorporating other movable types of the same provenance preserved in other institutions	Valérie Zaleski
Research avenues for contemporary art	- Corpus of Chinese photographs (1995–2000) focusing on the second generation of contemporary Chinese artists - Works of the first generation of contemporary Chinese artists (1976–1979) - Dansaekhwa: major Korean avant-garde movement (1950s–1960s) based on the donation from Philippe Tirault - The donation of a substantial collection of instant photographs by Nobuyoshi Araki		- Establish an overview of the policies implemented regarding contemporary art at the Guimet Museum to uncover the assumptions that have guided the formation of the collections and the programming of exhibitions - Increase knowledge about the modern and contemporary artistic avant-gardes of the 20th century	Cécile Dazord

AXIS 3 HISTOIRY OF THE COLLECTIONS				
Projects	Collections studied	Partners	Research objectives	Contributors
Research program on the history of Chinese collections circulating on the art market in the 20th century through the study of the C.T. Loo / Frank Caro collection	Chinese collections that circulated on the market in the 20th century, notably those from the dealer Ching Tsai Loo: statuary, textiles, furniture, ceramics, bronzes, jades, and associated paintings, particularly related to the China, Vietnam, Japan, and Himalayan Worlds departments.	• Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art - Joanna Gohmann • State Museums of Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) – Christine Howald • In close connection with the preliminary mission on provenance research led by the French Museums Service	• Trace and establish the provenance and ownership chain (local and Western dealers) of each work at the Guimet Museum acquired from the New York gallery • Study the history of the Asian art market and influential dealers at the beginning of the 20th century • Define the modalities by which these works left Chinese territory (illegal export, legal purchase, etc.) • Examine the relationships between C.T. Loo, Émile Guimet, Paul Pelliot, Joseph Hackin, and others • Cross-reference these archives with other collections and documents concerning works acquired in Paris from other influential art dealers of the time (Langweil, Bing, etc.)	Edouard de Saint-Ours Claire Florentin Arnaud Bertrand
Valorisation of the paper and photographic archives of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA)	• Photographic collection (prints, negatives, slides, glass plates) • Paper archives of archaeological missions (correspondence, notebooks, drawings)	• DAFA (research agreement) • ENS • ARscAN (research agreement) • Collège de France • Société Asiatique • Alka Patel (University of California, Irvine – for Seistan studies) • EFEO • Aga Khan Development Network • INALCO (Arezou Azad) • Kyoto University • ISMEO (International Society for the Study of the Mediterranean and the Middle East) • Cambridge University	• Identify the components of the collection, its structure, volume, the dimensions of the phototypes, and their state of preservation • Study the history of archaeology in Asian missions (Pelliot, Chavannes, Segalen, Carpeaux, etc.) • Carry out dust removal, repackaging, cataloguing, inventory, and labeling of the studied collection, followed by its digitization by series and indexing	Nicolas Engel Edouard de Saint-Ours

AXIS 4 PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA IN EUROPE / PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE IN ASIA

Projects	Collections studied	Partners	Research objectives	Contributors
Joseon Korea: a "Hermit Kingdom"?	• Joseon pictorial productions and ceramics dating from the 15th to the 19th century • Two unique works at the Guimet Museum dating from the 18th century (EG 2183; MET 2320): “Foreign ambassadors at the Beijing court, including Korean officials”	• Research institutes • Libraries (National Library, BULAC, Collège de France) • Center for Diplomatic Archives	• Study of exchanges between Ming and Qing China and Joseon Korea based on Korean objects from the 15th to the 19th century • Study of the impact of the Jesuit presence in China on Joseon Korea in the 18th century • Reconstruction of royal libraries and study of knowledge dissemination in the provinces • Contextualize the study of Hendrick Hamel’s text with 17th-century Korean artistic productions	Arnaud Bertrand
The HikariA research project	Collection of Dr. Joseph Dubois and other archives of old Japanese photographs (20,000 items)	• TEKLIA (convention) • Saki Toriumi, Nihon University College of Arts • Jules Keenan, Toronto Metropolitan University	• Preserve, study, and promote the museum’s photographic collections • Develop new research tools by optimizing automated description of historical photographs using AI • Enhance knowledge of photography in Japan during the Bakumatsu and Meiji eras	Edouard de Saint-Ours
Diplomatic gifts and the circulation of prestigious objects between Japan and Europe, 1850-1864: a comparative history of the reception of Japanese objects by European courts at the end of the 19th century	Diplomatic gifts offered by Japan to France	• Château de Fontainebleau • Vincent Droguet – Director of Heritage and Collections at Château de Fontainebleau • Vincent Cochet – Chief Curator of Heritage at Château de Fontainebleau • Lia WEI – Associate Professor of Chinese History and Archaeology at INALCO • Windsor, Ajuda Palace in Lisbon	• Conduct a study of museographic evolution by broadly examining Empress Eugénie’s Asian collections (1862–1864) and museographic developments. • Study the works and restore them to their original context. • Expand the study at the European level to compare gifts received by other European courts between 1850 and 1864. • Extend the study of Japanese collections to include Chinese (Siamese, and even Vietnamese) collections assembled at Fontainebleau.	Estelle Bauer Claire Déléry

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