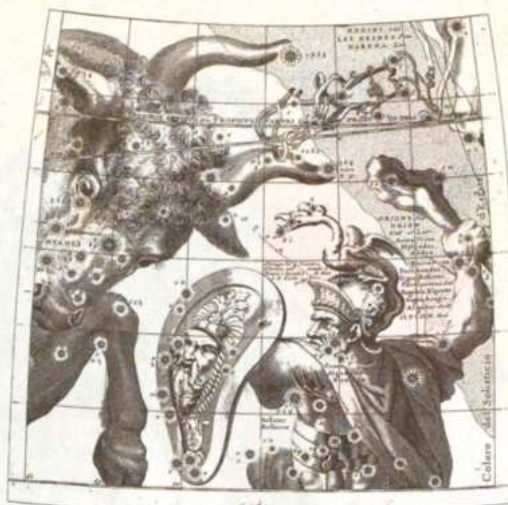


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## Etch a sketch

Mark a deep impression of France in your mind at an exhibition featuring the art of engraving on copper plates



**SEEING STARS:** Done by Jean-Baptiste Nolin, Coronelli's Globes depict the celestial heavens at the birth of King Louis XIV – like the constellations of Taurus (above) and Gemini (left).

**Adeline Chia**  
ARTS REPORTER

**T**HE most famous aerial map of Paris was done in the 18th century without the help of a helicopter.

The artist responsible, Louis Bretez, was given access by the French government to the rooftop of every house in the capital to observe and record the surroundings, block by block.

The detailed map, named Turgot's Map after the then Parisian head of municipality Michel Etienne Turgot, is on show at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) in an exhibition called Engraving The World: The Chalcography Of The Louvre Museum.

Broken up into 20 plates and spanning 2.6m by 3.2m, the map is part of the selection of 138 etchings from the Chalcography collection at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Chalcography refers to the technique of engraving on copper plates, as well as the place in which the engraved plates are stored.

Mr Pascal Torres Guardiola, 42, the curator of the exhibition and the chalcography section at the Louvre, said the Singapore show is a survey of the 400-year history of the art and captures several historical moments in France.

It includes early etchings from the Cabinet Du Roi (King's Cabinet), a collection of etchings commissioned by the French king Louis XIV.

These are finely detailed studies of court life, such as royal palaces and festivities.

Other highlights are etchings of masterpieces, including the Louvre's most famous work of art, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

Created by Antoine-Francois Dezarrre in 1926, the etching is regarded as the finest ever done of the Mona Lisa.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Louvre often commissioned engravings of its famous paintings to disseminate the images to the public.



**EYE IN THE SKY:** The photo above is one of 20 plates of Turgot's Map. This one depicts the Palais-Royal and the Louvre.

**FIGHT CLUB:** Created by Francois Chauveau, this print (left) from the collection called The Carousel Of 1662 depicts jousting contests performed by King Louis XIV and the princes and lords of his court.

Besides copies of blockbusters, works by contemporary artists such as French-born sculptor Louise Bourgeois are also on display.

SAM director Kwok Kian Chow said the show is a good introduction to print-making for Singaporeans.

He added: "We're beginning to be known as a print centre in the region. For example, Chinese artist Lin Tian Miao's show at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute after her residency there was sold 'out'."

The chalcography department of the Louvre has over 13,500 plates engraved by French and foreign artists from the 16th century to today.

Mr Torres Guardiola said the museum began to phase out making prints from historical plates last year to preserve their quality.

In five years' time, no more prints will be made for new exhibitions, but will be drawn from the museum's sizeable collection of existing prints.

Since 1989, the museum has also been commissioning artists to encourage the art of engraving.

The artists, who include French multidisciplinary artist Carole Benzaken, are free to choose their subject matter and technique as long as the procedure can withstand repeated printing.

"The Louvre chalcography collection should not just be an expression of French engravers, but of artists all over the world," said Mr Torres Guardiola.

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> Engraving The World is on at the Singapore Art Museum until July 22. Tickets cost \$4 for students and senior citizens and \$8 for adults. The exhibition is part of the Voilahi! French Festival Singapore 2007, a month-long festival which celebrates French culture with events such as art exhibitions, wine fairs and film screenings. Visit [www.voilahi.sg](http://www.voilahi.sg) for more details.