

Palais
DÉCOUVERTE

PALAIS DE LA DÉCOUVERTE 2025

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SYNTHESIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL PROJECT



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Synthesis of the scientific and cultural project presented to the Scientific Committee on 5 December 2018, and adopted by the Board of Directors of Universcience on 14 March 2019.

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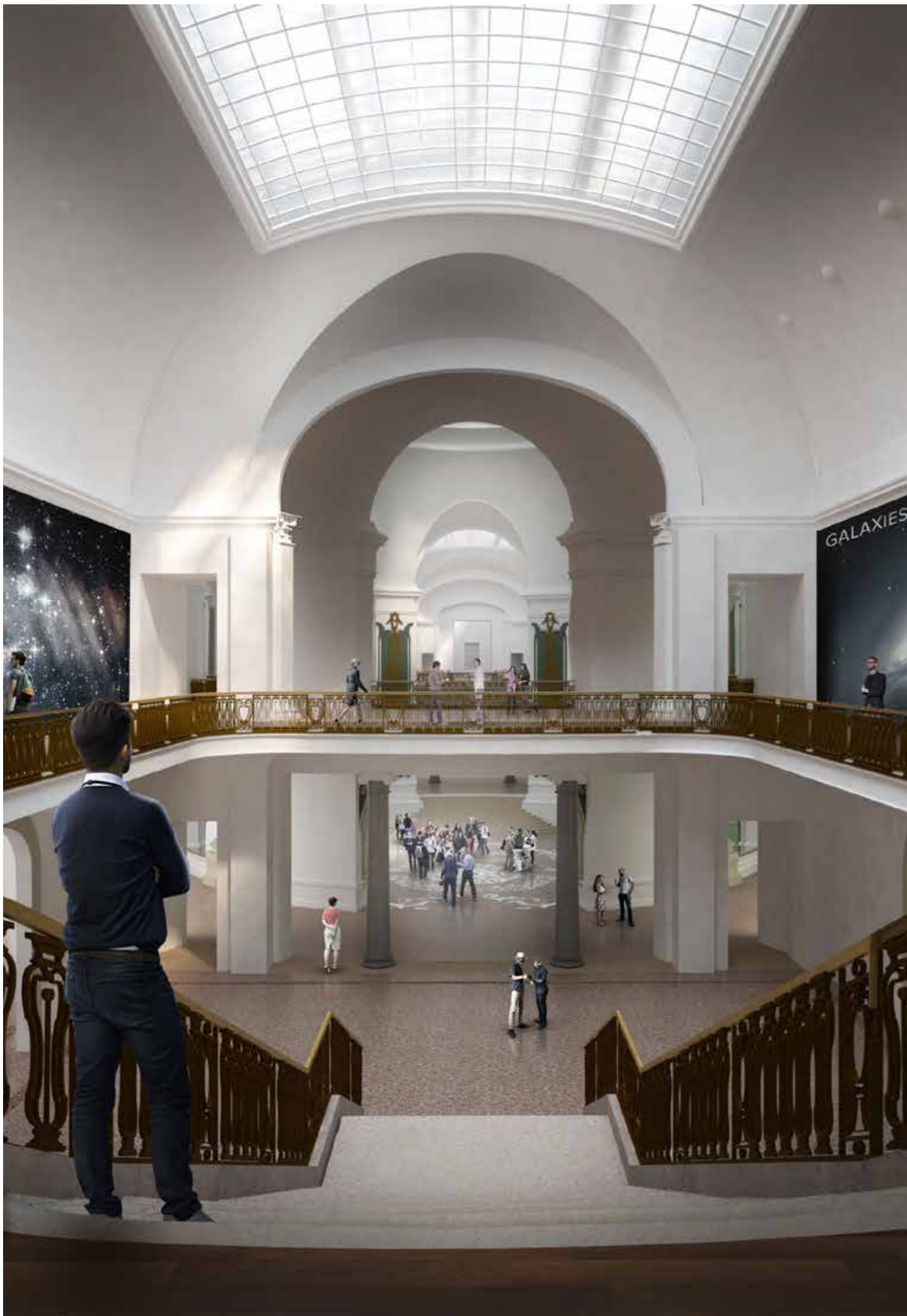
THE PALAIS DE LA DÉCOUVERTE 2025

The magnificent Palais d'Antin, the west wing of the Grand Palais, home to the Palais de la Découverte, had never benefited from a complete renovation since the museum's creation in 1937. The time had come to revamp the science museum, which has triggered the wonderment and curiosity of its more than 35 million visitors over the years. The ravages of time, the dilapidated facilities and below-standard accessibility made this renovation project all the more urgent.

The rehabilitation of the whole Grand Palais complex has given the Palais de la Découverte the opportunity to rethink its scientific and cultural content, with a view to renewing the experience proposed to visitors while keeping the soul and original spirit of the place alive. Remaining true to the spirit of the Palais de la Découverte's founder, Nobel Laureate Jean Perrin, means showing science in the making through live staff-mediated demonstrations.

By 2025, the "Palais de la Découverte 2025" will be a standard-setting venue, a place where the issues of science today are addressed and discussed, driven by a new impetus yet retaining its hallmark presentations of experiments by staff educators. This is the gist of the scientific and cultural project defined for and by the Palais de la Découverte in a collaborative process in which staff members and partners from the fields of science, art and museology participated.

While maintaining the principle of presenting basic sciences by discipline and fostering a discovery of research, new scientific fields, such as computer science, and transdisciplinary approaches will be present at the Palais de la Découverte 2025 with an eye to further enhancing visitor experience.



THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT

The first step in renovating the Palais de la Découverte is the restoration of the space that has been its home since its creation. This project is part of the government's plan to revamp the entire Grand Palais complex, under the contracting authority of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux - Grand Palais (RMN-GP), in partnership with Universcience, with Opérateur du Patrimoine et des Projets Immobiliers de la Culture (OPPIC) as the delegated project management agency. The restoration project is being overseen by François Châtillon, Chief Architect of Historical Monuments; agency, winner of the design competition, is in charge of the refurbishment.

The selected project answers with simplicity and ingenuity both the cultural and museological requirements and the need to update the building to current standards. It restores the original architectural coherence of the 1900 building, while upgrading it to the operating conditions of a 21st-century cultural facility and creating a new passageway between the Palais de la Découverte and the Grand Palais.

ACCESS FACILITATED

Accessibility is a structuring element of the renovation plan. It will be reinforced by the creation of two entrances, an entry and service spaces for groups and the availability of numerous elevators in these areas.

A NEW SPACE: RUE DES PALAIS

A novel element of the design will be a new public pedestrian street, Rue des Palais. It will cross the building from the Champs-Élysées on the north to the Seine on the south, and from Galeries Nationales on the east to Palais de la Découverte on the west. This pedestrian thoroughfare will run over two levels and provide the public with a panoramic view of the architectural complex.

THE PALAIS DE LA DÉCOUVERTE RENOVATED

The west wing of the Grand Palais, home to the Palais de la Découverte since its creation, is known for its sumptuous listed decors, conserved since 1900. Following the initial phase of restoration of the roofs and the glass entrance dome, the original spaces and structural elements will be upgraded to correspond to the new scheme of the Palais de la Découverte which will occupy three floors of the Palais d'Antin.



THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL PROJECT

Both Universcience sites fulfil the mission of making science accessible to all, each in its own distinct and complementary fashion, in line with the historical specificity of the sites. This will be reinforced with the renovation of the Palais de la Découverte. La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie will continue to explore science from the standpoint of its applications, the technical and industrial issues involved and its relationship with society. In 2025, the Palais de la Découverte will become the privileged forum for bringing the public into contact with contemporary research. Its main focus will be on basic sciences. Its privileged tool will remain live presentations by staff educators.

A SCIENCE PALACE

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will propose a comprehensive approach to contemporary science, as a body of knowledge, an element of our daily life and a cultural vehicle.

A CONTEMPORARY PALACE

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will not attempt to fill gaps in the public's knowledge. On the contrary, it will mobilize the intelligence and previous knowledge of visitors to help them further their understanding of the complex subjects on which research laboratories are working today.

A DISCIPLINARY, INTERDISCIPLINARY AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PALACE

The specificity of the Palais de la Découverte 2025 will reside in the combination of three complementary approaches: disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. This correlates with contemporary scientific methodology.

A PALACE FOR QUESTIONING

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will concentrate on presenting the scientific approach and the process of scientific discovery in ways that foster critical thinking.

A RELATIONAL PALACE, A CONVERSATIONAL PALACE

In an economy of knowledge that has been revolutionized by digital technology, the need to accompany and embody human exchanges has become all the more essential. The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will establish an enhanced relationship with visitors to accompany them as they move from learning to using science. Alive with activities, the venue will be a cheerful place that surprises all its audiences and encourages real conversations between visitors, researchers and artists.

AN OPEN PALACE

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will be a permeable place, open to what is happening around it via the active participation of researchers, the dissemination of its live demonstrations outside its premises and the development of hybrid approaches combining art, science and technology.

A PALACE WITH A RESEARCH CENTER ON STAFF-MEDIATED CONTENT

The Palais de la Découverte will apply scientific methods and approaches to investigating the practices themselves of live science demos and, for this purpose, will be equipped with a research center on the subject.



THE AUDIENCES

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will address difference audiences, structuring its content to be both coherent and pluralistic.

APPROACHING THE ADULT AUDIENCE AS A DISTICT ENTITY

In developing its main offering the Palais 2025 will consider adults an independent audience and facilitate their access to knowledge along three lines: becoming informed, getting involved and participating.

It will thus become the ideal place to explore new scientific concepts and issues in a dynamic way through practical activities or initiatives of participatory science.

FOSTERING CO-CREATION FOR TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Teenagers and young adults will find content at the Palais de la Découverte 2025 that is adapted to their practices and expectations. Spaces equipped with innovative technologies will facilitate co-creation and meetings with scientists, while permitting the development of staff-assisted projects.

IGNITING THE CURIOSITY OF THE YOUNG

A portion of the content for adults will be adapted to a younger audience, age 12 and up, and will be enhanced by the creation of presentations and activities specifically designed for families with young children, with the aim of arousing wonderment, curiosity and the desire to discover more.

ENHANCING THE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will also address pupils, teachers and the high-priority education network by 2020 with traditional presentations on basic sciences along with more experimental approaches. The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will also offer teachers resources and training to meet their needs.

ADDRESSING TOURISTS

The location of the Palais de la Découverte right in the heart of Paris, the beauty of the building's architecture, and the connection between its spaces and the art exhibition spaces of the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais will all act as magnets drawing tourists to the museum. Discovery units and artworks spread throughout the spaces will stimulate the curiosity of visitors and excite their interest in activities presented in several languages.

A FOCUS ON OUTREACH

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will also reach out to audiences with no scientific culture, on the premises and outside, with inclusive activities designed conjointly with players in the field.



DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

In accordance with its public service mission, the Palais de la Découverte 2025 will be fully accessible. This universal accessibility will apply to the building itself as to each individual activity. The accessibility will be at once physical, intellectual and social, which also means adapting to the interests of everyone by taking into account the socio-cultural diversity of audiences.

CO-CREATING CONTENT WITH VISITORS

The content of the Palais de la Découverte 2025 will be continuously renewed. A co-creation space, the Incubator will invite visitors to take part in defining content, thereby making them the privileged partners of staff presenters and museologists.



COMPONENTS OF THE NEW CONTENT

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will propose an integrated experience, with museological propositions that answer scientific presentations and vice versa, coming to support the programming of immersive demonstrations and discussions with researchers.

This coherent integrated approach will make the Palais de la Découverte 2025 a true “centre of scientific culture,” a place of ongoing discussions between research and the public. This “Palais experience” will be revisited every year from the standpoint of a major seasonal theme.

THE ICONS

Each of the seven disciplines – astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, computer science and digital sciences, earth sciences, life sciences and physics – will be symbolized by an icon, a large-scale element, emblematic of the Palais de la Découverte. These icons could take various forms – such as a Van der Graaf generator, a virtual 3D periodic table, or a stratigraphic section – and will be used in presentations and demonstrations.

THE LABORATORIES

Live demonstrations by staff presenters, scientists, or even artists, will constitute a strong element of the “Palais experience.” The architectural design of these laboratory spaces will be based on the principle of “nested boxes”: they will form protected enclosed spaces but with interface elements – transparent walls, screens, sound systems – that allow visitors on the outside to see what is happening inside.

These laboratories will have distinct infrastructures. There will be scientific instruments and mechanical and electrical equipment for experiments and workshops; a greenhouse and a vivarium for animal and plant breeding and tending; computer, robotics and artificial intelligence workshops; and science resource spaces online and on-site.

THE QUESTION MARKS

The Palais de la Découverte 2025 will focus as much attention on the questions that research scientists ask as the answers they try to bring to these questions. Thus, Question Marks will be placed in echo to the icons. For each discipline, they will highlight a major question of the moment, an area to be explored. To make these questions more tangible, artists will be commissioned to co-create works with scientists.



THE UNITS OF CURIOSITY

Some hundred units, or micro-exhibitions, divided into four categories and integrated into the permanent programming, will enable visitors to become, for the time their visit, actors in their own discoveries:

- > Units related to the disciplines of the Palais de la Découverte
- > Units on science history
- > Multidisciplinary units
- > Units on scientific news.

THE SPECIAL ACTIVITY ROOMS

For the purpose of fostering exchanges and forging connections between communities through science, the Palais de la Découverte 2025 will propose several spaces:

- > The Planetarium: overwhelmingly popular among visitors, this signature element, featuring the latest digital technologies, will be reinstated in a modernized approach, open to art.
- > The remote laboratory: immersive and innovative, this room, equipped with the latest technologies, will give visitors the possibility of plunging into the heart of research through live and recorded broadcasts: for instance, they could watch surgery performed by a robot in France under the supervision of a surgeon in Boston and commented by presenter at the Palais de la Découverte.
- > The pop-up room: this open access space will present the work of a resident research scientist, the findings of one of the participatory science activities, or a research project submitted for public consultation in the framework of a European programme, or it can serve as a space for co-construction and tests with the public.
- > Room 37: currently called Salle d'optique and preserved as faithfully as possible, it will be a historical reference and, through innovative digital technologies, it will bring to life the memory of the Palais de la Découverte as it was in 1937.
- > The salons: in the spirit of science cafés, these inviting and relaxing spaces will be conducive to informal encounters and conversations between visitors, staff educators and researchers.

THE CHILDREN'S GALLERY

With the aim of expanding its audiences, the Palais de la Découverte 2025 will give a special place to the young. For the very first time, there will be a Children's Gallery, co-produced with the Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN-GP), dedicated to children ages 3 to 12. Children will be able to visit this gallery in the company of an adult or take part in workshops with or without their parents. Stimulated by the expertise of Universcience in museology for children, this gallery will be adapted to child development and skills and do so in a way that transcends the boundaries of art and science.



THE TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

Once or twice a year, a large temporary exhibition will be presented in an area of about 1,000 m². Devoted mainly to subjects of contemporary research, the temporary exhibition will be conceived in line with the overall spirit of the Palais de la Découverte. Scientists and artists will be invited to co-design these exhibitions. The auditorium, situated in proximity to the exhibition hall, will provide the possibility of organizing related programmes of events, debates, performances, etc.

THE EXTERIOR SPACES

On the rooftop of the building, an observatory with astronomy instruments will provide the public with an exceptional view of Paris but also the opportunity to benefit from a one-of-a-kind programme of observation. On the ground, the garden located near Palais d'Antin will host art installations related to the contents developed inside the building, thereby creating a further link between art and science.

THE PALAIS DE LA DÉCOUVERTE ONLINE

In 2025, the Palais de la Découverte online will provide a virtual space for conversing with audiences before, during and after a visit to the museum, and will propose contents adapted to dissemination on all networks. This new site will naturally establish connections with the blob, l'extra média, a digital platform launched in 2019 by Universcience.



UPON LEAVING THE PALAIS DE LA DECOUVERTE...

Regardless of age, origin or relationship to science, when visitors leave the Palace of Discovery, they will find themselves wanting to explore the world, with all the richness and complexity of its manifestations, on the strength of the new, more confident and more thoughtful outlook on science that they have acquired.

They will have been given the means to sharpen their critical thinking, to develop their own judgments and to be receptive to a more enlightened analysis of the scientific information relayed by the media and social networks. They will have been amazed by the shows and demonstrations. And they will have learnt that the questions that scientists tackle can be great sources of inspiration and creativity for artists.

By the end of their visit, they will see the Palais de la Découverte as a standard-setting venue where they can find accurate answers to the questions they may have had when they arrived. This institution will be theirs. And they can contribute to developing its contents and projects. Visitors will leave the Palais de la Découverte wanting to come back.



RENOVATION PROJECT BUDGET

The provisional budget for the construction work is 393 M€ (exclusive of tax, all expenses included).

This sum is divided as follows:

- > 137 M€ for the restoration of the historical monument
- > 255 M€ for the refurbishment of the Grand Palais entrusted to the architecture office LAN, winner of the design competition.

Added to this restoration and refurbishment work under the contracting authority of Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais, will be the development of the newly upgraded Palais de la Découverte museum and associated costs.

- > The cost of this operation, led by Universcience is 44 M€ (exclusive of tax, all expenses included).

In addition, come the expenses involved in financing the operation (financial charges): 30 M€ (exclusive of tax).

The total cost of the project is 466 M€ (exclusive of tax, all expenses included).

