

Press release

Paris, January 4, 2023

Appointment of Sophie Makariou as Scientific Director

The French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) announces the appointment of Sophie Makariou as Scientific Director in charge of the Culture and Heritage division (Archaeology, Contemporary Art and Museums). Sophie Makariou was previously President of the Musée des Arts asiatiques - Guimet.

She succeeds Jean-François Charnier, who left his post in September 2022. Gérard Mestrallet was the acting Scientific Director until then.

Sophie Makariou will start her new position on Monday 9 January 2023.

About AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla)

The French Agency for AIUla Development (Afalula) was founded in Paris in July 2018 following an intergovernmental agreement signed by France and Saudi Arabia in April of that year. Afalula aims to support its Saudi partner, The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), in the co-construction of the economic, touristic and cultural development of AIUla, a region located in the North-West of Saudi Arabia which benefits from outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The agency's mission is to mobilize French knowledge and expertise and to gather the finest operators and companies in the fields of archaeology, museography, architecture, environment, tourism, hospitality, infrastructure, education, security, horse, agriculture, botany, infrastructures, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

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Sophie Makariou's biography

Sophie Makariou is Chief curator of the French Museums. She was trained at the Ecole du Louvre, at the Langues O (INALCO) and the EHESS in art history and history and specialised in the Islamic world.

After getting her tenure from the National Institute of Heritage (INP, promotion Hubert Robert), she joined the Near Eastern Antiquities Department of the musée du Louvre in 1994. She was entrusted to conceive the future Department of Islamic Art, of which she was director. The new wing was inaugurated in 2012.

She taught art history at the Ecole du Louvre from 1993 to 2010.

She was appointed President (CEO) of the Guimet National Museum of Asian Art in 2013 and run the museum during 9 years. After three terms she left the museum in november 2022.

An orientalist, specialized in artistic interactions, she is the author of many books, articles and has curated scores of exhibitions. In Guimet she put forward a rich programm of contemporary « cartes blanches » and was key to a strong renewal of the acquisition policy, enhancing especially photography.

Among her books are « Histoire de Grenade » (Fayard, 2018, with G. Martinez-Gros), « Le partage d'Orient » (Stock, 2021), and, recently, various exhibitions catalogues « The dragon and the phenix, centuries of artistic exchanges between China and the Islamic world » (Louvre Abu Dabi/Snoeck, 2021) « Afghanistan, ombre et légendes » (Liénart 2022, avec N. Engel).

She is the head of the Scientific Committee of the Musée des tissus et des arts décoratifs in Lyon, a member to the French jury of the Praemium Imperiale (Japan) and of the Orchid Awards (China).

She is a knight of the French Ordre national du Mérite, Officer of the Japanese Order of the Rising.