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The Louvre-Lens: A New Museum Experience

Artist Pablo Picasso once said, “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” Now, a post-industrial coal city in northern France, Lens, is the site of the first-ever regional branch of the famous Parisian art museum, the Louvre. This new museum has brought world-class art to clean the coal dust from the city’s soul.

Although there is hope that the museum will breathe new life into the city, the building’s design and location embraces the area’s coal-mining roots. It is even built on a coal heap from a mine that was taken over by nature after the mine closed.

With the area’s roots in mind, Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa designed a building that is both industrial and connected with nature. The museum consists of five rectangular low buildings that are glass and polished metal. The buildings are surrounded by parks and forests. The green is reflected in the metal of the structures, allowing the modern museum to blend into the nature around it.

Stepping into the Time Gallery, visitors get a real sense of how this museum differs from the Louvre. The walls, floors, and ceilings are white, which makes the artwork – stand out. Instead of separate rooms to display the art by area or style, there is one huge room, and the art is organized chronologically. This allows visitors to walk through the history of art, from 3500BC to the **Industrial Revolution** era, and make connections on their own.

Another way in which the Louvre-Lens has changed the museum experience is by making every aspect of the museum visible. The museum’s studios and storerooms, usually places hidden from view, can be seen, as can the museum employees as they restore and maintain the priceless works of art.

As Henry Matisse said, “Creativity takes courage,” and the creators of the Louvre-Lens museum have embraced both. By creating a new museum experience in Lens, the Louvre is making art more accessible in our modern age.