

MEDIA RELEASE
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PAUL BANGAY INSTALLATION BRINGS A VERSAILLES GARDEN ENTRANCE TO THE NGA

Celebrity gardener Paul Bangay has designed a new garden entrance to the National Gallery of Australia to celebrate the *Versailles: Treasures from the Palace* exhibition. Taking inspiration from the opulence of the Orangerie at Versailles, Bangay has created an avenue of pleached Pyrus sculptural urns, paired with large date palms.

‘I have tried to capture the scale and essence of the historic gardens and to evoke that feeling of grandeur and formality you get when you are in Versailles,’ said Bangay. ‘The gardens in Versailles are an inspiration to my work and it’s wonderful to be collaborating with the NGA on a little slice of France outside the main entrance.’

Versailles: Treasures from the Palace features objects from the gardens and fountains throughout the exhibition, including the massive *Latona and her children* statue from the central fountain of Versailles. Topographical views of the gardens illustrate the changes in style throughout the royal reigns over more than 150 years. Garden plans, labyrinth sculptures, ornate bronze vases from the Orangerie, and paintings of the flowers grown around Versailles also feature strongly in the exhibition.

Bangay is a prolific garden designer. Throughout his award-winning 27-year career, he has produced living artworks for festivals, corporate gardens for clients, released more than eight best-selling books, and is a media favourite. Bangay began his career with the ‘Botancia’ spectaculars at the Queen Victoria Garden for the Melbourne Festival of the Arts. He has since continued to combine creative flair with horticultural know-how for countless displays, commercial and residential gardens. It is fitting that his prowess is called upon to create a piece of Versailles right here in Canberra.

Background information:

The gardens of Versailles were an integral part of the display of power by the successive kings from Louis XIV to Louis XVI. Commissioned by Louis XIV in 1661 to complement the grandeur of the palace, the gardens were designed by architect André Le Nôtre. The impressive natural embellishments took more than 40 years to complete under the guidance of Jules Hardouin-Mansart, who focused on creating outdoor rooms such *The Colonnade* within the grounds.

Louis XIV was keenly aware that the gardens were another way to showcase the wealth, power and prestige of France. Still, bubbling and gushing water is the heart of the gardens. Louis XIV ordered more and more fountains for the grounds of Versailles—a feat in itself considering the lack of a natural water source—to demonstrate the royal power to bend nature to his will. Louis XIV wrote six treaties on how to view the gardens.

The royal love of the gardens continued under the reign of Louis XV who, with his mistress Madame de Pompadour, created a garden with more than 4000 rare species.

During the reign of Louis XVI the French formal style of garden had gone out fashion, and Marie-Antoinette promoted a more fluid natural-style garden at her private residence, the Petit Trianon.

Versailles: Treasures from the Palace is open from 9 December to 17 April.

Tickets are available through Ticketek.

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