

NARBO —
— VIA

PRESS
RELEASE



TO CELEBRATE ITS 5TH ANNIVERSARY, NARBO VIA INVITES FRANCO-CHINESE ARTIST JIANG QIONG ER TO ENTER INTO DIALOGUE WITH ITS COLLECTIONS

At the heart of the Museum's collections, Jiang Qiong Er has conceived an unprecedented encounter between her works and Roman civilisation, exploring resonances between forms, materials, symbols and layers of time.

AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED ARTIST AT THE CROSSROADS OF TRADITION AND THE AVANT-GARDE

A Franco-Chinese artist and designer, Jiang Qiong Er stands out as a singular figure on the international contemporary art scene. Born in Shanghai and trained in art and design at Tongji University before continuing her studies at the École nationale supérieure des Arts décoratifs in Paris, she has developed a multidisciplinary practice combining visual arts, design and material research. Her work reflects a profound engagement with ancient civilisations, foundational narratives and the ways in which inherited forms can be reactivated through a contemporary visual language.

Her career has been shaped by a constant desire to foster dialogue between craftsmanship, contemporary creation and philosophical thought. In 2009, she co-founded Shang Xia with Hermès, dedicated to promoting traditional Chinese craftsmanship within a contemporary creative context, already affirming her ambition to reconcile memory, material and modernity. This approach permeates her entire artistic practice, in which material becomes a vehicle for meaning and transmission.

Drawing inspiration from Chinese artistic and philosophical traditions, Jiang Qiong Er reinterprets them through a distinctly avant-garde lens. She explores memory, transformation and transmission, creating a sensitive body of work in which cultural boundaries dissolve in favour of a universal dialogue.

Internationally recognised, she has been invited by major museum institutions, including the Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet in Paris between 2024 and 2025. Her works are held in the collections of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris.



Portraits of Jiang Qiong Er ©Qiting Lin

AN ARTISTIC DIALOGUE WITH NARBO VIA

For this unique encounter with the ancient collections of Narbo Via, Jiang Qiong Er presents twelve mythical creatures throughout the permanent exhibition — hybrid figures shaped by the imagination of great ancient civilisations.

Inspired by Chinese mythology as well as other foundational cultures — Mayan, Egyptian and Indian — these symbolic entities embody universal values such as bravery, wisdom, solidarity and benevolence.

Integrated into the museum route, they resonate with Roman mythology, creating subtle correspondences between ancient civilisations while raising essential questions: humanity's place within the cosmos, our relationship with the natural world, and the boundary between the visible and the invisible.



Painting, *Angels of the Caves* and *Time* one of the *XII Calls* in bronze ©Qiting Lin



Inclusion, one of the *XII Calls*, are rendered in mineral pigments.

A PLAY OF MATERIALS BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

The exhibition *The Breath of Time* continues Jiang Qiong Er's artistic research while unfolding within a new context: the ancient heritage of Narbonne. The artist engages with the permanent collections through a particular focus on symbolic forms, memory-laden materials and layers of time.

Some works are created using pigments reminiscent of prehistoric cave paintings, echoing the ancient frescoes preserved within the museum. Others, created on delicate wax surfaces, explore transparency, cracking and layering, producing vibrant textures where past and present converge.

This representation of time enters into close dialogue with the archaeological artefacts of Narbo Via, themselves marked by wear, stratification and fragmented narratives.



Angels of the Caves, The Sky



Angels of the Caves, The Sky and The Earth
©Qiting Lin

WRITINGS, MEMORIES AND INVISIBLE VOICES

Jiang Qiong Er's work around nüshu writing extends this reflection on hidden memories. Developed and used exclusively by women embroiderers from the Jiangyong region in Hunan, this now-vanished script constitutes a unique testimony to a female voice long kept at the margins.

New Nüshu continues this legacy while also marking a break from it. Created by Jiang Qiong Er, this contemporary form of writing emerges as a 21st-century mode of female expression. Inspired by traditional Chinese nüshu, this new language stems from a fundamental observation: although moving and precious, the ancient script no longer fully reflects the presence, silhouette and voice of women today.

From this seed of memory, the artist invents an original visual language by combining the essential strength of seal script (zhuanshu), the living freedom of cursive script (caoshu), and the primordial, almost sacred simplicity of oracle bone inscriptions (jiaguwen). From the meeting of these writing traditions emerges a new form of calligraphy – both deeply rooted and resolutely contemporary.

By integrating this work into Narbo Via's permanent exhibition route, the artist creates a subtle dialogue with ancient Latin inscriptions, inviting reflection on what is transmitted, what disappears and what art can render visible once again. This juxtaposition also echoes the status and education of women, as well as their historically limited access to reading and writing, both in Roman antiquity and throughout Chinese history.

This unprecedented encounter between two writing systems, two civilisations and two cultural memories offers a poetic reflection on the ways art reveals and reinvents cultural heritage.



Painting on canvas – *Her Voice, Bravery*



Paintings – *Her Voice, Bravery* ©Qiting Lin

By inviting Jiang Qiong Er to transform the Museum's permanent display for its fifth anniversary, Narbo Via once again affirms one of its key ambitions: to foster dialogue between archaeology and contemporary creation – and, beyond that, between cultures and civilisations.

The exhibition *The Breath of Time* stands out as a major highlight of these anniversary celebrations, offering a renewed perspective on the collections while fully embodying the museum's cultural vision.



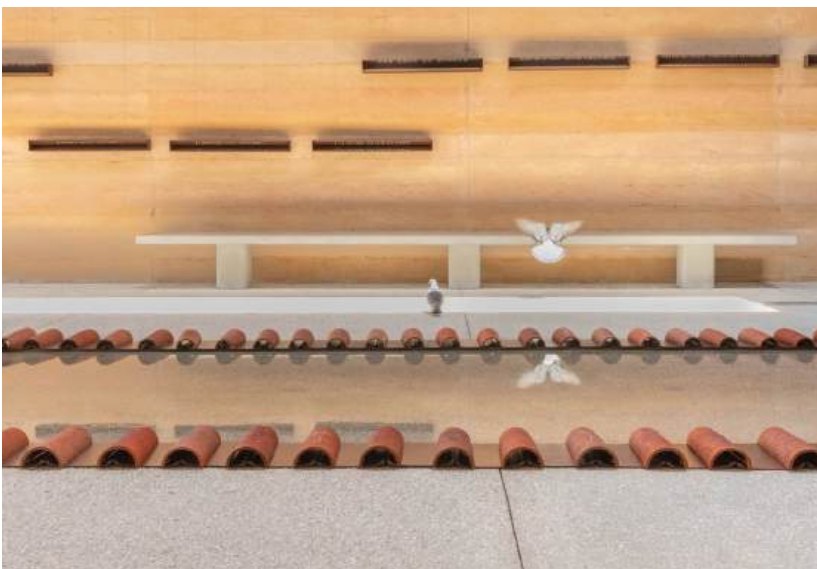
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Sky & Earth ©QEJ Studio



XII Calls ©QEJ Studio



Sky & Earth and The Reflections ©QEJ Studio

NARBO VIA



XII Calls ©QEJ Studio

MAY 2026

THE NARBO VIA MUSEUM: A LANDMARK OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE BRINGING *NARBO MARTIUS*, THE PRESTIGIOUS LOST ROMAN CITY, BACK TO LIFE

Opened in May 2021, the Narbo Via Museum — an essential destination for understanding Roman antiquity and the challenges of archaeological research — pays tribute to Narbo Martius, capital of the Roman province of Narbonensis and the first Roman colony founded in Gaul in 118 BC, whose archaeological heritage is internationally renowned.

Designed by Foster + Partners in collaboration with scenographer Adrien Gardère and architect Jean Capia, the museum stands as a striking architectural landmark at the entrance to the city, on the banks of the Canal de la Robine. Elevated on a plinth, the building's clean horizontal lines establish a dialogue with both the Mediterranean landscape and the ancient heritage it houses.

The museum's permanent galleries extend across more than 2,600 sqm and present a remarkable collection of over 1,300 works, including 760 fragments of funerary monuments displayed within a vast modular wall unique in the world. A true living cultural space, Narbo Via also features a 192-seat auditorium available for private hire, a bookshop, the restaurant Cadence au Musée, educational workshops, research spaces and gardens designed to host open-air events.

Since 1 February 2020, Narbo Via has been managed through a partnership governance model within a Public Cultural Cooperation Establishment (EPCC), bringing together the French State, the Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée Region, the Greater Narbonne urban community and the City of Narbonne.



Narbo Via Museum ©Foster Nigel Young

NARBO VIA CELEBRATES ITS 5TH ANNIVERSARY: AN EXCEPTIONAL ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

In 2026, the Narbo Via Museum celebrates five years since opening. This anniversary highlights the museum's strong presence within the cultural landscape of Occitanie and reaffirms its role as a leading institution for the understanding and promotion of Roman antiquity.

Five years after its inauguration, the museum has established itself as a major cultural destination, having welcomed more than 620,000 visitors.

To mark the occasion, Narbo Via is presenting an exceptional anniversary programme combining exhibitions, performances, participatory creations and festive events. Conceived for all audiences, it invites visitors to experience the museum in new, immersive and accessible ways.

NARBO VIA MUSEUM – KEY FIGURES

- A collection of over 15,000 antiquities from Narbonne
- 8,000 sqm of floor space
- 2,600 sqm permanent exhibition galleries
- 500 sqm temporary exhibition gallery
- Auditorium with nearly 200 seats
- 3 educational workshops
- Bookshop, gardens and restaurant
- Conservation and research laboratory, storage facilities, study rooms and documentation centre
- Foundation stone laid on 10 November 2015
- €56.8 million investment project led by the Occitanie Region (€48 million Occitanie Region, €6 million European Union, €2 million French Ministry of Culture)
- Opening: 19 May 2021
- Inauguration: 11 December 2021



Lapidary Gallery with the XII Calls — Narbo Via Museum
©Qiting Lin



Lapidary Gallery — Narbo Via Museum
©Arnaud Späni

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Museum

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm
Tel: +33 (0)4 68 90 28 90
2 avenue André Mècle, 11100 Narbonne

From 19 May, admission to the museum including the temporary exhibition will be €12.

Admission to the Horreum: €6.

Horreum

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am – 12 pm and 2 pm – 5 pm
Tel: +33 (0)4 68 32 45 30
7 rue Rouget de Lisle, 11100 Narbonne

Amphoralis

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am – 12 pm and 2 pm – 5 pm
Tel: +33 (0)4 68 46 89 48
Allée des Potiers, 11590 Sallèles-d'Aude

Free admission to all three sites (upon presentation of valid proof) for:

under-18s, recipients of social welfare benefits, people with disabilities and accompanying persons upon presentation of a disability card, asylum seekers, ICOM and ICOMOS cardholders, journalists, teachers preparing educational visits (advance booking required via reservation@narbovia.fr and licensed tour guides.

Free admission for all visitors on the first Sunday of each month from October to May.

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