

The Lady Liberty Initiative

Creative Presentation



GEDEON
experiences

In 2026, to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the Statue and mark the 250th anniversary of American independence, GEDEON Experiences presents an ambitious 360° project:

The Lady Liberty Initiative,

- An original large-scale VR experience

A STATUE FOR LIBERTY

- An event documentary film coproduced internationally

LADY LIBERTY, SECRETS OF AN ICON

This project is presented under the High Patronage of **Stanislas de Laboulaye,**
Former Ambassador of France

U.S. Steering Committee - Chaired by **Richard Salomon**

The background image is a virtual reality scene. It depicts a narrow, cobblestone street in a European city, with tall, multi-story buildings on both sides. In the center of the street, the Statue of Liberty is being constructed. The statue is surrounded by a complex network of metal scaffolding. The lighting is soft and warm, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting. The overall atmosphere is one of historical immersion and construction.

The VR experience

A collective, walk-through virtual reality experience
immersing visitors in the creation of a monument
that has become a **universal symbol**.

A coproduction

GEDEON
experiences

B BackLight

M
O Musée d'Orsay

 VIVEARTS

With the support of

 **PARIS**

 Région
île de France

 Musée
Bartholdi

 **FONDATION**
DES
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EST. 1959



CONCEPT

Before becoming a universal symbol, the Statue of Liberty was an extraordinary human and artistic adventure. Conceived in France by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, it brought together artists, engineers, and thousands of citizens for more than twenty years, culminating in its inauguration in New York Harbor.

Designed as a collective, walk-through experience, this work invites visitors to relive the full intensity of this epic journey. From Bartholdi's earliest sketches to the Parisian workshops, from feats of engineering to civic mobilizations on both sides of the Atlantic, it reveals the behind-the-scenes story, the secrets, and the lesser-known chapters of a monument that has become an icon of the modern world.



FORMAT

VR experience duration: 35 minutes.

Total visit duration: 1 hour (pre-show + VR experience + post-show)

An agile format: the experience is based on a modular setup composed of 6.5 m × 8 m units, accommodating 10 simultaneous users. The system is easily deployable and scalable, allowing replication across different venues.

Accessibility: suitable for ages 10 and up; accessible to visitors with reduced mobility; multilingual (French, English, Spanish, and Chinese versions for the initial Paris presentation).

DIFFUSION

French premiere: Musée d'Orsay, Paris
September 15, 2026 – January 31, 2027
(Galerie Amont, 700 m², up to 80 visitors simultaneously)

Followed by national and international touring



PRODUCTION NOTE

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most iconic monuments in the world. Everyone believes they know it, yet few have the opportunity to stand at its feet. Visiting it remains a true *must-see* for anyone traveling to New York. Each year, nearly four million visitors explore the site and its museum, inaugurated in 2019.

The Statue of Liberty fascinates. Above all a symbol of freedom, officially titled *Liberty Enlightening the World*, it embodies the rule of law, light, progress, and the end of oppression. Standing at the entrance to New York Harbor, it long represented, for millions of migrants, the promise of a new life.

On the occasion of its 140th anniversary in 2026, we sought to tell the story of its creation... differently. How can we give audiences the feeling of discovering it anew, after so many films, exhibitions, and documentaries? And who truly knows its origins, when France lies at the very heart of its history and when some forty smaller-scale replicas are scattered across the country?

Our archival research revealed a story far more eventful than we had imagined: a statue envisioned by a young Alsatian artist, built over nearly twenty years in Paris, rising above the rooftops of the capital, then shipped to America in two hundred crates (nearly lost overboard!), before being stored for months on an island while funding for its pedestal was secured. Disgruntled suffragettes protesting the exclusion of women from the inauguration, a torch breaking on the eve of an exhibition...

This adventure also tells the story of a bold creative vision and an exceptional level of public engagement: fundraising campaigns, public visits to the workshops, and the display of fragments at world's fairs to rally support. These almost novelistic episodes lend themselves perfectly to an immersive experience.

Virtual reality quickly emerged as the natural medium to tell this story. It allows us to travel across time and continents, bringing back to life settings that no longer exist today.

Above all, it offers the possibility of feeling the Statue's physical presence: grasping its monumental scale, venturing into its inner structure, moving through its workshops... as if one were truly there. It presents a living history, conveyed through the emotions and gestures of its creators, the atmospheres of the spaces encountered, and the events themselves.

And what could be more natural than wanting to share this adventure with as many people as possible, and to have it begin in Paris, where it all started? The Musée d'Orsay, custodian of an original replica, naturally emerged as a highly symbolic setting to host this immersive experience, presented as part of a major American season.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the motivations that have continued to grow stronger at every stage of this project. Initiated two years ago, this production resonates deeply with us through the values it embodies: freedom, dialogue between peoples, and collective engagement — values that must continue to resonate loudly across the world.





AUTHOR'S STATEMENT



Jonathan
Astruc
VR director



Stéphane
Landowski
VR author

A Monument of Copper, Iron, and Flesh

The Statue of Liberty is far more than a monument: it is a human adventure. It begins in 1865, in the mind of a young Alsatian sculptor, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, and comes to an end twenty years later, in 1886, off the coast of New York. Between these two dates lie encounters, failures, immense passion, and an almost unreasonable perseverance — one that ultimately prevails...

If this monument is so beautiful, it is because — unlike so many others — it does not embody a victory, a god, or a great man, but a generous idea: freedom and friendship between peoples. The Statue of Liberty could have remained a mere project, deemed too large, too costly, or too complex... Yet the determination of its creator, sustained by the shared commitment of the French and American people, allowed this bold idea to rise and become the universal symbol we know today.

To tell the story of the Statue of Liberty is to venture into its inner structure and, through an extraordinary epic, uncover the flame that drove its creators. With this experience, we therefore pursue a clear ambition: to transform the major stages of its construction into an emotional journey, bringing visitors into the very heart of this fascinating story and its many dimensions.

A Multidimensional Narrative

In order to tell the story of the Statue of Liberty in all its richness, we have structured the narrative around several interwoven threads:

Human: by meeting those who took part in the construction of the statue.

Artistic: by exploring the inspirations and the aesthetic development of the project.

Scientific: by explaining the engineering challenges that had to be overcome to erect such an ambitious undertaking.

Historical: by placing the work back in its historical context to restore its full meaning.

Symbolic: by illustrating what the monument represents for America and for the world.

One hundred and forty years after its inauguration, the values embodied by the Statue of Liberty appear to be profoundly challenged. We are therefore, in turn, driven by a dream: to offer an unforgettable experience that allows Bartholdi's legacy to shine once more — and to show that we are all, in France, in Europe, and around the world, in some way the children of Lady Liberty.

SEQUENCING



1 - NEW YORK HARBOR — 1886

A few months before the inauguration

In the mist of the harbor, a boat approaches Liberty Island. Visitors move among several groups of passengers: some are filled with excitement, others with doubt — but already the Statue comes into view, still under construction... and already laden with fantasies.

At the bow, a journalist from the *New York World* begins to recount what he knows of the monument. He speaks of its French origins, of the name Bartholdi, and of an adventure that began more than twenty years ago, across the Atlantic...



2 — LABOULAYE'S SALON — 1865

In Laboulaye's salon in Versailles, visitors move freely among several groups. On one side, conversations focus on France under Napoleon III and freedom under constraint. On the other, America under Lincoln is discussed — his recent assassination and the abolition of slavery. The exchanges echo one another, like two mirrors reflecting the same ideal to be defended.

Soon, Laboulaye gathers his guests and articulates a simple yet bold idea: to offer the United States, on the centennial of its independence, a work that would embody Liberty and the friendship between the two peoples. Everyone agrees, without yet grasping the true scale of the undertaking... and Laboulaye introduces the man for the task: Auguste Bartholdi.

SEQUENCING



3 — INSPIRATIONS AND SKETCHES

Inspired by the exchanges in Laboulaye's salon, Bartholdi nonetheless still lacks the means to begin his work. What follows are years of decisive travel and training. Visitors move through this inner journey via his letters and sketches. From the abandoned project of a lighthouse at Suez to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, we discover the experiences that shaped his reflections on liberty. His path ultimately leads him to America. At the entrance to New York Harbor, his gaze comes to rest on Bedloe's Island... During this journey, Bartholdi finally defines the design of his monument, revealing its symbols to us.

Bartholdi now believes in the construction of his monument at last. But the collapse of a plaster hand throws everything into doubt...



4 — DOUBT

The setting shifts into a dark, empty space. Around the visitors, debris floats — rubble and fragments of the unfinished monument. Bartholdi appears, tiny, facing the vastness of the Statue's still-incomplete face.

Confronted with this vertiginous scale and the lack of resources, he begins to doubt. Has he aimed too high? Is the project beyond reach? Then a familiar voice rises — that of his mother. She urges him to persevere and to show his work to the world.

In the distance, the torch lights up.

SEQUENCING



5 — PHILADELPHIA CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION — 1876

A shift in atmosphere. Celebration, crowds, music! Visitors wander freely through the avenues of the World's Fair, before gathering around Lady Liberty's torch, now one of the exhibition's major attractions.

Bartholdi appears on a balcony and addresses the crowd. He announces that public mobilization and the fundraising campaigns carried out for years on both sides of the Atlantic have finally made it possible to secure the funds needed to begin construction of the monument in Paris.



6 — GAGET WORKSHOPS

The visitor enters the vast hall of the Gaget workshops, alive with activity.

Guided by Bartholdi, they discover the successive stages of the monument's construction: enlarged plaster models, wooden frameworks, hand-hammered copper.

The worksite also reveals the collective and artisanal nature of the undertaking. Yet despite the progress made, one question remains: how can a statue of such monumental scale be supported?

SEQUENCING



7 — THE EIFFEL STRUCTURE

The visitor enters a luminous space filled with plans, diagrams, and scale models. Here, Bartholdi meets Gustave Eiffel. Together, they confront the core challenge: how to support a statue of this size, exposed to wind, salt... and time.

Eiffel presents his solution: a metal framework. Before our eyes, the structure gradually assembles as we move through it, level by level.

As we reach the level of the head, a burst of light pouring in through the openings propels us into the next sequence.



8 — PARISIAN INAUGURATION — 1884

We are on the roof of the Gaget workshops. The Statue rises above Paris, towering over the city's rooftops. Visitors move among the workers, onlookers, and journalists who have come to witness the event, commenting on it with excitement.

Below, Bartholdi addresses the crowd. He presents the completed work and announces that the Statue must now be dismantled, transported, and shipped across the Atlantic to reach its final destination.

The adventure continues on the other side of the ocean!

SEQUENCING



9 — PULITZER'S OFFICE

The visitor enters the bustling offices of the *New York World*. Around Joseph Pulitzer, the presses are running and newspapers pile up.

Pulitzer lays out the situation: the Statue has arrived, but its pedestal is not yet completed. He then decides to launch a public fundraising appeal, addressing the American people directly. At that moment, bold newspaper headlines burst into view around us as contributions pour in. Thanks to this wave of popular support, the project is saved. The Statue can finally be erected!



10 — AMERICAN INAUGURATION — 1886

From the deck of a boat, visitors witness the inauguration of the Statue. Around them, other vessels celebrate, and an immense crowd fills the harbor. Suddenly, a small boat approaches: on board, suffragettes raise a banner denouncing a freedom that is still incomplete...

Then light breaks through the clouds. Lady Liberty appears in all her splendor, at last completed. Some search the crowd for Bartholdi, imagining his silhouette within the crown...

And finally, night falls. The torch lights up, shimmering above the bay. Lady Liberty has become that beacon, enlightening the world...





VISUAL UNIVERSE

A Pictorial Approach, from the Intimate to the Monumental

For this project we felt the need for a pictorial treatment. Faced with a knowledgeable audience, familiar with the great masters, we wanted to move away from disembodied photorealism and instead favor sketching and painting — the very tools of Bartholdi’s time. Our intention is to propose a strong graphic signature that does more than simply depict facts, immersing visitors in a sensorial and emotional atmosphere.

Artistic Research

We studied numerous painters from the late 19th and 20th centuries in order to analyze their work. We observed how they used light, restrained color palettes, rapid brushstrokes, and tonal vibration. Some paintings served as references for historical precision, others for their strongly marked atmosphere. It is through these studies that we were able to define our choices for color and lighting throughout the experience.

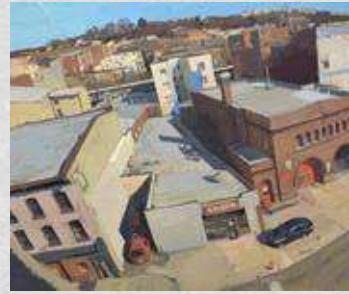
Guiding the Eye Through Light and Color

We favor soft atmospheres and lightly saturated tones so as not to distract the eye. Light guides our attention: it becomes dark and intimate in Laboulaye’s salon or when facing the broken face of the statue, then turns radiant to reveal the vastness of New York Harbor. Each sequence is built around a dominant color palette, yet to keep the image alive and vibrant, shadows are never rendered in pure black. They are enriched with deep blues or warm browns, preserving a sense of life and materiality.

The Energy of the First Gesture

We seek to retain the spirit of the sketch. By leaving pencil lines visible and paint strokes broad, we aim to give the impression that each scene has been captured in the moment. To us, this style echoes the very nature of the Statue project itself: an idea coming into being, a thought in constant motion before becoming a monument of metal.

GRAPHIC REFERENCES



Chromatic Harmonies: Soft, Desaturated Tones

Pictorial Treatment: Material Texture and Light

GRAPHIC REFERENCES



Muted Atmospheres and Brushwork

GRAPHIC REFERENCES

To embody Bartholdi's journey, we draw on the aesthetics of the Golden Age of American Illustration, specifically through a visual dialogue between Dean Cornwell (1892–1960) and Saul Tepper (1899–1987). These two masters, connected through their shared training under Harvey Dunn, share a philosophy that underpins our artistic direction: the primacy of emotion over completeness. They teach us the art of “leaving out” — the deliberate power of omission.







CHARACTER TREATMENT



Historical reference.



Concept.

Created from historical references validated by the curators.



High-poly sculpted model.

This version uses a maximum number of polygons to capture the character's shapes and fine details.



Texturing and lighting.

Materials and colors are applied to the model, followed by lighting. A new 3D model with fewer polygons is then created to meet performance constraints while preserving visual detail through the textures.



CHARACTER TREATMENT



Pulitzer



Eiffel



Laboulaye

A PRESTIGIOUS FRANCO-AMERICAN LAUNCH



Musée d'Orsay

September 15, 2026 to January 31, 2027

Amount Gallery - 700 sqm

80,000 visitors expected



New York City

(**Museum of Jewish Heritage** to be confirmed)
and other American cities

Expected Late September 2026 - February 2027

500-600 sqm

120,000 visitors expected

...before an international tour to come

With the media partnership of



HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE PROJECT

Scientific Advisory Support

The VR experience is built on a rigorous research approach, supported by a scientific committee supervised by the Musée d'Orsay.

It brings together experts from several institutions, including François Blanchetière, Chief Curator of Sculpture and Architecture at the Musée d'Orsay, and Juliette Chevée, Heritage Curator and Director of the Bartholdi Museum in Colmar.

The committee supports the project at every stage: editorially, by guiding the writing and development of the narrative, and visually, by ensuring that characters, environments, sets, and atmospheres are historically credible. It also provides privileged access to collections and archives, making it possible to ground our immersive approach in solid and authoritative references.



Beyond this oversight, our teams conducted extensive iconographic research on the various figures featured in the narrative, the environments of each sequence, as well as the furniture and everyday objects of the period. This research makes it possible to bring historically accurate scenes to life, in which every element—costumes, objects, and settings—contributes to an immersive experience that is fully coherent with the Franco-American context of the 1860s–1880s.



An unprecedented reconstruction of the Gaget workshop

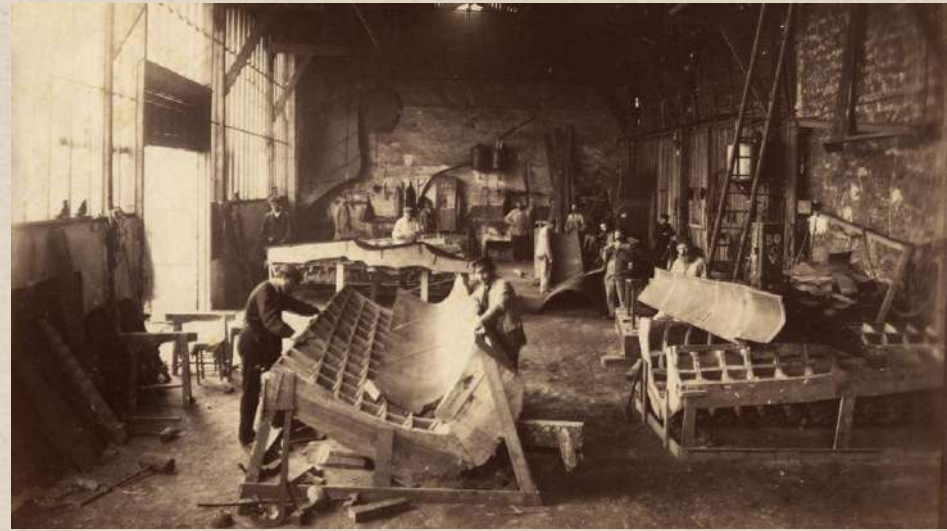
For this project, we focused on the very place where the Statue was created: the Gaget workshop in Paris. While everyone is familiar with the statue standing in New York, few realize that it was in fact designed—and even assembled—in Paris before being shipped to the United States.

In partnership with Aristeas, a specialist in the reconstruction of lost heritage environments and a long-standing partner of GEDEON, we seized the opportunity to bring this little-known site back to life for the general public.

The objective was twofold: to deepen historical knowledge of the monument and to offer visitors a vivid, scientifically credible immersion into its creative process.

To achieve this, Aristeas conducted exhaustive research in period archives—plans, photographs, cadastral records, publications, and iconography—making it possible to faithfully recreate all the interior and exterior spaces of the workshop. This 3D reconstruction now forms the basis of several key scenes in our experience.

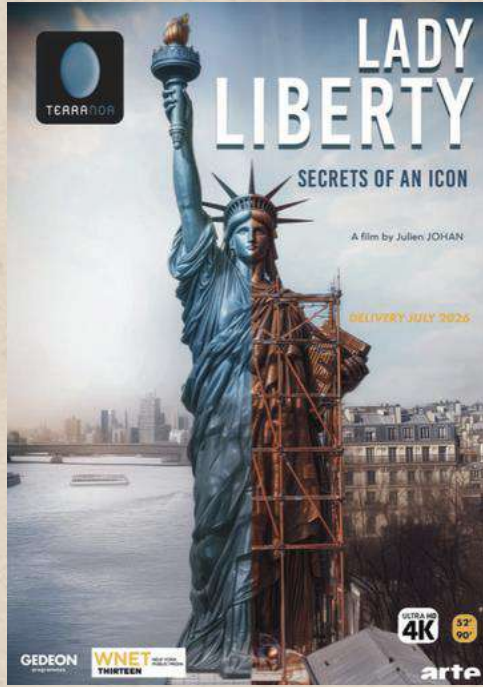




A surreal image showing the Statue of Liberty in the center of a city street, surrounded by scaffolding. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, golden glow emanating from the background, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The buildings on either side are multi-story and have a classic architectural style. The overall mood is mysterious and historical.

The documentary

LADY LIBERTY, SECRETS OF AN ICON



Overview

An event documentary produced by GEDEON Programmes and commissioned by European Cultural Channel ARTE in coproduction with PBS/WNET will be released in July 2026 for a premiere broadcast on both sides of the Atlantic in the fall. Additional partner channels include SBS Australia, RTS Switzerland, Télé Québec and Ceska Television.



LADY LIBERTY, SECRETS OF AN ICON



Narrative Structure

The narrative unfolds across twenty years, tracing the major stages in the construction of the Statue of Liberty from the 1860s to its inauguration on Bedloe's Island in 1886. At the center of the story stands Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, his artistic vision, his uncompromising determination, and his ability to overcome financial hardship and political turmoil to complete an unprecedented engineering achievement.

The film portrays a vast collective adventure driven by innovation and entrepreneurship, the very forces at the heart of this colossal undertaking. For the first time, audiences are transported inside the bustling Gaget workshops in Paris through detailed original 3D recreations that reveal the groundbreaking processes of design, fabrication, and assembly on a monumental scale. World-renowned engineer Gustave Eiffel brought his pioneering expertise to the project, applying cutting-edge techniques in metal construction and structural design. His innovative internal framework, an early form of curtain-wall engineering, ensured the statue's strength and long-term resistance to wind and corrosion, redefining the possibilities of monumental sculpture.

LADY LIBERTY, SECRETS OF AN ICON



Bartholdi was not only a visionary artist; he was also a master in advertising. Through inventive fundraising campaigns in both France and the United States, a historic precursor to modern crowdfunding, he mobilized public enthusiasm to finance the monument. The film follows his transatlantic journeys to the young American republic he so deeply admired, documenting the statue's evolution and revealing the extraordinary symbolic power it held at the time of its inauguration in October 1886. While Bartholdi serves as the central figure, the narrative introduces other key protagonists: Édouard de Laboulaye, the French intellectual who conceived the idea of a diplomatic gift celebrating the young American Republic and New York press magnate Joseph Pulitzer, whose campaign galvanized public support among New Yorkers and helped complete the funding of the monument.

Their intertwined stories illuminate the political, cross-cultural, and social landscape of the era. Blending cinematic drama with original footage filmed in historic locations across France and the United States, the film anchors its storytelling in rigorous scholarship while unfolding as a compelling narrative for a broad audience. French and American experts present archival materials and previously unseen documents that place events in context and highlight the political turmoil shaping both nations during the statue's long creation. Featured contributors include François Blanchetière, Chief Curator of Sculpture and Architecture at Musée d'Orsay, Juliette Chevée, Heritage Curator and Director of the Bartholdi Museum in Colmar; Edward Berenson, historian, author of "The Statue of Liberty: A Transatlantic Story" and Director of the Institute of French Studies at NYU; Robert Snyder, historian of New York City; and Professor Sharon Ann Holt of the University of Pennsylvania, among other leading American historians.

DOCUMENTARY AUDIENCE FORECAST



ARTE France:

- 800,000 viewers on average at first broadcast
- Similar figures (approx. 800,000) at the second broadcast 18 months later
- Approximately 500,000 to 600,000 additional views on the platform (replay)

ARTE Germany:

- 450,000 viewers on average at first broadcast
- 300,000 in replay



PBS / WNET (national premiere broadcast):

- On average: 1 to 2 million viewers
- Stronger-performing episodes may reach 2 to 3 million viewers

Including:

- Re-broadcasts, Streaming on PBS.org PBS app
 - Time-shifted viewing
- Total audience + 20% to 40%,
depending on the subject matter.



RTS (Switzerland):

- 250,000 viewers (linear broadcast + replay)

Česká televize (Czech Republic):

- 300,000 viewers + replay



SBS (Australia):

- 600,000 viewers + replay

Projected total audience for 2026: approximately 5 million viewers

Re-broadcasts in 2027/2028

- Additional international broadcasters to be announced, representing a further estimated 2 to 3 million viewers on average.



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