

Google Arts and Culture launches Mali Magic

Google has launched Mali Magic, a digital treasure trove that aims to preserve and showcase Mali's historic and contemporary art and culture.



Image supplied: A Malian woman by Passion Paris

Together with its local partners, Google Arts and Culture identified four key pillars of Malian culture - manuscripts, music, monuments and modern art - and worked closely with local communities and experts to digitally document the country's art, architecture, scholarship and musical tradition and share stories of its resilience in the face of political struggles with the world.

With the launch of Mali Magic, people from all over the world can view an array of manuscripts, music, art and heritage sites including over 40,000 digitised endangered manuscripts - many of which were smuggled to safety during political unrest in the country. It also contains more than 50 exhibits which include the first online, interactive tours of some of Mali's most significant historic sites, at-risk mausoleums and mosques including the Sidi Yahiya and Djinguereber Mosques and the Tomb of Askia, all created using Street View.



Image supplied: The Djinguereber Mosque by Passion Paris

Google Arts and Culture also worked with artist and musician DJ Spooky (Paul Miller) to create short videos to explore the evolution of storytelling, from West Africa to the American blues. An original album, *Maliba*, by Malian singer-songwriter Fatoumata Diawara, produced in Mali and written about the country's cultural legacy, was created exclusively for the project. The collection also contains a wealth of videos and imagery which capture Mali's contemporary art scene and profile some of its artists.

Chance Coughenour, programme manager and digital archaeologist at Google Arts and Culture, said "The Malian city of Timbuktu gave birth to an abundance of learning in the fields of human rights, morality, politics, astronomy and literature captured in thousands of manuscripts. When this ancient knowledge was threatened by extremist groups in 2012, local communities raced against time to preserve these treasures. This legacy is now available for people across the world to explore."



Image supplied: A Modern Art Monument in Bamako by Passion Paris

Dr. Abdel Kader Haidara, the 'badass librarian' known for smuggling the manuscripts out of Timbuktu, said, "[They] are more than important historical documents. Central to the heritage of the West African nation of Mali, they represent the long legacy of written knowledge and academic excellence in Africa, and hold potential to inspire global learning from the actions of the past in confronting modern-day issues."

"The preservation of global heritage is a huge endeavour, " added Coughenour, "Many experts, NGOs and cultural institutions work in this space and do an incredible job. We are honoured to support our partners with the technology to make their work accessible to people all over the world," he concludes.

Savama - Manuscript Digitisation and Curation, Timbuktu Renaissance, Unesco, Instruments 4 Africa and Brooklyn Public

Library all worked in partnership with Google Arts and Culture on the Mali project.

To learn more about the project, go [here](#).

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