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The Victoria & Albert Museum

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Victoria and Albert museum

On monday the 16 th we visited the victoria and albert museum . It is one of the biggest museum of decorative arts and design. It has got 4 500 000 million objets. It was founded in 1852 just after the Great exhibition. It was known as the museum of manufactures.

Each one of us has chosen a subject, so we shall first tell you about chinese porcelain, then the Arts and Crafts movement and finally the dresses of women.

The V and A is a huge building with several rooms, each of them the home of different subjects. For example there is a room dedicated to China. Indeed the V&A has got one of the most important collection of Chinese art dating from 3000 BC until today. The museum harbours a rich collection of textiles , prints, ceramics and furniture. We are interested in the porcelain objects which were made with much precision and details.

http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L150xH150/porcelaine_cd5d4-91ba4.jpg

Tea caddy, Thomas Baxter, 1780-1790

Chinese ceramic is mainly known for the invention of porcelain.

Tea canisters were utilised for the tea service in Europe to maintain and preserve tea and its fragrance. The curved form of the cannister is modelled on earlier designs in silver or pewter with similar porcelain cannisters being manufactured in China from the 1770s. The design on the body of the vessel, depicting a landscape scene of a pagoda and a man carrying baskets over a bridge, was a European adaption of a traditional Chinese landscape. Chinese landscape patterns were extremely popular with similar designs incorporated into pieces produced by European ceramic factories. Gilding was often added in English workshops as Chinese gilding was considered of inferior quality as it wore away easily.

The tea caddy is painted in blue and white. These colors are often used in the chinese porcelain. The porcelain blue and white was used for the first time by the Persans potters on the XIIIe.

However the « blue and white » porcelain was one of the luxuries available only to the nobility.

The Arts and Crafts movement was an international movement in the decorative and fine arts which was located in Europe and North America between 1800 and 1910 and was also present later in Japan in the 1920s.

The founder of this movement, William Morris, created it in 1891. He was a designer and was a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was one of the source which initiated the Arts and Crafts movement.

The furniture in Victoria and Albert museum was really impressive. Yet, my favorite pieces of furniture, belonged to the Arts and Craft movement because they were adorned with many flowers and medieval details and were really

beautiful.

I selected several photos that I took to compare them

The first that I have chosen is a piece of furniture made by William Morris.

This cabinet is formed of rectangular cupboard which has three doors in which we can see five scenes which represent events of the life of St George.

The colors are dark, however we notice yellow on the women's dresses and red on the clothing of the men. Yellow represents joy and helps to brighten the painting whereas red gives warmth.

This cabinet is a rare work of Morris. We find on this piece of furniture many details inspired by the medieval era. We find this period with the women's long dresses and hairstyles and with weapons like spears knights. They were fascinated by an idealized medieval time which enabled them to escape the ugliness of their materialistic century. Here the materials used are pine and oak, with copper mounts.

[http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L150xH113/art_and_craf6f38-22e4d.jpg]

St. George Cabinet, William Morris, 1861 - 1862

The second object that I have chosen is an armchair made by Gimson. This piece of furniture is a reproduction of chairs made during the Middle-Age.

I selected it because it is totally different from the first. Indeed, this chair is made of wood but the lines are really clean and straight.

Even if, usually furniture belonging to the Arts and Craft movement has got many patterns or details, here it is just a chair of very simple design. However, the founder of this movement, Morris, wanted to create objects that you could keep longer because he sought to revive traditional crafts and to emphasize the decorative arts. Yet, the Arts and Crafts's furnitures were more expensive than others.

[http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L102xH150/armchair_2-ad7ab-35e0d.jpg]

Armchair , Ernest William Gimson (1892-1904)

The last object that I have chosen is a vase made at William De Morgan's pottery and it is one of his unique goods.

De Morgan's passion was for the arts of the Middle and Far East.

This object is different from the others because it seems to be more modern thanks to the patterns which are very colorful. In fact, we can see many leaves which are yellow, orange and green.

This object had been made with metallic oxydes, like copper and silver, with white clay to which was added gum arabic to do the manipulation easier. This was painted on and heated at a low temperature to dry the vase quickly. What's more, to prevent it from losing its color it was not to be touched for several days.

[<http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L116xH150/vase-b4362-d7e9c-926d7.jpg>]

Vase and lid, De Morgan, William Frend, 1888-1898

So, in this movement there were several styles to create furniture.

Dresses of women

In this museum what fascinated me was the section devoted to woman's fashion. In fact, room 40 was dedicated to the dresses of women around the world, so we could see the evolution of dresses by different designers. We can see dresses from the XVIIIth century to right now. My favorite dresses were two by famous designer Christian Dior. These dresses were created in Paris in the 20th century. Just a anecdote : Dior used to name his collections with a letters of analphabet and these dresses come from the Y line. Both are a cocktail dress and are the same color the pink/red with a white on one of them. I find them very original because they are simple but very elegant at the same time and of course they were created by Christian Dior. In the museum we saw other dresses from different countries like China.

[http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L113xH150/ecarlarte_cokded4-4bb1d.jpg]

'Ecarlate' cocktail dress, Christian Dior, 1955

[http://lyc-george-sand-la-chatre.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/eva/sites/lyc-george-sand-la-chatre/local/cache-vignettes/L113xH150/robe_dior-cb825d-382c5.jpg]

Dress by Christian Dior's

What's more, in the V and A, there was an exhibit of wedding dresses which opened the 3rd May 2014 and ended on 15th March 2015. This exhibition traced the evolution of white wedding dresses between 1775 and 2014. Unfortunately, you could see these wedding dresses only if you paid the entry. But we could see a little of this exhibit from another balcony, it was very interesting and beautiful because we see the evolution and we noticed that even if some dresses are old, they are really beautiful even more beautiful than now. In the new dresses we can notice more patterns like beads, flowers and now the weddings's dresses are shorter than before

To conclude the museum was very interesting because it was rich in objects, paintings and more subjects from different countries . But the only problem was time : we couldn't see every thing due to their abundance. But it was an exciting visit because we learnt a lot.