

Home and Garden: Domestic Spaces in Paintings from 1675 to 1914

Part One: 1675-1830, from 16 September 2003 to 18 January 2004

Part Two: 1830-1914, from 9 March to 18 July 2004

This major exhibition brings together some eighty paintings to explore the representation of urban domestic interiors and gardens in paintings over two hundred years. It will be the first ever exhibition of works on this theme and, unusually, will focus on the valued domestic spaces of the middle-classes rather than those of Royalty or the aristocracy. Many of the homes and gardens shown belonged to the merchant or professional classes of English, and mainly London, society. With works by Hogarth, Wilkie, Tissot and Sickert and many by lesser known artists rarely exhibited, this will be a unique opportunity to explore the material culture, tastes, values and social milieu of this increasingly influential and confident sector of society.

Paintings from collections across the UK and America will be shown not simply as beautiful works of art but as social-historical documents which contain revealing details about the nature of middle-class domestic interiors and gardens. This is the Geffrye's specialist area of research and the paintings will be analysed as part of a wider study into urban living. This approach involves the use of physical evidence from surviving buildings and gardens, interior furnishings and decorative art, as well as documentary sources in the form of inventories, diaries and letters, trade catalogues, pattern books and planting plans. Pictures studied in isolation of the wider evidence can be misleading, but read alongside this multi-layered information, can reveal fascinating details which might otherwise elude 21st-century viewers.

The works will be displayed in two groups of about 40 paintings and drawings. Part One will include works by Gawen Hamilton, Arthur Devis, Marcus Tuscher, David Wilkie and Benjamin West and Part Two will include paintings by George Elgar Hicks, Mary Ellen Best, James Tissot and Spencer Gore. Each part of the exhibition will be divided into three main sections: portraits, the room or garden as subject and genre. Within these broad categories we will explore the stories contained within each image in an attempt to assess to what extent these paintings show actual homes and gardens and how much the artist may have altered or intervened in the interests of composition. These images are rich in meaning and symbolism and provide vivid glimpses into private worlds.

Exhibition Talks: Home and Garden

An opportunity to explore a selection of pictures with an exhibition curator. *All three talks will be held in the exhibition gallery, so places are very limited. Tickets £5.00 on the door. Please note that the museum door will not open until 6.45 pm.*

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Portraits 1730-1760: The early conversation piece

Tuesday 11 November 7.00 - 8.00pm

The room and garden as subject 1675-1830

Tuesday 18 November 7.00 - 8.00pm

Portraits – 1760-1830: A new realism

Tuesday 25 November 7.00 - 8.00pm

Study Day – Home and Garden

A day of lectures and case studies, presented by specialists, historians and the exhibition curators, exploring themes and particular paintings in the exhibition

Saturday 15 November 10.00am - 4.30pm

Tickets £35 in advance (includes morning coffee and a sandwich lunch)

NOTES TO EDITORS

- 1) For further information or images, please contact the Press Officer Rachel Balfour, on 020 7739 9893 or info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
- 2) Two **study days** (Part One – 15 November 2003 and Part Two - March 2004) will accompany the exhibition. Part 1 will include a talk focussing on the use of props in portraiture, on John Soane's desire to document his life and on a series of early 19th century Bristol garden watercolours. Part Two will focus on themes specific to the Victorian period, including the pictorial representation of 'separate spheres', the notion and importance of privacy, the issues surrounding leisure time and the role of the conservatory in domestic life. Both days will encompass a range of art and social historical approaches. Case studies on particularly intriguing or lesser-known works will be interspersed throughout the day.
- 3) The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-colour catalogue with contributions from art historian Charlotte Gere and Geffrye staff.
- 4) The Geffrye Museum presents the quintessential style of English urban middle-class interiors from 1600 to the present day through a chronological sequence of period rooms. The museum is set in the former almshouses of the Ironmongers' Company, elegant 18th century buildings surrounded by tranquil gardens, including an award-winning walled herb garden and a series of period gardens in Shoreditch, East London.
- 5) The Geffrye Museum is an independent charitable trust, grant-aided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Trust actively seeks to attract donations and corporate sponsorship to support the museum's services and development plans.
- 6) Admission: FREE
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Recorded Info: 020 7739 8543
Web Address: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk
Email Address: info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm
Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays 12 - 5pm
Travel: Buses: 149, 242, 243, 67 or 394
Tube: Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242
Old St (exit 2), then bus 243

