

Obsessed with the Victorian Obsession

As a result we have an amazing collision of Victorian art with the interior of the former home of Lord Leighton. You will experience the largest collection of Victorian art outside the UK, including 50 paintings by well-known Victorian artists.



Now is the time to visit the Leighton House in Holland Park.

Why?

Because the collection of Victorian art from the private collector Juan Antonia Pérez Simón is on display.

The Leighton House – an art piece that stands by itself

If the exhibition won't attract you then Leighton House itself surely will. It is the former studio-house of artist Lord Frederic Leighton. When entering the Arab Hall you are taken to another place immediately. The harmony of convoluted blue, green mosaics, Islamic tiles and the golden dome is breath-taking and was inspired by Leightons' trip to Damascus in 1873.

Ambling through the rooms you ask yourself 'Were these painting created for the house or was this house built for the display of these paintings?' The resonation is incredible. Leightons' studio is an experience in itself with its high ceilings and huge windows facing north for consistent lighting conditions. It is the only room in which the permanent art collection hasn't made way for the exhibition.

The artists whose paintings are on display at the Victorian Obsession knew Leighton well and used to be his guests at his 'private palace of art'. Queen Victoria herself was invited and was entertained by the collection that bejewelled the home of the Leighton.

Victorian art at it's finest

Has Leighton House convinced you? The paintings you'll experience definitely will. The Mexican businessman Pérez Simón art collection includes impressive paintings from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Sir John Everett Millais, John



William Waterhouse, Sir Edward Poynter, John William Godward, John Melhuish Strudwick, Charles Perugini and many more.

The highlight of the exhibition has to be Sir Lawrence Alma-Tademas 'Roses of Heliogabalus', which hasn't been seen in Britain since 1913. The dramatic scene on the two metre-canvas shows how the Syrian emperor Heliogabalus (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus) suffocates his guests under a sea of pink and white rose petals for his own distorted pleasure. Stepping into the room you are greeted by the overpowering scent of Jo Malones 'Red Roses', which gives a multi-sensual touch to the experience of the painting. The composition of the dramatic scene with the sickly sweetness of the scent of roses seems surreal and will leave you startled.

Another highlight is 'Crenaia, the Nymph of the Dargle' by Lord Frederic Leighton. The nymph is linked to the River Dargle, which ran across the Irish estate of Lord Powerscourt, the painting's first owner. The subject is transformed by the naturalistic portrayal of the model Dorothy Dene, his muse and long-time model. Her nudity emerges from beneath diaphanous folds of her drapery, which blend into the waterfall behind.

The 19th century paintings have never been seen together before and probably won't be back soon. If you have the chance to go, take it. This is a one-off aesthetic experience no one interested in Victorian Art should be missing.

'A Victorian Obsession: The Pérez Simón Collection' at the Leighton House Museum in London is on until the 29th of March 2015. More details on leightonhouse.co.uk

(text: Sophie Melrose-Doering)