

Press release



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INDOOR GARDENS

AUTRIQUE HOUSE

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Interest in plants and the study of plant life must surely be as old as the human race itself. The gardens were the fruits of a new relationship with objects, of the discovery and trade voyages that characterised the development of the European empires and of their diplomatic networks. Having rare and expensive plants enhanced the prestige of elite social groups, as well as the status of a middle class that was finding its place in the sun.

The Société de Flore de Bruxelles was founded in Brussels in 1822. Its leading figures were, indeed, aristocrats and wealthy middle classes citizens, with local horticulturalists having only a secondary status. A number of commercial firms appeared just as these types of association were emerging; there, plant producers and enthusiasts often rubbed shoulders with one another.

During this time, elite groups were settling in areas around the capital (in the famous “faubourgs” such as Schaerbeek and Evere, which were to remain municipalities for a long period).

The revival of interest in floral compositions was mainly announced through the abundance of literature and exhibitions that proliferated in the late 19th century, with the Impressionist and Art Nouveau movements. The floral motif was developed in vast decorative compositions. It was no longer a sub-category undermined by the all-powerful dominance of history painting. New life was breathed into subjects in a society that was gradually opening to less affluent classes.

The permanent introduction of greenery into people's homes is revealing, as it shows us the connection that industrialised society forges with nature. Tending to plants is an uplifting and calming activity; instead of succumbing to the lure of nightlife, why not stay home and cultivate one's plants? Although it is often neglected by art history, this phenomenon provides us with a vital key to understanding the aesthetic development of interiors during that period.

The middle classes' passion for horticulture was clearly reflected in the periodicals devoted to the subject. These were lavishly illustrated with colour plates that naturally indicated their intended readership.



Intérieur bourgeois, around 1910, MoMuse, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean/Sint-Jans-Molenbeek

The pages of the horticultural reviews displayed the plants and flowers that formed the ornamental features of home interiors, small gardens and flowerbeds throughout the long 19th century. We learn from La Tribune Horticole, for example, that in 1903 the rose remained the queen of flowers and that the white lily was no longer in vogue, even though it was still sold on the Grand-Place; it also tells us that in 1904, winter mimosa from Nice "reigned supreme in sitting rooms".

In the early 20th century, small gardens were filled with the types of flowers that we still plant today: lilies, tulips, gladioli, dahlias, begonias, calceolaria and chrysanthemums. Flowers also provided an opportunity to create a temporary, natural adornment, which could be adapted to the main living areas (in other words, sitting and dining rooms) using cattleya orchids, Japanese anemones, narcissi, hyacinths, etc. The horticultural periodicals showed bouquets of flowers created by the major Brussels-based brands, including Linden & Cie and La Roseraie belge, which had shops in the rue Royale and the rue du Noyer; these were displayed in photographs of the various shows and exhibitions.

LUCIO COLLOT

Lucie Collot has been a watercolourist since 2008 and has developed a unique style where Art Nouveau emerges quite naturally as a source of inspiration. Her vividly coloured and sinuous umbelliferae and other plants blossom in a world of harmony.

MARIE JO LA FONTAINE

Marie-Jo Lafontaine is a polymorphic and international artist. Her photo series will not leave you indifferent with their mixture of nature, art and technique. «The floral motif that she develops is a logical continuation of her work as a painter. A mastery of colour, a plastic rendering of great craftsmanship make her pictures of great dimensions. The function of these frames is to focus on the essential: the search for the shadow of the world.» Christophe Le Gac

With the support of: Plantentuin Meise ; Africa Museum ; Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique ; MoMuse ; Museum van Elsene ; Musée Charlier ; Gemeente Schaarbeek ; Denis Diagre-Vanderpelen ; Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest ; Nationale Loterij

In dialogue with the works of: Lucie Collot and Marie-Jo Lafontaine

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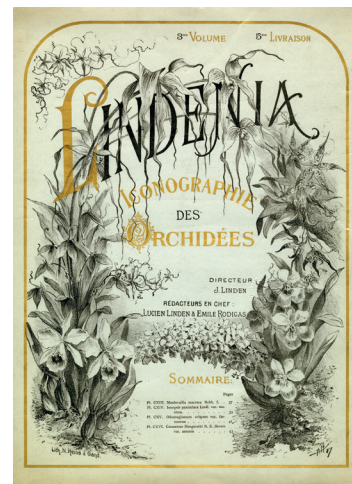


AUTRIQUE

From Wednesday to Sunday, from 12pm to 6pm
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Plantentuin Meise, Meise



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La Roseraie Belge, Plantentuin Meise, Meise



(793), 2019, ©Lucie Collot



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Lost Paradise, 2000-142x212 cm, photographie cibachrome, ©Marie-Jo Lafontaine