

EXHIBITION

PRINT & PAINT

350 years of flowers on cotton

Come and admire our unique collection of painted and printed cotton fabrics! We combine their remarkable story with dozens of loans from the Antwerp Fashion Museum, previously unseen views of interiors and works by contemporary artists. Some rooms are open to the public for the first time. All this from 26 May onwards.



Cecilia Paredes, *The Dream* (2020), photo in lightbox · photo © Bart Ramakers

Love of cotton

In fifteen rooms of the house the walls are covered with what we call chintzes, cotton fabrics that were painted or printed in India or Europe. The oldest pieces date from the middle of the 17th century and the most recent were installed as recently as 1967. Together, they form a unique collection: in no historic house in Europe are there more chintzes than at Hingene.

PRINT & PAINT tells the story of where this love of painted and printed cotton came from. The first chintzes were imported from India in the 16th century. Their designs of exotic plants and flowers appealed to the imagination, the fabric was finer than wool or linen and they retained their bright colours even after washing. From the 17th century onwards, with the large trading companies ensuring a permanent supply, the popularity of chintz grew and grew. Besides expensive, multi-coloured and hand-painted fabrics for the rich, the

trading companies also imported printed fabrics with fewer colours aimed at the lower classes. Chintz was used for clothing, but also for bedspreads, tablecloths, furnishing fabrics, curtains and wall hangings. From the 18th century onwards, in order to meet the growing demand, cotton printing factories also began to emerge in Europe.

Technology, chemistry and restoration

Our exhibition also presents the technological and chemical side of the production process. How were fabrics painted or printed and how were the different colours made? You will see 18th-century printing blocks, sample books and dyes, but also a remarkable work by Renuka Reddy, an Indian artist from Bangalore. She painted a reproduction of a wall covering from the castle and kept a sample of each of the ten (!) stages it takes to make a chintz. The story of the restoration of

Hingene's chintzes is also told. When the Province of Antwerp bought the castle in 1994, the wall coverings were only saved at the last minute. Then while the castle was gradually being restored they were kept in various depots.

Before the chintzes could be put back in place they were cleaned and disinfected as much as possible. Image processor Frederik Hulstaert reconstructed any missing pieces and made digital prints. Textile restorer Jefta Lammens sewed the new pieces into the old fabrics, meticulously repaired tears and holes and provided all panels with protective gauze. In some rooms, the original wall coverings were too badly damaged and a complete digital reproduction was made in the fresh, original colours.



Caroline d'Ursel (?), *Auguste d'Ursel in his second-floor flat at Hingene Castle* (c. 1847–1860) · © Château d'Ursel, Durbuy · photo © Frederik Hulstaert

Loans from other castles

We know from other, still inhabited, castles that, in addition to the walls, the curtains, bed curtains, bedspreads, cushions and upholstery were also covered with chintz. As evidence we will be showing photos and furniture from 'la chambre de la belle indienne' at Hex Castle.

There is also a group of paintings, never exhibited before, that we discovered in the possession of descendants of the 19th-century residents of Hingene. On these you will see Léo d'Ursel and his second cousin May posing in the small chintz-covered salon, you will catch a glimpse of Caroline d'Ursel's bedroom and in two watercolours of Auguste d'Ursel's apartment, you will find him comfortably seated reading his newspaper. The hangings in his alcove had been preserved, but not the ones on the

walls. Thanks to these watercolours, we know that the same motif adorned the entire room and we were able to restore its original appearance.

The grand salon was depicted several times in these paintings. A beautiful gouache shows the room when it was still covered with chintz and filled with matching furniture. And after the pink Chinese wallpaper was hung, the grand salon remained a favourite subject for watercolour painting. A scarce roll of unused wallpaper still has the bright colours of more than 150 years ago. Alongside the blue Chinese wallpaper we show the letter that two countesses of the family hid behind it in 1877.

Flowers on clothing

In the 18th century chintzes with large motifs, such as trees of life, were mainly chosen to cover walls. However, the d'Ursel family made a different choice. In Hingene we only find small motifs of flowers and plants such as were normally used for clothing. This is clearly shown by the many loans from the Antwerp Fashion Museum, originating from the private collection of Jacoba de Jonge. Throughout the museum, you will find shawls and sashes, samples and stencils, jackets and gowns, skirts and capes, a waistcoat, a dressing gown and a mysterious 'krablap'. They illustrate how Europeans experimented with printing techniques on fabric, but above all how immensely popular chintzes were in the 18th and 19th centuries.



A late 18th-century dressing gown worn by gentlemen of distinction at informal occasions • © Jacoba de Jonge



Emilie Faïf, *Excroissance* (2006) • © Emilie Faïf

A new way of seeing

As in our previous exhibitions *SWEET 18. Contemporary art, fashion and design inspired by the 18th century* and *The Beauty of the Beast. Animal art by old and new masters*, we combine and confront the historical story with work by contemporary artists and designers. We chose both young textile artists and established names from other disciplines. Sometimes the inspiration is very literal, sometimes the references are quite subtle. The contemporary art offers a surprising reflection on the techniques, patterns and colours from the historical part of the exhibition.

The Peruvian-American artist Cecilia Paredes was inspired by a 19th-century motif with birds and flowers that once decorated the Duchess's cabinet. Her work is the campaign image for *PRINT&PAINT*.

You will also discover work by:
 Markus Åkesson (SE), Virginie Broquet (FR),
 Bruno Cattani (IT), Isabel Devos (BE),
 Joël Ducorroy (FR), Camille Dufour (BE),
 Collectif Ensaders (FR), Emilie Faïf (FR),
 Kristine Fornes (NO), Clothilde Gosset (FR),
 Elsje Janssen (BE), Cecilia Paredes (PE/US),
 Elise Peroï (FR), Pablo Piatti (AR),
 Renuka Reddy (IN), Richard Saja (USA),
 Timorous Beasties (UK), Aiko Tezuka (JP),
 Dries Van Noten (BE) and Dirk Van Saene (BE).