



MUSEO STIBBERT



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Via Federico Stibbert 26
50134 Firenze

Opening hours

Museum

Monday - Wednesday
10.00-14.00
Friday - Sunday
10.00-18.00
Closed on Thursday

Park

April - October 8.00-19.00
November - March 8.00-17.00



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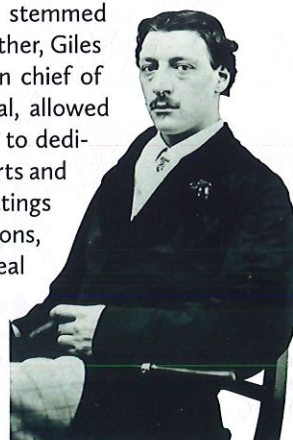
THE STIBBERT MUSEUM

THE HOUSE-MUSEUM

In 1849 Giulia Stibbert, recent widow of Colonel Thomas Stibbert and mother of his three young children: Frederick, Sophronia and Erminia, acquired one of the beautiful villas on the Montughi hill-top. This family, and Frederick Stibbert in particular, were to have a profound influence on the architectural, artistic and landscape transformation that the hill would undergo by the end of the century. The Stibbert Museum, as it appears today, is in fact the fruit of Frederick Stibbert's passion for collecting, which would drive him to transform his own residence into a house-museum following 19th century historicist tastes.

FREDERICK STIBBERT

Frederick (1838-1906), son of Thomas Stibbert (1771-1847), an English colonel in the Coldstream Guards, and the young Tuscan, Giulia Cafaggi (1805-1883), divided his time between Florence, where his family affection lay, and England, the family's country of origin. The family's considerable wealth, which stemmed from the life's work of Frederick's grandfather, Giles (1734-1809), who had been commander in chief of the East India Company troops in Bengal, allowed Frederick, sole heir to the family fortune, to dedicate a substantial part of his personal efforts and economic assets to art collecting. The settings Stibbert chose for his collections of Weapons, costumes and artworks in the villa reveal exceptional stylistic coherence. Thus, he managed to achieve striking evocation of the fascination and allure of those civilizations he loved so much.



His last will and testament, made public after his death, dictated that the collections be used to found a public museum, which was moreover to be left as its founder had created it. The city of Florence, which took possession of the villa, established the Stibbert Museum Foundation in 1908.

THE BUILDING

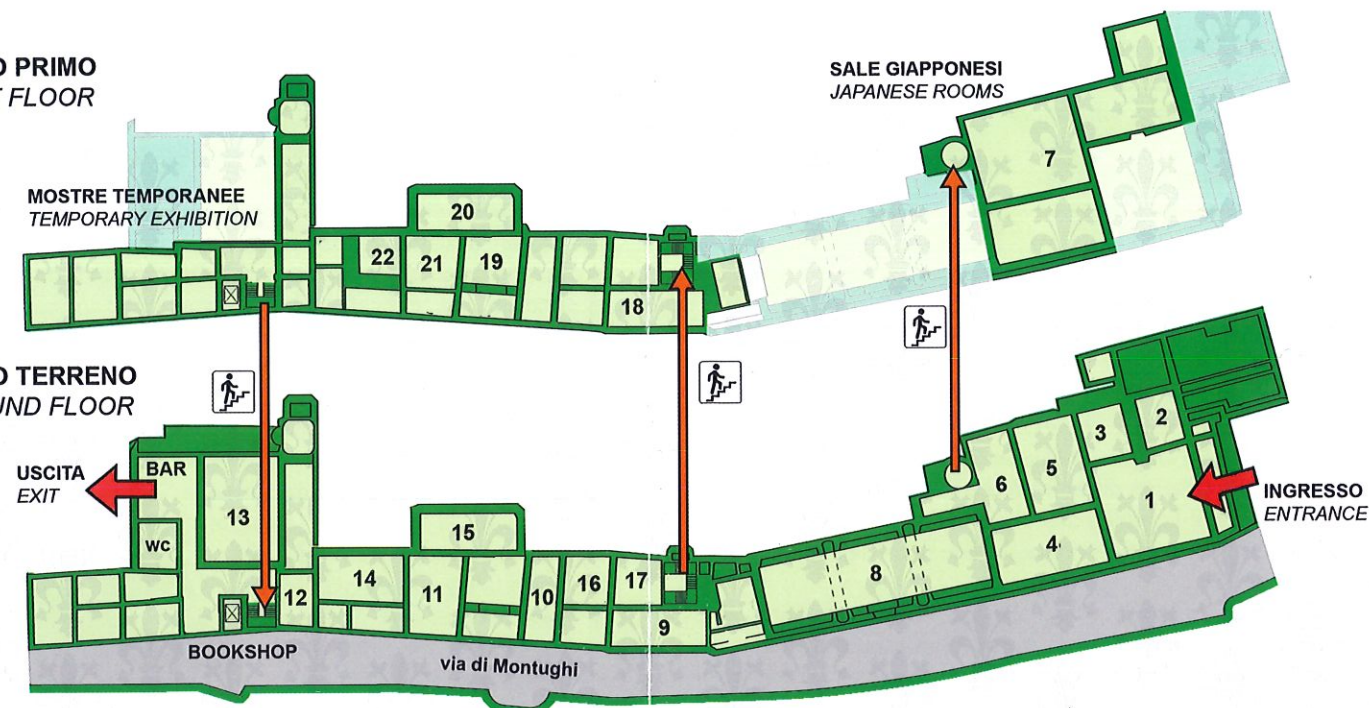
The structure that currently houses the Museum is the result of the unification of three different buildings on Stibbert's Tuscan estate, each purchased at a different time, first by his mother and then by Frederick himself. Remodelled a number of times, for over forty years the buildings underwent profound modifications and adaptations at the hands of Florence's most renowned architects, craftsmen and interior decorators. When the main building was no longer able to contain the collections that Frederick continued to add to, he purchased the nearby Bombicci Villa (1874), which was eventually linked to the original building by the addition of the large Hall of the Cavalcade. In fact, in those years (1879-1880), Stibbert already had in mind the eventual creation not only of a treasured private collection but a true museum as well.

THE PARK

In the Stibbert Museum complex the park takes on particular significance, in that it too reflects the tastes of its creator. Frederick created a vast romantic park, enriched with temples, evocative ancient ruins and rare plants. During Frederick's lifetime the park, just as the entire museum, was subjected to continual modifications and were built the Lemon House, the Stable, the Greek temple and the Egyptian temple.



PIANO PRIMO FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

- | | |
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| 1 Malachite Room | 11 Giulia Stibbert's Sitting Room |
| 2-3 Room of Sleeping Venus and Louis XV Room | 12 Gallery of Firearms |
| 4 Room of the Condottiere | 13 Ballroom, Gallery and Cantagalli Loggia |
| 5-6 Islamic Rooms | 14 Dining Room |
| 7 Japanese Rooms | 15 Loggia of Stuccoes |
| 8 Hall of the Cavalcade | 16 Red Drawing Room |
| 9 Billiards Room | 17 Hall of Flags |
| 10 Library | |

FIRST FLOOR

- | |
|---------------------------|
| 18 Room of Antique Plates |
| 19 Yellow Drawing Room |
| 20 Empire Loggia |
| 21 Giulia's Bedroom |
| 22 Frederick's Bedroom |

VISIT ROUTE

GROUND FLOOR

1 Malachite Room (or Painting Gallery)

The Malachite Room was originally part of the Bombicci Villa. It owes its current aspect to several successive renovation projects, carried out from 1879. Under the glass dome, amongst the stuccoes, are four marble reliefs by Augusto Passaglia, representing the Allegory of the Arts, and a magnificent Empire gilded bronze chandelier. In the room's centre stands an imposing bronze and malachite table, with a decoration of four bronze nymphs dancing with Zephyr around an oak tree. It was executed by Charles Henry Auguste, supplier to Napoleon's court, for Anatolio Demidoff in 1807. The malachite veered fire-place, with 17th century semi-precious stone panels, is dated to about 1840. The floor before the hearth holds a priceless marble and spun-glass mosaic, the work of M. Barberi. All these objects were originally part of the Demidoff Collection at the San Donato Villa in Florence; Frederick Stibbert acquired them during the great auction held there in 1880. A 16th century Flemish tapestry depicting the Resurrection of Lazarus hangs on the walls and on top two big paintings by Luca Giordano with Lot and her daughters and Susanna and the old men dated 1686. On the walls there are Spanish and Medicean dynastic portraits, Flemish paintings, landscapes and paintings by renowned masters such as Crivelli, Tiepolo, Moroni, Suttermans and Beccafumi. The group of 16th century armours on display here are amongst the collection's most representative pieces: the majority are of Italian manufacture, though German and French artefacts are also present.

The collection includes tournament suits of armour, characterized by extra reinforcement plates, several horsemen's armours and waist-length corslets for fighting on foot.

2 - 3 Room of Sleeping Venus and Louis XV Room

The Malachite room leads into two rooms; the first takes its name from the statue of the Sleeping Venus by Tito Sarrocchi (1874), which is on display in the centre. On the walls Flemish pictures, Medicean portraits and religious paintings. The second room is the Louis XV small salon decorated in an 18th century style.

4 Room of the Condottiere

The walls and the ceiling were frescoed with heraldic motif by Gaetano Bianchi around 1889. The frieze consists of 15th century Lombard school ceiling panels, depicting male and female busts alternating with arms. A glass cabinet here displays Etruscan, Roman and Longobard arms from archaeological digs, including an important Roman helmet from the Imperial period. The large equestrian figure in the room's centre depicts an armed knight with partly original, though composite armaments dated to the last of 15th century, such as the bard of the horse of German manufacture in metal plate and iron mesh. The figure is patterned after the tomb of John Hawkwood, the great English commander in chief in the service of the Florentines, which was painted by Paolo Uccello in Florence's Cathedral. This figure is part of a setting-up that reveals a predilection for grandiose theatrical effects. Hung along the walls are the polearms used by infantry and higher up we can see a series of 15th century wooden shields. Below stairs Stibbert set up the Egyptian collection, including two sarcophagi.

5 - 6 Islamic Rooms

The first room was decorated by Michele Piovano (1889), with stucco-work reproducing the Moorish motifs at the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. The Oriental style polychrome tiles, the work of the Cantagalli workshop in Florence, originally covered the entire floor. Here Stibbert wished to create an Eastern atmosphere in order to provide a suitable setting for the so-called "Islamic cavalcade", which shows Turkish, Persian and Moghul knights of Muslim culture and religion. The Oriental armaments differ from the European one for the attention paid to the lightness and the consequent easier mobility of the warriors. The cabinets contain a fine set of sabres, scimitars and dagger.

One of the knights in the group, the last in the right-hand row, deserves special attention as its horse is protected by exquisite 18th century armour in lacquered and gilded papier mâché from the region of Kashmir. One of the foot soldiers is wearing rare laminated armour, also datable to later half the 18th century and originally from Sindh, the ancient region between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The cabinets continue in the following room, where thousands of treasured Islamic weapons are on display, for the most part side arms and fire arms of Ottoman and Persian origins.



11 Giulia Stibbert's Sitting Room

After a small room which was originally intended to hold books and now holds oriental porcelain, there is the Giulia Stibbert's Sitting room. In this room there is a stuccoed ceiling by Bernardo Ramelli with Frederick Stibbert's initials around a fresco by Annibale Gatti from 1868, which copies the Dawn by Guido Reni in Palazzo Rospigliosi in Rome. The walls are lined with painted and gilded 17th century leather, chosen by Frederick to cover the original frescoes by Luigi Ademollo, still visible in other rooms of the villa. Venetian furniture, a couch and armchairs decorate this room, which in the centre display a rare German harpsichord from 1722.



12 Gallery of Firearms

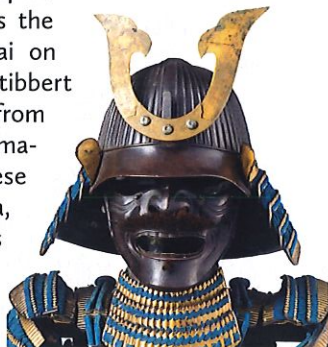
The rooms, which were set up after Stibbert's death, hold a display of 16th to 18th century European firearms and 19th century weapons used by various representative Italian and French corps, as carabinieri. The collection of Napoleonic weapons includes the remarkable sabre that belonged to Gioacchino Murat.

13 Ballroom, Gallery and Cantagalli Loggia

This group of rooms was once the heart of the family's social life. In the Gallery in front of the Ballroom are display cases in carved wood holdings small bronzes. The Ballroom, built by Cesare Fortini in 1887-1889, is dominated by a monumental oak fireplace by Egisto Gaiani, surmounted by the plaster figure of The Thinker by

7 Japanese Rooms

A narrow spiral staircase leads up to the rooms holding the Japanese collection, placed by Stibbert in this location at the end of the 1880s. The walls and the ceiling were decorated in 1890 by Gaetano Bianchi and Michele Piovano in neo-Florentine motifs. Stibbert was, in fact, one of the first collectors to show interest in far-Eastern armaments after Japan re-established trade with western markets in 1854. Through agents in Florence and London he managed to amass a core collection of weapons and armours unrivalled in size and importance outside of Japan. In the centre of the first room is the spectacular group of the samurai on foot and horseback, for which Stibbert used dummies imported directly from Japan. The collection includes armaments from all the major Japanese schools: helmets, sabres and tsuba, as well as finely fashioned polearms and accessories. The pieces are nearly all from the Momoyama and Edo periods (1568 to 1868).



8 Hall of the Cavalcade

The Hall of the Cavalcade was created around 1880 during the remodelling work which would connect Giulia Stibbert's original villa to the nearby Bombicci Villa purchased by Frederick. The wide, rectangular room is divided into three spans whose ceilings are decorated with the coats of arms of illustrious Florentine families. The arch of the main span signed by both the architect who designed it, Cesare Fortini, and the painter who illustrated it, Gaetano Bianchi. On the short wall, Saint George, the Patron Saint of England, is the work of Pietro Traballese. The 16th century

Giovanni Giovannetti (1893). On the garden side is a mirror and on the opposite wall is a large portrait of Giulia Stibbert with her two daughters Erminia and Sophronia (who was to become Countess Pandolfini), painted by Cesare Mussini in 1853. On either side there are six still life made by Frederick himself. In the room is also exposed the collection of neoclassic style paintings from the second half of 19th century. The Loggia was originally the smoking room and is completely covered with 16th century style ceramics with metallic lustre, work of the Cantagalli manufactory in Florence.

14 Dining Room

The room, with wooden floor and coffered painted ceiling, on the walls is covered with embossed leather from 18th century and present a Beauvais tapestry with scenes from Pastor Fido. The large cabinet holds a collection of crystal and silver from Stibbert household. On the walls there are paintings depicting still life scenes, including two works by Franz Werner von Tamm from late 17th century.

15 Loggia of Stuccoes

The loggia is decorated with stuccoes by Michele Piovano (1885) and medallions of Francesco de' Medici, Bianca Cappello, Charles V, Vittoria Colonna and numerous mythological scenes, all surrounding the Stibbert coat of arms. The room is furnished with Louis XVI glass cabinets holding porcelains and family memorabilia.

16 Red Drawing Room

This drawing room was furnished in 1868 and present Murano glass mirror and chandelier bearing the Stibbert coat of arms. On the walls hangs works of a typically neoclassic style from the second half of 19th century. The vents for the hot air heating system that serviced the entire villa are still visible in this room.

Flemish tapestries with the episodes from the life of Hercules were originally from the house of the Bourbon del Monte.

In preparing the setting up of this room which displays the impressive cavalcade of European and Turkish knights and represent the most gorgeous room in the museum, Stibbert visited the greatest dynastic weapon collections in Europe. The models that most inspired the exhibition were the Tower of London collection and the Royal Armoury in Madrid, both providing spectacular displays of weapons and armour arranged on dummies on horseback.

The striking procession is composed of twelve mounted knights in double file, accompanied by armed foot soldiers along the walls. In order to realise these European and Islamic knights, Stibbert had his artisans fashion plaster and wood dummies of the human figures and horses, inspired by the world's greatest equestrian monuments, and meticulously followed every detail of their creation. The series is completed by two knights set on each side of the staircase. A niche next to the large swords display on the right-hand wall holds the German breastplate in which Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, father of the future Grand Duke Cosimo de' Medici, was buried. A short flight of stairs leads up to the Gallery Room, with a 18th century horseman in the centre. On the walls, decorated by Gaetano Bianchi, are displayed some German wooden sculptures and Italian wood paintings dated 15th century. The painting includes the noteworthy panel with Stories of Antonio Rinaldeschi (1501) and the Madonna and Child by Sandro Botticelli (1500 ca.).



17 Hall of Flags

The pavilion ceiling is made up of twelve flags of the Siena Palio, with symbols of the city's districts, which Stibbert purchased in Siena in 1884. This ceiling was intended to evoke the atmosphere of Gothic castles and encampment tents. On the walls, covered in 17th century painted and gilded leather, is a series of portraits as well as some paintings with mythological subjects.

FIRST FLOOR

Passed the atrium, which was the main entrance of the building, the stairs bring to first floor. The monumental staircase was built as part of the grand design of uniting the Stibbert and Bombicci villas and are decorated with tapestries, from 17th century, executed after the cartoon by Rubens.

18 Room of Antique Plates

The room at the top of stairs contains the collection of religious objects and paintings from 14th and 15th centuries and from here we reach the Room of Antiques Plates which once housed the collection of costumes. The room is decorated with 17th century leather wall-coverings and stuccoes on the ceiling; in the centre is exposed the Petit Costume d'Italie, a green silk and velvet suit gold-embroidered, which Napoleon I wore in occasion of his coronation as King of Italy in Milan in 1805. This room leads into the Louis XVI Room with walls covered in silk and pieces of furniture of a similar style.



9 Billiards Room

This room is the first along the Museum itinerary that was once part of the family residence. The room was furnished around 1880 and devoted to the game of billiards. The oak fireplace is decorated with tiles from Copeland manufactory. Other English ceramics by Copeland and Minton manufactory are exposed along the walls below the floral stained-glass windows. In the under-arches of the doors there are ceramics from Cantagalli factory in Florence and panels in red and black lacquer from Japan. Along with the remarkable collection of swords displayed against the wall, this room holds numerous helmets, lances and 17th century armours.



10 Library

Moving through a small room, which once was Stibbert's private study, decorated with trophies and at present displays a series of Scottish swords and 16th and 17th century Slavonic swords, there is the antique Library decorated with furniture made bringing together ancient pieces. Today, in place of Stibbert's books which, by his will, have been transferred to a new library, the bookcases contain porcelains. It is particularly worth mentioning, as are the 17th century gold and red leather wall coverings.



19 Yellow Drawing Room

Passing through a room, which once displayed the collections of drawings and engravings and a gallery with frescoes by Luigi Ademollo painted between 1807 and 1810 depicting Bacchus and Arianna and stories of the vestal Virgin Clelia, we enter a drawing room with yellow silk brocade covering the walls. Here are exposed some copies of famous portraits by Suttermans, Raffaello, Tintoretto e Giorgione.



20 Empire Loggia

Built in 1895 in place of a balcony, it was painted in 1900 by Cesare Benini with decorations in Napoleonic style. On the walls there are paintings with mythological and Napoleonic themes and the furnishings in Empire-style.

21 Giulia's Bedroom

The chamber was redone by Friederick after his mother's death and on the walls and ceiling present frescoes by Luigi Ademollo with mythological scenes and circus battles. The furnishing, including the walnut bed, are in Empire-style.

22 Frederick's Bedroom

The Frederick Stibbert's bedroom is simply furnished with a brass bed and on the walls hangs works by artists from the end of 19th century. It is linked with another room once used as a dressing room, here has been recreated the Stibbert's private study, by a small hall with closet and bathroom.