

The Lady Lever Art Gallery will be transformed Fotography

The Lady Lever Art Gallery has received £1.2m backing from the HLF to go towards a stunning redisplay of more than 1,500 items of fine and decorative art.

The grant will also go towards returning the galleries in the South End of the Lady Lever to their former Edwardian glory. The restoration encompasses 500 square metres of gallery space- a revamp of more than a quarter of the venue.

The newly themed displays will feature:

- Wedgwood Rooms - two interlinked rooms displaying the gallery's astonishing Wedgwood collection. In 1905 Lord Lever purchased a large group of beautiful ornamental ware, which is now regarded as the world's finest collection of Wedgwood jasperware. New displays will highlight very rare objects, such as two copies of the celebrated Portland Vase and three (of possibly only four in the world) complete jasperware fireplaces
- Eighteenth Century Room - including some of the most outstanding examples of English 18th-century furniture in the country. The display in this room will explore female portraiture and the lifestyles of women during this period
- Chinese Rooms - two interlinked rooms will demonstrate the importance and influence of Chinese ceramics on European art and taste. A rich collection which includes 17th-18th century porcelain (Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong periods), reverse paintings on glass, cloisonné, jade, snuff bottles and earlier ceramics of the Han, Tang and Song dynasties (2nd century BC - 14th century)

- Chinoiserie Room – a new room exploring the ways in which European artists re-interpreted oriental designs and decoration in objects made in the West. Much of the gallery's Chinoiserie furniture will be displayed together here for the first time
- Napoleon Room – a dazzling display of furniture and artefacts related to Napoleon will be given new life as visitors will be able to get much closer to the objects. The room is not only a demonstration of Lord Lever's eclectic taste, but also his drive to collect, assemble and share those things which inspired him most
- The Sculpture Gallery and Vestibule – refurbishment of the stunning south dome will create a dramatic backdrop for fine examples of Victorian and early 20th century sculpture. While the plans for the south vestibule will connect the gallery with the architecture of Port Sunlight village

Sandra Penketh, Director of Art Galleries National Museums Liverpool, said: "We are thrilled to be able to take our exciting plans for the future of the Lady Lever Art Gallery forward with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund. 2014 marks the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone, so it is especially fitting that 100 years since it began we can continue Lever's vision for the gallery to inspire a love and understanding of art.

"This level of support from Heritage Lottery Fund not only endorses the local, national and international significance of the Lady Lever's collections but also means we can approach the project creatively. We are working with our architectural and design team to give the objects the sort of environment they deserve, one which draws out their beauty and cultural value to a modern audience. A principal part of Wirral's heritage, Lady Lever is a fascinating and free place to visit for local people but it also brings many tourists to the area. This project will help ensure the ongoing appeal of this wonderful attraction."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "We're delighted to support the next chapter in the story of the Lady Lever Art Gallery, especially as this year marks the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone. As well as restoring original architectural designs and celebrating Lord Lever's local story, this project will transform the building and the presentation of its world-class collections for future visitors. Improved access and a strong focus on educational and community activities will greatly enrich people's experience of the gallery's incredible heritage."

The HLF grant will also go towards funding new educational programmes and resources for local schools and community groups.

Kate Johnson, Deputy Director of Education, said: "Lord Lever set the blueprint for our plans when he said 'art can be to everyone an inspiration'. It is from this starting point we are working with local communities and schools to develop really exciting interpretation of the new displays which will breathe new life into the collection, making access and understanding a real priority."

Alison McGovern, Wirral South MP & Shadow International Development Minister, said: "I am thrilled at the news of the award of this grant. This funding will ensure that the Lady Lever Art Gallery will continue to be a treasured part of the community to be enjoyed by visitors to the historic village for many years to come."

Architects Purcell are overseeing the restoration. Purcell Senior Architect, Victoria Alderton, said: "The works will remove detrimental interventions added in the 1960s including suspended ceilings and modern partitions, reinstate historic doorways to improve visitor circulation and refresh the interiors. This will recreate the sense of space and volume as Lever originally intended, reconnecting the architecture of the gallery with the nationally significant collections."

The £2.8m scheme will be funded through major grants, donations and corporate sponsorship. National Museums Liverpool is extremely grateful for the generosity of all the funders and supporters, including the Lady Lever Art Gallery Patrons and Centenary Club members, without whom this project would not be possible.

Notes to editors

Lady Lever Art Gallery facts:

- On 25 March 1914 King George V laid the foundation stone for what was to become one of the UK's finest art galleries
- Lady Lever Art Gallery was opened in 1922 by William Hesketh Lever to house the best of his personal art collection. It's situated in the centre of Port Sunlight village, Wirral
- Built by Lever for his workers, the gallery is today considered to hold one of the best fine and decorative arts collections in Europe
- For more information and a film about the plans for the gallery, visit the National Museums Liverpool website
- Follow Lady Lever on Twitter @LeverArtGallery or visit their Facebook page

About National Museums Liverpool

National Museums Liverpool comprises eight venues, including some of the most visited museums in England outside of London. The collections are among the most important and varied in Europe and contain everything from Impressionist paintings and rare beetles to a lifejacket from the Titanic.

The venues attract more than 2.7million visitors every year. Venues are the Museum of Liverpool, World Museum, the Walker Art Gallery, Merseyside Maritime Museum, International Slavery Museum, Border Force National Museum, Sudley House and the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

About Purcell

For over six decades Purcell has been involved in the care and development of some of the best loved buildings and places in the UK and abroad. From start to finish, Purcell's expertise includes funding and planning advice, heritage consultancy, conservation and architectural design across eight sectors. With studios covering the UK and in Asia Pacific, Purcell's talented team has the local knowledge and sector expertise to handle projects of all types and sizes. Purcell actively seek opportunities that stand out, that will best benefit their clients, the community and the environment. Visit the Purcell website for more information.