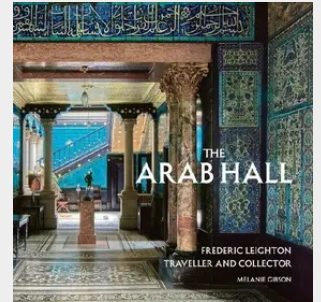


The Arab Hall

Frederic Leighton: Traveller and Collector

Frederic Leighton (1830-96) was celebrated as one of the most successful and influential artists of his day, and as the creator of some of the most iconic and well-loved paintings of the Victorian era, including *Flaming June* and *Perseus and Andromeda*. The house he built in Holland Park was his home, his studio, and his passion. He lavished money and attention on it throughout his life, but its centrepiece was the 'Arab Hall' – the extraordinary suite of spaces on the ground floor of the house that Leighton decorated with a spectacular collection of tiles and ceramics brought back from his travels across the Middle East. Many books have been written on Frederic Leighton, but this is the first to explore his activities as traveller and collector; uncovering the story of how he travelled, where he stayed and how he acquired the artworks that went into the making of what has been called 'the most beautiful room in London'. This lavishly decorated space, with its golden dome and tiles from Damascus and Iznik, was hailed as an extraordinary creative and artistic triumph from the moment of its first public unveiling in 1881, with one visitor described it as 'quite the eighth wonder of the world'. It continues to astonish, delight and inspire today. *The Arab Hall* details the history of these rooms, and the role played in their creation by such figures as Leighton's architect George Aitchison; the ceramicist William De Morgan and the designer Walter Crane; by Owen Jones, interior designer for the Great Exhibition of 1851; by Arthur Liberty, founder of the store that still bears his name, and by such fascinating 'extras' as the explorer and writer Richard Burton and his wife Isabel, and the garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, one of whose earliest commissions was to make cushions for a seat from which Leighton could admire his tiled walls. This volume also includes a complete translation of the inscriptions in the Arab Hall by Hidayat Abbas, and selections from Leighton's correspondence with Val Prinsep.



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