

# *The Regency Wardrobe at Firle Place*

**Sunday 29th August - Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021**



## *Illusion and ephemeral fashion*

This exquisite collection of **11 Regency costumes and a myriad of accompanying accessories**, have been wholly created by the hands of one extraordinary decorative paper textile artist, **Stephanie Smart**.

However all is not as it first appears... Astonishingly each of the items in the entire collection, from dresses and shoes, to fans, jackets and bonnets, have all been **entirely made with only paper and thread**.

The exhibition re-interprets the popular Regency art form of the black paper cut silhouette and also responds to the history of Firle Place, with one bespoke piece uniquely inspired by one of the most famous parts of the historic collection.

Firle Place was recently used as the set for Hartfield in Autumn de Wilde's feature film of Jane Austen's **EMMA** and the new exhibition will be displayed throughout the house, using the **historic room settings**, (many still featuring their confection of Regency colours from the film of EMMA), as the perfect period backdrop for the costumes. The exhibition will culminate in a beautiful ball dress in-situ on a Regency style chalked floor – an ephemeral art almost lost to time. Frequently created for Regency balls, (initially for the safety of the dancers whose shoes could slip on the wooden floors), chalking the floor was the new transient aspect of the ballroom decorations, turning to dust over the course of the evening.

The exhibition is a beautiful representation of Regency style and which will undoubtedly be a highlight of the Firle year.

**Stephanie Smart** started her unique fashion house and fine art studio, **The House of Embroidered Paper**, in 2017. Each garment she produces is a work of paper textile employing paper craft techniques and embroidery and inspired by period and place. Stephanie uses the ancient art of paper quilling or paper filigree extensively in her creations. The art form involves rolling, shaping and gluing paper into ornamental designs, in Stephanie's case mimicking embroidery, lace and haberdashery. The ambition

behind every piece is that it be simultaneously visually beautiful, technically ambitious and conceptually interesting.

Some of items in the collection will be for sale.

### **Exhibition and House Opening:**

Pre-Booking is essential via [www.firle.com](http://www.firle.com) Tickets £11.00

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August - Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021

12pm – 5pm on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays

### **Group Bookings for *The Regency Wardrobe* Exhibition**

We are please to welcome group bookings, **up to a maximum of 20 people**. Please contact [events@firle.com](mailto:events@firle.com) for more information and rates for exclusive tours. Groups are usually hosted on **Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings** subject to availability.

### **Firle Place - General Opening Times:**

**Tickets: Adults £11.00, Children: £5.50, Disabled: Free**

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May – Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021

12pm – 5pm on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays

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### **Talks and Workshops**

A series of talks and workshops, chosen to compliment the exhibition and led by Costume and Fashion Historians, will run throughout May and June.

#### ***Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September***

*Many Faces of English Fans in the Late Georgian Period*

**Mary Kitson, Fan Historian**

#### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September**

*Rascals and Rakehells: Original Menswear from Jane Austen's time*

**Mark Wallis, Fashion Historian**

#### **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September**

**Grace Evans, Curator of Fashion, Chertsey Museum**

#### **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October**

Paper Quilling workshop

Stephanie Smart, decorative paper artist and head of the House of Embroidered Paper

***For more information and to book, please visit [www.firle.com](http://www.firle.com)***

**The Regency Wardrobe is supported by Arts Council England, The Textile Society, Great Art.**

Photo credits left to right: Ray Sullivan, James Ratchford, Ray Sullivan

*Notes to Editors:*

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***About Firle Estate***

Firle Place, and surrounding estate of 7,000 acres, has belonged to the Gage family for over 500 years. It illustrates a rare cultural continuity with an unusually intact estate all set within the magnificent South Downs National Park.

Firle Place is very much a family home which provides the perfect setting to house an exemplary collection of works of art national significance; Van Dyck's *Count John of Nassau* takes centre stage as well as other artists such as Philips de Koninck, Salomon van Ruysdael, Stubbs, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Zoffany. A fine collection of furniture, includes the celebrated Chippendale Melbourne Cabinets, and Sèvres porcelain, being a portion of the Cowper collection from Panshanger House in Hertfordshire, brought to Firle by Imogen, wife of the 6th Viscount in 1952.

Charting its history back to early Medieval times, the Tudor mansion at Firle was built by by Sir John Gage ca 1530, a trusted advisor to Henry VIII. The house, built of Caen stone, was later remodelled in the 18th century giving the house a Georgian façade, and the present Riding Sables were constructed in 1804

Firle Place remains at the heart of its community; the traditional village of Firle is part of a special conservation area and has remained relatively unchanged for generations. One of the earliest ever cricket matches was played in the parkland of the house in 1725 and Firle cricket club is one of the oldest in the world. Firle Place remains the focus of a thriving community which lives and works on the Firle Estate while the house itself recently serving as Hartfield, (home of the eponymous heroine), in the feature film of Jane Austen's EMMA.

[www.firle.com](http://www.firle.com)

***About The House of Embroidered Paper***

Fine artist Stephanie Smart creates life-sized garments and footwear using only paper and thread. In 2017 she formally established The House of Embroidered Paper, a unique fashion house/fine art studio. Each piece is inspired by period and place, history and story. Developing her use of paper as a medium for garment construction, with embroidered and applied decoration, Stephanie's latest collection variously reinterprets the Regency era.

By working closely with volunteers from The Regency Town House Heritage Centre, Hove, Stephanie has created a collection that's broader in scope in terms of its relationship to a particular area, and historical era, than any she has worked on previously. The period from 1795 to 1837, which includes the latter part of George III's reign and the reigns of his sons George IV and William IV, is regarded as the Regency era, characterised by distinctive trends in British architecture, literature, fashion, politics, and culture.

The Regency Wardrobe collection is formed of eleven life-sized outfits, twelve accessories, four wall-hangings and an item of furniture. The collection is predominantly inspired by the Regency era, whilst celebrating the bicentennial of the end of the Formal Regency, 1820-2020 and looking forward to The Victorian era.

Shown alongside it at Firle Place are five pieces from the 300 Years of Shoes collection and one from the Maison de Papier collection; chosen specifically to frame The Regency Wardrobe collection in time.

[www.stephaniesmart.net](http://www.stephaniesmart.net)