# THE ART OF TRAVEL

PUSHKIN
ANTIQUES

# FOREWORD

*But the true voyagers are only those who leave*
*Just to be leaving; hearts light, like balloons,*
*They never turn aside from their fatality*
*And without knowing why they always say: "Let's go!"*
*Those whose desires have the form of the clouds,*
*And who, as a raw recruit dreams of the cannon,*
*Dream of vast voluptuousness, changing and strange,*
*Whose name the human mind has never known!*
*[...]*

**Charles Baudelaire, The Voyage**

Throughout history there were numerous reasons that pushed man to take long journeys and visit far flung destinations, but the truth is that the impulse to move, to discover and cross new frontiers, to adapt to new environments has defined human nature for six million years and brought us to populate all four corners of the planet.

Although the word 'tourism' made its first appearance in 1811, the concept of going away from home, for leisure or business purposes, has always been part of almost every culture.

Mythology is full of stories about adventurous travels. Let's just think about the audacious journey of Aeneas, who left Troy and after many vicissitudes that took him around the Mediterranean coasts finally reached Latium, where he founded the city of Rome. Or about the ten long years that Odysseus spent sailing before being able to reach his beloved wife and home.

Venice, from the Porch of Madonna della Salute - 1835
J. M. W. Turner

>

In Norse mythology instead we find Odin, a travelling God who in the shape of different animals came across the world in quest of wisdom and knowledge. Without that insatiable curiosity, there would not have been any Marco Polo, Columbus or Magellan and surely no moon landing and our world would be much smaller.

Along the history of humanity there have been many inventions that have allowed people to travel faster and more comfortably.

In the next chapters we will reflect on some of them, especially those of the 19th century, and we will focus on those inventions that made travelling a truly luxurious experience.

England has always been one of the leading countries in terms of travelling and exploring. It is in fact here that the tradition of the Grand Tour began in the 17th century. The Grand Tour was a period of foreign travel commonly undertaken by gentlemen to finish off their education.

The definition was first introduced to the public by a Roman Catholic priest named Richard Lassels in his 1670 book Voyage to Italy. He recommended it as a sort of rite of passage to adulthood and a priceless chance to gain a broader knowledge of the world. The aim of these journeys was to see the remains of the great Roman and Greek civilisations, to admire the architecture and art of Renaissance, to perfect the foreign languages and broaden their cultural horizons.

For at least 200 years, the Grand Tour was a privilege only available to a small and extremely wealthy élite.

The Grand Tourists were primarily interested in visiting cities that were considered the major centres of culture at the time - Paris, Rome, and Venice were not to be missed. Florence and Naples were also popular destinations. As industry developed, the possibility to travel both domestically and internationally widened enormously.

The Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the mid 18th century and spread throughout Europe and North America over the next few decades. Steam navigation began in Scotland in 1812; the continuous use of steam ships on German watercourses followed in 1820 and, in 1823, Switzerland received its first steam ship on Lake Geneva.

Railways also created greater mobility. The first sections of track were opened in England in 1825, in France in 1828, in Germany in 1835, in Switzerland in 1844/1847 and in Italy in 1839. Railways offered a considerably quicker, safer and more comfortable alternative to the traditional roads.

*'What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by him who interests his heart in everything, and who, having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can fairly lay his hands on!'*

**Lawrence Sterne, A sentimental journey through France and Italy, 1768**

< The Grand Canal Scene - 1837 - J. M. W. Turner

What was considered the privilege of a small élite, became now accessible to a larger mass. In 1841 Thomas Cook, a former Baptist preacher, had a brilliant idea, he organised a rail journey from Leicester to a temperance meeting in Loughborough. Cook negotiated a deal with Midland Counties Railway Company.

Each passenger would be charged a shilling for return tickets and food, Cook would receive a percentage of the total figure made. It was such a success that he organised many more trips after that, launching for the first time the concept of the travel company and becoming the world's first travel agent. By 1892, when Thomas Cook died and his sons took over the business, the company organised tours in Europe, Egypt, United States, New Zealand and Australia. Tourism in its most contemporary meaning was born.

Shipping lines promoted international tourism from the late 19th century onward. From the Norwegian fjords to the Caribbean, the pleasure cruise was already becoming a distinctive tourist experience before World War I, and transatlantic companies competed for middle-class tourism during the 1920s and '30s.

Another incredible leap was made on December 17, 1903, when Wilbur and Orville Wright made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk with their first powered aircraft. The Wright brothers had invented the first successful airplane, it was the last sensational achievement in less than a century, humanity had finally found a way to cross the air. Unfortunately a decade later the First World War broke out, and the most recent travelling technologies were put at the service of the military forces.

To see the first commercial and touristic flights, humanity would wait until 1952 when de Havilland DH 106 Comet, which was developed in Hertfordshire in the UK, and launched its commercial service.

The inexhaustible curiosity of the human being brought us to discover the Poles, as well as the mountain heights and the deep oceans and finally took us to the Moon in 1969. Transport innovations between the 19th and 20th century made most parts of the world accessible to any tourist and yet, in going anywhere new, anyone has experienced at least once the satisfactory and fulfilling feeling of being an explorer of the unknown and to live, even if for a short time, another life.

It is exactly with this spirit in mind that we are glad to present in this catalogue a wide range of objects related to travels: objects that our ancestors found functional to their journeys, such as wardrobe trunks or travel tea sets but also items that represented some of the most relevant discoveries in the renovation of transports and that today become wonderful home decor elements other than precious testimony of incredible achievements.

*Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.*

**Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad**


COOK'S
TOURS TO THE
RIVIERA
ITALY, ETC.

# *Sailing*

*I must go down to the seas again, to*
*the lonely sea and the sky,*
*And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;*
*And the wheel's kick and the wind's song*
*and the white sail's shaking,*
*And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.*
**John Masefield, 'Sea fever'**

Possibly the most fascinating among the modes of transportation, for centuries the one chosen by explorers and merchants all over the world, surrounded by legends and mythological stories, sailing still maintains its charm and intriguing allure.

Throughout history and literature, many have been the memorable journeys that are nowadays part of our imagination. We think of Odysseus, the Greek king of Ithaca, who after having won the war of Troy, began a ten years long journey home facing every sort of peril and monsters, the Cyclops, the rage of Poseidon, the sirens, Circe and the island of Calypso.

The unexplored, the curiosity to cross the boundaries of the unknown, the challenge between man and an untameable Nature are some of the leitmotifs of Homer's poem and of so much literature and art that during every century had the sea as a setting when not as a protagonist.

During the 19th century and later during the 20th, many have been the improvements in sea travelling and, although it might be superfluous to remark, the United Kingdom can be considered a leader in this field.

< The Fighting Temeraire - 1838 - J. M. W. Turner

Although we always associate the invention of the steam engine with the advent of the railroad, it is important to remember that it was also applied to navigation. Thanks to the new technologies it became possible to build colossal ships capable of carrying people en masse across the oceans.

These ships were made from steel and not wood, the first ship with an iron hull was the Great Britain in 1843 - and could transport hundreds of people: the Old and New World had never been so close. By the beginning of the new century, the United Kingdom had no rivals in the production of the biggest and fastest steamships in the world. Cunard and White Star Line competed in the production of the most advanced ships.

Cunard's Mauretania was perhaps the most popular ship ever launched until it was finally withdrawn in 1934. In 1912 during its maiden voyage, one of these colossal ships - the Titanic - hit an iceberg off the Newfoundland coast sinking within hours, the entire world was shocked. The terrible accident, in which about 1500 lives were lost, did not stop the progress: bigger and more luxurious steamships kept being built and the competition became broader: German, French and American companies started to cross the Oceans and new courses were discovered.

Incredible amounts of money were spent to decorate them with luxurious interiors, fine details, silver tableware, the most popular artists and designers were employed and although the exterior of the new 20th century steamships was not as appealing as the one of the antique wood ships, inside every detail was carefully designed to give the impression of a very exclusive experience.

Transporting people was not the only purpose for which the new, large and fast ships were created: naval power was the most important resource for the Western powers to build their colonial empires. Controlling the seas became critical to maintain a central political and economical role. Thanks to its naval supremacy, Britain not only had formal control over its own colonies - let's just name, among many, Canada, India, Australia, Hong Kong, Kenya and South Africa - but also could effectively control the economies of many countries including China, Argentina and Siam.

During the reign of Queen Victoria British ports were full with ships arriving from the colonies carrying the goods that were processed and sold making Britain the richest European nation. Precious metals such as silver came from India and China, textiles and porcelain again from the Far East, cotton and tobacco from America. Sometimes sailors brought onboard some souvenirs from the countries they visited, some memorabilia of their difficult and long journeys in exotic lands, unusual items and in many cases unique.

The late 19th Century "blond" turtle shell pictured on the right comes from South America. The turtles would be captured to take on board the merchant ships to be boiled and eaten, with one turtle capable of reputedly feeding up to 100 sailors. However, the leftovers were not simply thrown overboard. Often a sailor would take the shell and polish it by hand for hours on end giving it a gloss-white finish and sell it as an item of curiosity for a few shillings once docked at home which explains why most of them tend to turn up for sale in the northwest of England in the proximity of Liverpool, one of the busiest trading ports of the world at the time.

19th Century Blonde Turtle Shell On Mounted Stand c.1880 >

19th Century Victorian Silver Mounted Coco-de-Mer Tea Caddy c.1880

Very much sought after by English noblemen were also the legendary coco-de-mer nuts. These very rare seeds only grow on a palm tree native to the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. Even before the Seychelles were discovered, these nuts were sometimes carried by the ocean currents to distant shores where the tree was unknown and collected by seafarers to be sold in Europe.

Until the source of the nut was discovered in 1743, it was believed to grow on a mythical tree at the bottom of the sea because it was once believed to be a sea-bean evolved to be dispersed by the sea.

Even after the discovery of the palm tree though, the rarity, the size and erotic shape of this seed gave rise to several legends about its magical properties. They were sold in Europe to royalty and noblemen who considered them as fertility amulets and displayed them as rare curiosities in their private collections.

Collecting exotic curiosities became a popular pastime among the high British society, these extraordinary objects would make in fact wonderful conversation pieces and at the same time would represent the power and vastness of the British colonial Empire.

19th Century Victorian Coco-de-Mer Box c.1890

The flourishing of the maritime transport gave a new impulse to another classical branch of collecting connected to sailing: the ship models. With such a strong sailing and naval industry tradition, it goes without saying that many were the collectors of boats and yacht models in England.

Nonetheless, ship models were not a 19th century invention: wood replicas of ancient boats were found in Egyptian pharaohs' tombs, clay, wood and iron models belonged to ancient Greeks and Scandinavians since the Bronze Age.

During the Middle Age, the art of making ship models continued in Europe, they could be toys, drinking cups, reliquaries or gift offerings. They were made for worship, decoration, recreation: whatever purpose they were built for, the tradition of ship modelling continued through the Renaissance and the following centuries until today.

For thousands of years these models shared a common aspect: whether they were made of clay, bone, silver, wood, they were all individually handcrafted.

The new technological acquisitions of the naval industry were not immediately welcomed by ship-modellists, who preferred to copy and reproduce the old wood sailing ships.

This early 20th century silver model of a 16th century war galleon is an extraordinary example of how, while the huge transatlantic ships crossed the oceans, people still dreamt about incredible and difficult adventures across unknown waters, when men were forced to fight with an unfriendly nature and to face adversities. The hull, supported by four grotesque birds, is decorated in relief and the deck is armed with seven cannons.

20th Century German Silver Neff Galleon Ship c.1900


20th Century German Silver Gilt Neff Galleon Ship c.1900

20th Century English Rigged Racing Pond Yacht c.1920

This type of ship model, generally made of silver or other precious metals are called 'nefs'. Nefs were table-ornaments, sometimes used either purely for decoration, to store table-linens, eating-utensils or to hold some sort of condiment or beverage and they were considered an important part of Continental elegant dining. Some nefs have wheels that allow them to be rolled from one end of the table to the other, however most of them stand on pedestals. Such pieces were popular in Europe during the 19th century, most of the surviving nefs - such as this fine example - were made in Germany at the end of the 19th century.

Ship models are an incredibly vast field and - as we said above - they could be made for several purposes. From 1716 the Navy Board established that all drafts for new vessels produced within the United Kingdom must be accompanied by a scale model, a totally exact replica of the ship - whether steamship or sailing ship - on a small scale.

As they were made to impress the buyer, these models showed exquisite workmanship, every rope, pulley or portion of the engine being faithfully reproduced. Some of these models, especially sailing yachts, were pitted against each other in ponds in proper sailing models regattas.

During the 19th century the art of ship model building flourished and model yacht clubs arose all over the country. Although these models are generally anonymous they can be of incredible quality and show incredible building and decorating workmanship as in this fine example of exceptional size.

Collections of these models can be appreciated in maritime museums worldwide. Certainly contemporary ship design is much more complex and technologically sophisticated, but the harmonious lines of these traditional ship models better express the romance and fascination of the sea.

Despite the passing of time, these models maintain their charm and even when not used for racing, they make stylish decorative pieces to any interior.

20th Century Edwardian Rigged Racing Pond Yacht, England, c.1910

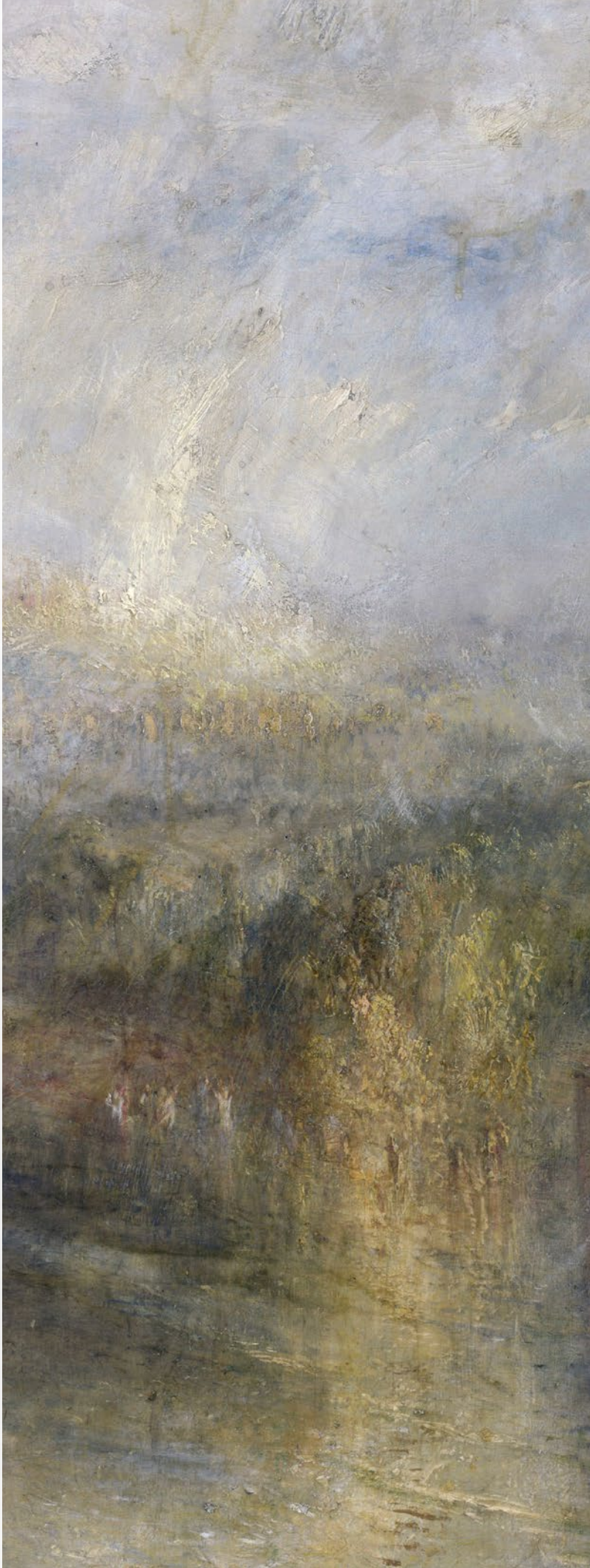
# RAILWAYS

*I think I'd rather sit in the railway station,"*
*she answered, a remnant of vexation still in her voice.*
*"That's the centre of the town life now.*
*The cathedral has had its day!"*
*"How modern you are!"*
**Thomas Hardy, Jude the obscure, part third, ch. 1**

On February 21, 1804, Trevithick's pioneering engine hauled 10 tons of iron and 70 men nearly ten miles from Penydarren at a speed of five miles-per-hour, winning the railway's owner a 500 guinea bet into the bargain. In 1830 Robert Stephenson inaugurated the first regular passenger service in the world, linking Canterbury to the seaside town of Whitstable six miles away.

By 1850 Britain had already 7000 miles of railroad connecting the country together. During the following years the railroad system spread all over Europe and North America. In London the first section of the Underground began its work in 1863 and by the turn of the 20th century trains were dominating long distance land transport, connecting cities and countries. Trains contributed to the growth of industry by reducing the freight costs of heavy materials and finished goods around the country.

They also allowed people to live further from their places of work as the phenomenon of commuting took hold. Railways also allowed people to travel further, offering a quicker, safer and more comfortable alternative to actual roads, diminishing the risk of unexpected accidents and delays.



Rain, Steam and Speed - 1844 - J. M. W. Turner >

Trains also allowed people to enjoy the journey by absorbing the surrounding scenery while reading or chatting. Many people even to this day claim that train travel is the best form of transport. It's relatively cheap, it offers the kind of comfort impossible to find on planes and buses. It is also an incredibly safe form of travel.

The third class ticket was available to many but of course the price to pay to enjoy a more comfortable journey was much higher. Luxury trains became a fashionable way to travel. In 1883 the French Compagnie International des Wagons-Lit inaugurated the passenger train service called 'Orient-Express' connecting Paris to Istanbul. The route changed several times, but among the traditional stops there were Venice, Vienna and Budapest.

Although it was created as a normal international rail service, its fame quickly grew thanks to the comfort of its sleeping car with permanent service and the quality of the cuisine, which was in line with luxurious service people came to expect from such a world class travel experience, serving delicacies such as oysters and offering the finest wines and champagnes. Royalties, diplomats, noblemen and business people were frequent users of the Orient-Express and promoted its service.

Of course the Orient-Express is one of the most iconic examples of the 'transport revolution' that started with the advent of the railway, a revolution that had its consequence in the way people travelled. Until the 19th Century, discomfort was one of the obvious downsides connected with travelling, and it was a given in any journey. Once railways started connecting most parts of the world, people quickly became accustomed to a different way of traveling. Sleeping and baggage cars allowed people to carry with them much more than the minimum needed for long journeys.

People could now indulge and take with them all that was needed to make them feel at home whilst on the move. The first to understand the change in traveling habits was a young provincial Frenchman named Louis Vuitton, who had traveled on foot from his hometown to Paris, more than 400km away.

Once in Paris he was hired as a malletier/ emballeur, a sort of butler specialised in packing and trunk making for high-society travelers. His skills did not go unnoticed and he was soon hired by Napoleon III to be the malletier of the Empress.

20th Century Louis Vuitton Wardrobe Trunk c.1900

South Eastern Railway_London-Chatam-Dover Railway

CHEMINS DE FER DU NORD & DE L'EST DE FRANCE

# LONDRES·PARIS·CONSTANTINOPLE

Départ tous les Jours
DE LONDRES & DE PARIS POUR VIENNE
Les Mercredis
POUR CONSTANTINOPLE
Le Jeudi & le Dimanche
POUR BUKAREST

SERVICE RAPIDE
Sans Changement de Voitures
ET
SANS PASSEPORT
ENTRE

FAST TRAVELLING
Without any Change of Carriages
ET
WITHOUT PASSPORT
BETWEEN

The Trains are Starting
FROM LONDON & PARIS EVERY DAY FOR VIENNA
Only on Wednesday
FOR CONSTANTINOPLE
On Thursdays & Sundays
FOR BUKAREST

## PARIS·MUNICH·VIENNE·BUDAPEST·BELGRADE & CONSTANTINOPLE

& ENTRE & BETWEEN

PARIS & BUKAREST

# ORIENT EXPRESS


HIVER 1888-89 WINTER 1888-89

## LONDRES-PARIS-VIENNE

Tous les JOURS — Every Day

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LONDRES (Victoria) | Dép. | 8 h. 20 matin | LONDRES (Charing-Cross) | Dép. | 9 h. 40 matin |
| CALAIS (Gare maritime) | Dép. | midi 33 — | BOULOGNE | Dép. | 1 h. 55 soir |
| PARIS (Gare du Nord) | Arr. | 5 h. 40 soir | PARIS (Gare du Nord) | Arr. | 5 h. 57 soir |
| PARIS (Gare de l'Est) | Départ | 7 h 30 soir (p. m.) | | | |
| MUNICH | Arrivée | 1 h 38 soir (p. m.) | | | |
| VIENNE | Arrivée | 10 h 15 soir (p. m.) | | | |

## PARIS-CONSTANTINOPLE

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mercredi | PARIS (Gare de l'Est) | Départ | 7 h 30 soir (p. m.) | Wednesday |
| Jeudi | VIENNE | Arrivée | 10 h 15 soir (p. m.) | Thursday |
| Vendredi | BUDAPEST | Arrivée | 5 h 25 mat (a. m.) | Friday |
| Vendredi | BELGRADE | Arrivée | midi 32 (12 32 p. m.) | Friday |
| Samedi | CONSTANTINOPLE | Arrivée | 6 h 40 soir (p. m.) | Saturday |

20th Century Louis Vuitton "Stokowski" Trunk c.1940

Thanks to his experience and entrepreneurship, in 1854 he opened his first trunk-making firm in Paris. His trunks immediately became very popular and by 1913 his shop on the Champs Elysées was the largest travel-goods store in the world.

This early 20th century Louis Vuitton wardrobe trunk was the must-have for any luxury journey. Covered in the world-wide famous LV monogrammed canvas, it would have been the top of the line even at the time of purchase, some 100 years ago. Thanks to its fitted interior it could carry clothes and accessories any traveler could need over a periods of several weeks.

A roomy wardrobe was not the only concern for of the fashionable man or woman. Over the course of a transatlantic journey he or she may have passed the time reading, typing letters and manuscripts.

This library trunk could contain not only books but also a portable typewriter. It is one of the rarest among the Louis Vuitton trunks, produced upon request in a very small number. This model was conceived by Gaston Louis Vuitton in collaboration with Ernest Hemingway whose original trunk was recently found in the Ritz basement in Paris together with the lost manuscript of his posthumous book 'A movable feast'.


20th Century Louis Vuitton Hemingway Trunk c.1935

# *Aviation*

*For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.*

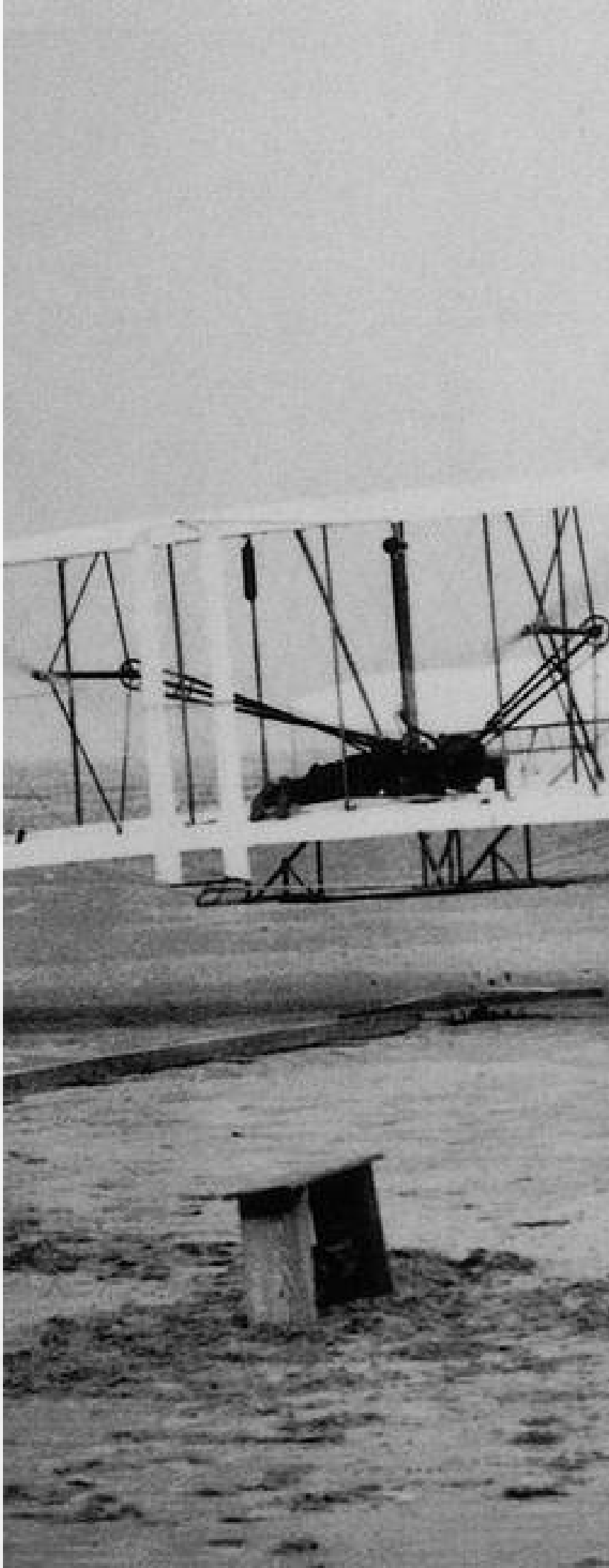
**Leonardo da Vinci**

When did man start thinking about flying?

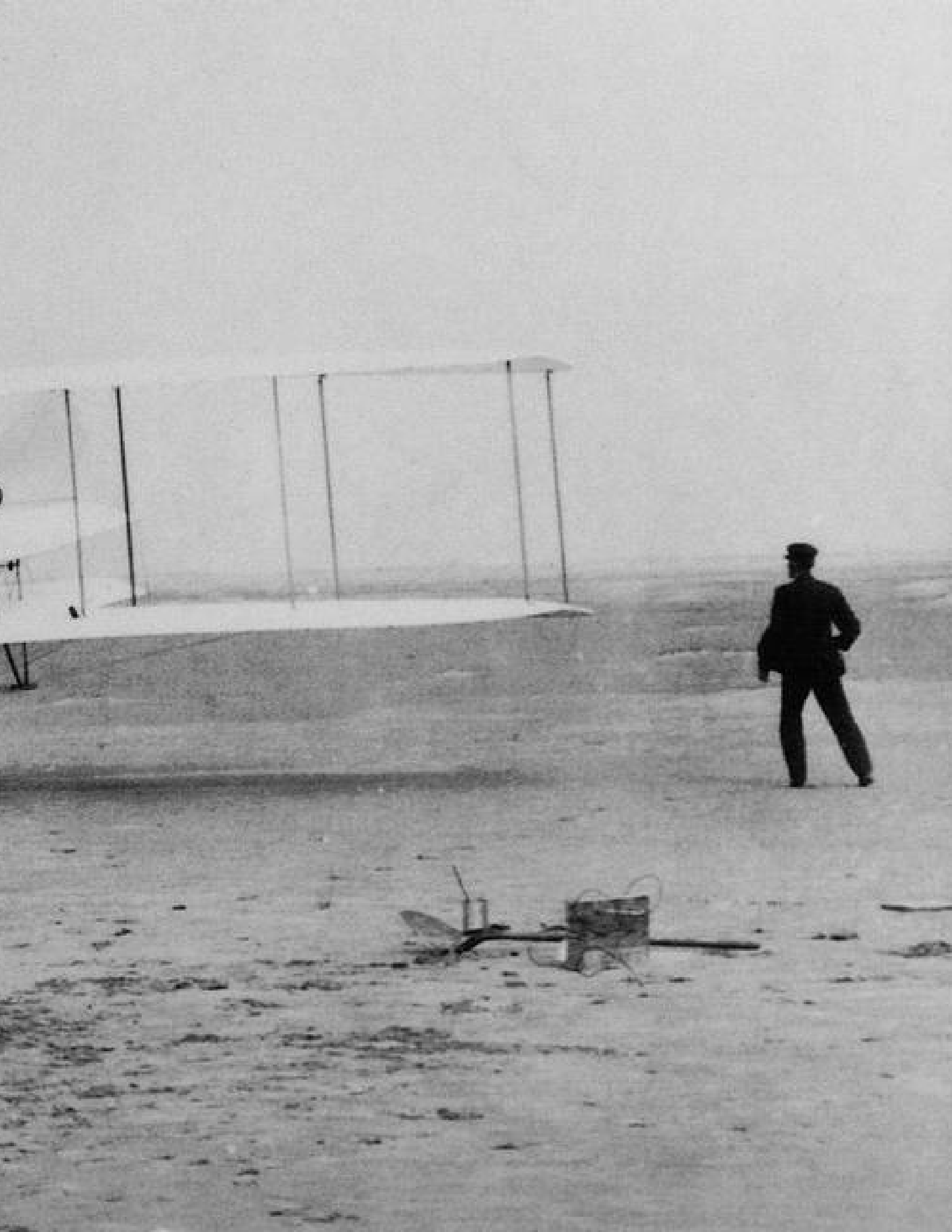
The origin of this quest has long been lost but stories and myths of flight attempts can be found throughout the ancient history of almost any culture. In Greek mythology we find one of the first engineers daring a flight attempt: Dedalus, who built a pair of wings for himself and his son Icarus. The story may have ended in tragedy but it has fascinated whole generations, dreaming about flying into the heavens.

On the 7th of December 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright completed the first heavier-than-air human flight with their newly invented flying machine after years of experimentation. The flight only lasted 12 seconds and covered 850 feet: it is a very short distance but it represents one of the biggest steps in modern history.

After this first successful attempt, the two brothers spent two more years perfecting the craft and in 1905 they managed to pilot their flyer for almost 40 minutes and 24 miles until it ran out of gas. Humans had now found a way of traveling through the air.



Wright brothers fly the first airplane - 1903 >



The world's first scheduled passenger air service began in Florida on January 14, 1914. It operated between St. Petersburg (USA) and Tampa but it only lasted a few months. With the outbreak of the First World War civil air service was no longer a priority although the production of airplanes and the flying technology progressed very quickly due to their military potential. The first crafts had simple two-bladed propellers such as the very rare walnut Belgian Gnome Helice Normale propeller, that was probably originally mounted on a Belgian Jero Farman 16, pictured below.

One of the first crafts made for military purposes was the F.E.8, designed at the Royal Aircraft factory for the British AirForce. It was a single-seater airplane with a forward firing-machine gun and it made his maiden flight in 1915.

This original propeller was mounted at the back of the aircraft so that the pilot could fire the machine guns mounted on the front. Wood propellers were made from many layers of mahogany, glued together and perfectly balanced to achieve maximum strength for the aforementioned aircraft. The above mentioned propeller is signed 'DARRACQ MOTOR ENGINEERING CO. LONDON' and numbered '2835'. It belonged to the late Ken Ellwood, local historian and aviator and is in superb condition.

A couple of years after the beginning of the First World War, this design was already outdated and replaced by new and more efficient engines. The Aircraft Manufacturing Company (AIRCO), soon became the most profitable aircraft company in the world producing thousands of airplanes for the British forces during the conflict.

20th Century Belgian Walnut Gnome Helice Normale Two-Blade Propeller c.1912

20th Century English WWI Fe8 Four-Blade Propeller c.1915


20th Century Stylish Polished Ejection Seat By Martin Baker c.1960

Just after the end of the War new records were set. In 1919 a U.S. Army aircraft managed to compile a 23 day flight from the USA to Great Britain and in the United Kingdom intercontinental flights to the Empire's dominions drew considerable attention. Around 1920 the USA, France, United Kingdom and the Netherlands were running regular passenger flights to and from various countries.

During the Second World War airplanes were used again for military purposes and at the end of the conflict many of those crafts were converted into civil airliners. By the end of the war many towns and cities had built their own airports. New security tools were created and aviation engineering was becoming more and more complex. The jet powered engine was developed at the same time by Germany and the United Kingdom and it soon replaced the propellers which had already reached their power limits. The new crafts could carry a higher number of passengers and reach new speeds and heights.

The superbly detailed and highly polished ejection seat pictured on the left belongs to a British first-generation jet-powered bomber: the Royal Airforce Canberra Jet. Its production started in 1949 and it was in service until 2006, when it made its last sortie. The seat was designed by Martin Baker, a British manufacturer of ejection seats and safety-related equipment for aviation. Nowadays it has been converted into a fully functional chair and a wonderful talking point.

The first airplane to be built exclusively to transport passengers en masse was the de Havilland DH 106 Comet in 1952. Seventeen years later the legendary supersonic airliner Concorde made its first test flight taking off from Toulouse (France). In 1976 the first commercial Concorde flights took over from Heathrow airport and Paris Charles de Gaulle. A small elite of wealthy passengers could cross the Atlantic Ocean in under three and a half hours, flying at twice the speed of sound. Only fourteen Concorde airplanes were effectively running: seven with AirFrance and seven with British Airways.


This model prototype, at 1:24 scale, was realised by the popular model makers AGM (Aeronautical & General Models). It was made around 1969, when BOAC was the UK's national airline and it was assumed that the Concorde would be flying in these colours. However in 1974 BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) was merged with other airlines companies to form British Airways (BA). Therefore the supersonic aircraft never flew in this livery, making this a very rare model. These models were made for marketing purposes to be presented in one of the top travel agents.

Concorde passengers flew far above other flights and cruised much faster to their destinations. They were offered exclusive lounges in every airport and superlative service and cuisine during their flights.

Nevertheless, the career of this record-setting airliner didn't last long. In July 2000 an Air France Concorde suffered a tragic accident that resonated in the aviation industry. It was the end of an era for supersonic passenger flight.

In 2003 the last British Airways Concorde flew on its final flight. The 13 remaining Concorde aircrafts are now exhibited in some privileged museums around the world. Not many people today can say that they had the privilege to fly breaking the sound barrier and the Concorde still remains a legendary engineeristic masterpiece, the symbol of our insatiable desire to fly defying our natural limits.

Large Concorde Model On Original Chromed Stand c.1980


G-BOAC


FREEDOM
FRAT
GREENLAND
DOMINION OF CANADA
NORTH
AMERICA
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
PACIFIC
SOUTH
AMERICA
WORL


# The British Empire

*[...]*
*The Muses, still with freedom found,*
*Shall to thy happy coast repair;*
*Blest Isle! With matchless beauty crown'd,*
*And manly hearts to guard the fair.*
*"Rule, Britannia! rule the waves:*
*"Britons never will be slaves."*
**Rule, Britannia!, James Thomson**

In the previous chapters we have seen how tourism quickly developed during the 19th Century, thanks to the recent transport innovations and in particular with the advent of railroads and steamships. Still bound to the previous century's fashion and style, a fresh and new curiosity toward the exotic and unfamiliar of the Orient was developing throughout Europe. The art from the Far East was considered by many to be pure and unspoiled by the advent of industrialization and mass production.

This interest - evidently connected to the flourishing of trade with the East and the rise and golden age of the British Empire - developed in sciences, literature, fashion and art. During the 19th century the Empire included over 14 million square miles of territory and 450 million people. It included more than a quarter of the world's population and, as the Scottish writer John Wilson said, "the sun never sets on the British Empire".

Britain not only had formal control over its own colonies but, with a dominant position in world trade, Britain could also effectively control the economies of many countries including China, Argentina and the Siam.

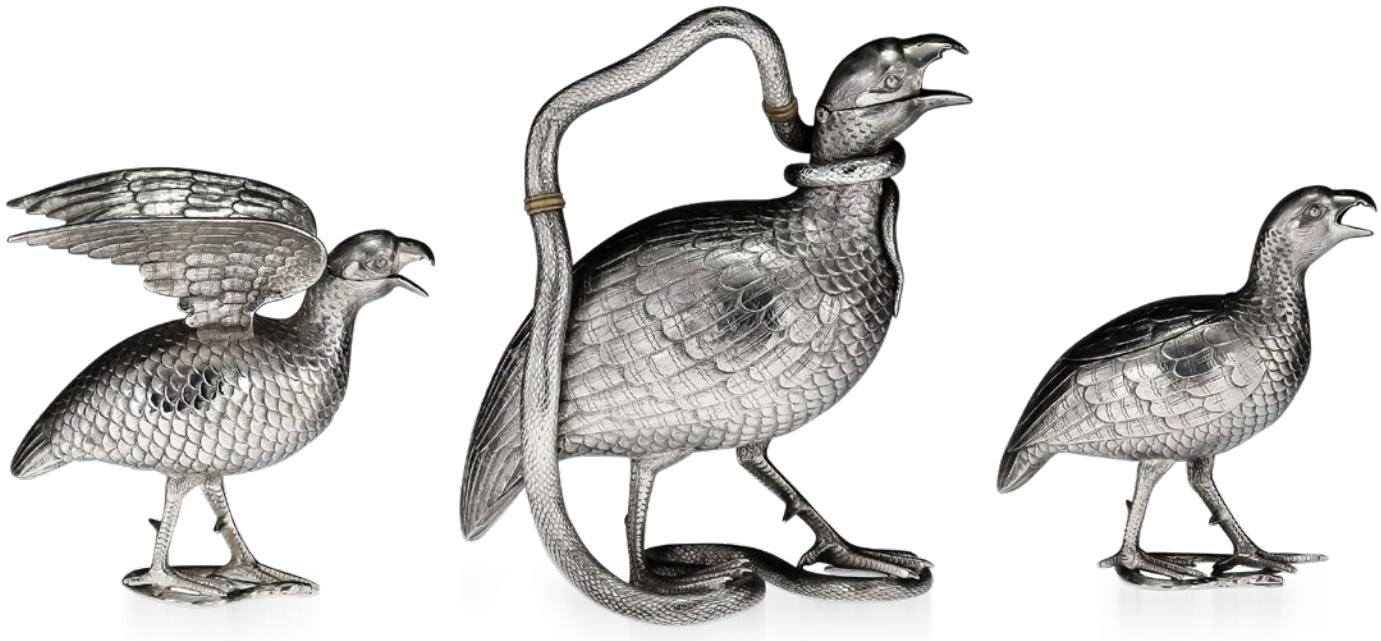
< Imperial Federation, map of the world showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886

Although relations with India were strong since the 17th century, it was in 1858 that the British government took direct control of the Indian territories. Modern day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh became known as the 'British Raj' and only ended in 1947 with the Indian declaration of independence.

Although in the first years of the Raj, British colonials were relatively indifferent to the native art traditions, in the latter years of the 19th century the fusion of European styles with Indian traditions became more evident and floral patterns, exotic animals, folklore and religious scenes gained popularity, creating a unique hybrid between form and decoration.

Oomersi Mawji was one of the first Indian native silversmiths to introduce the traditional motifs of his own region, the Kutch district in Western India. In his artworks it is possible to recognise Western forms and shapes generally decorated in the Indian Kutch style.

Europeans immediately loved the exotic taste of his creations, and his pieces became extremely sought after amongst the British élite that could experience a taste of the exotic while sticking to their traditional objects and shapes, epitomised by the superb tea set, modeled as Black francolins standing on snakes as pictured below.



19th Century Indian Oomersi Mawji Silver Francolins Tea Set c.1870

19th Century Indian Royal Presentation Silver Tray, Peter Orr & Sons c.1880

The firm's artworks were appreciated all over Europe and in 1889 Oomersi Mawji was invited to participate in the Exposition Universelle' in Paris, where for the first time Indian Art became popular in the West.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the rising nationalism sparked a new interest in genuine Indian art and style. Decorations representing religious processions, Hindu gods and goddesses and inspired by the ornaments of famous temples became quite in vogue. They were particular to a specific area in the South of India, the city of Madras, now called Chennai.

This style became very popular also among the British colonials and was in fact pioneered by an English company, P. Orr & Sons, founded in 1848 by Peter Orr, a watchmaker originally from Edinburgh.

Pieces by these artists were displayed at the Universal Exhibitions of London and Paris, contributing to glorification of the British Empire, to show its grandeur and highlight its unrivaled power on the world stage.

# TAXIDERMY

*Tyger Tyger burning bright,*
*In the forests of the night:*
*What immortal hand or eye,*
*Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? [...]*
**William Blake, The Tyger**

The term 'Taxidermy' has its roots from ancient Greek and it means 'the art of arranging skin'. It is in fact the practice of creating lifelike representations of animals - especially birds and mammals - through the use of their prepared skin.

Ancient Egyptians were the first to develop a method for animal preservation using injections, balms, spices and oils, but the rise of modern taxidermy in Europe can be traced back to the 1500s but it was during the 19th century that the natural world really captured the public's imagination and interest. It was during this century that taxidermy as a science and an art form would reach its peak. Queen Victoria herself was an avid collector of taxidermy, in particular stuffed birds.

The enthusiasm for the natural world grew during the Victorian Era proportionally with the development of scientific discoveries and alongside the renewed interest for geographical explorations. Charles Darwin himself learned from Charles Edmondstone, a freed slave working at the Edinburgh Museum the fine techniques of animal skin preservation and he had a large collection of stuffed animals that he used for his scientific studies.


The Great Exhibition: Display of Fur and Taxidermy, 1851 >


WOLF
WATLING STREET
LAY

In his 1840 "Treatise on Taxidermy," famed British zoologist William Swainson wrote: "Taxidermy is an art absolutely essential to be known to every naturalist since, without it, he cannot pursue his studies or preserve his own materials."
In the meantime the preservation techniques developed making it possible to present the animals in more natural poses

Science is not the only reason why the art of taxidermy developed and spread throughout centuries and cultures. Taxidermy was, especially in ancient times, used for religious purposes or death rituals, while in more recent times it has been mostly associated with adventurous travels as well as hunting.

20th Century Massive Full Mount Taxidermy Male Giraffe

20th Century Taxidermy Study Of A Jaguar, Edward Gerrard & Sons c.1900

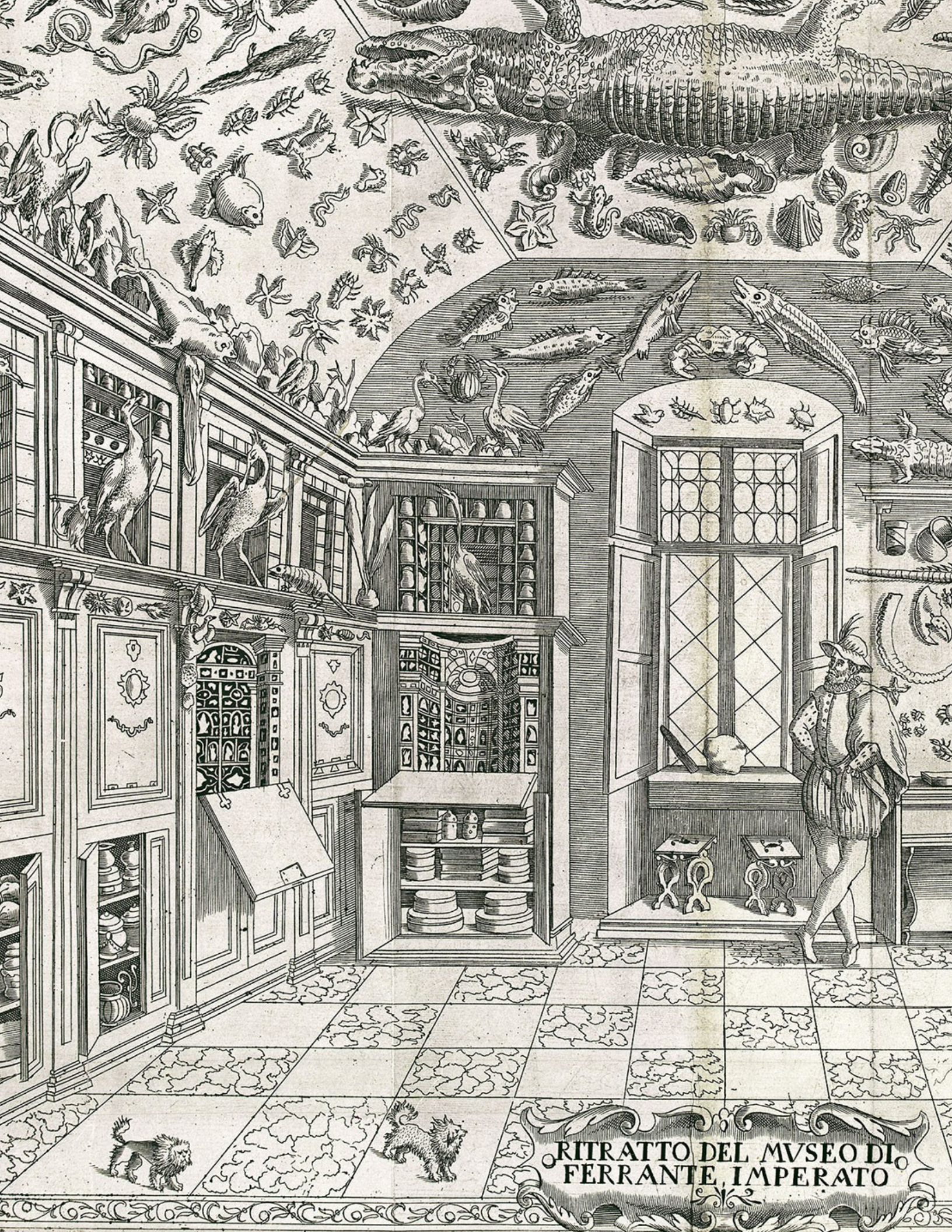
Hunting wild animals was originally an instinct human beings developed out of necessity and now survives – controlled and strictly regulated – as a sport, a sublimated challenge between man and nature. Stuffed animals, in this instance, became a token of a man's accomplishments and glorified the hunter.

However, collecting taxidermy is not necessarily related to the act of hunting. It can simply relate to the curiosity and attraction that we all have for the exotic and the diverse. During the Victorian Era and the golden age of the British Empire, the practice of bringing back from Eastern and African British colonies trophies of exotic animals became quite common.

Even in recent times, the regulated production of exotic and beautifully crafted taxidermy pieces such as the giraffe pictured on the left page could represent an interesting and fascinating conversation piece for a home interior.

From the 19th century onwards displaying these animals in one's living room not only indicated that the owner is well travelled and cultured but also boosted pride in national identity serving at the same time for educational and aesthetic purposes.

For the London Great Exhibition in 1851 a vast assortment of creatures, including an elephant, was transported across land and sea.


RITRATTO DEL MVSEO DI
FERRANTE IMPERATO

The rise of importance given to natural history favoured the art of taxidermy as a way to display beautiful or uncommon items from around the world: displaying rare animals, together with ancient jewels and rare stones and minerals in the so-called cabinet of curiosities became very fashionable among cultured aristocracy and upper society.

In the 20th century, with great demand taxidermy techniques improved greatly, especially with the easy availability of photographs of animals that allowed people to consult images of the real animals in their natural poses. The improvements in the quality standards were also due to a significant change in the materials used whereby straw, hay and peat have been replaced by wood wool and epoxy resins.

Today, as it was in the past, taxidermy is a way to get as close as possible to wildlife, to capture its beauty and frame the untamed and transitory into an imperishable vision, making the uncanny become a bit more familiar.

< Engraving from Ferrante Imperato, Dell'Historia Naturale, Naples c.1599