



## PRESS RELEASE 18th November 2015

### History @TheMovies exhibition

The History@ TheMovies exhibition of Ghent Historic Houses, will be held from 27th November to 10 th April 2016 in Peter's Abbey in Ghent.

### Famous people visit St. Peter's Abbey this winter!

Hugh Grant, Keira Knightley, Emma Thompson and Colin Firth are just a few of the stars who will be present at the History @theMovies exhibition.

Costumes, film clips and stills from popular and less popular historical films and television series such as *The Tudors*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Casanova* and *The White Queen* play a central role and show how history is depicted on screen. With sumptuous costumes and romantic movie scenes this unique exhibition transports you to the distant past or more recent history.

But ... where does fiction begin and reality end?

### History in the movies

Film and history: this is a powerful combination, often resulting in fireworks and a screen sizzling with passion. The trick is to find the right mixture of fact and fiction. The slavish imitation of every historical detail can never lead to an exciting result and all too often produces costume dramas that simply gather dust. A film is not a documentary. Indeed, the medium plays on different registers. At their best, compelling story lines will fill you with rapture. Imagination as a source of insight and awareness.

Film is a very powerful medium and one the world of history today takes into account. It uses its own idiom of language and works differently from written history. The condescending criticism often bestowed on historical films or television series, that fictionalisation cannot contribute to the historical discourse, is highly unjust. Indeed, they leave their mark on our collective historical image formation and frequently inspire a lasting enthusiasm for history.

In our historical houses we also like to use these lyrical and narrative methods. Ever vigilant and balancing between historical and sensual or emotional aspects, between seriousness

and lightness, our aim is to raise you above the ordinary and gently reconcile you with the hard side of life.

## **The Exhibition**

This winter, St. Peter's Abbey will be rolling out the red carpet. Costumes from different historical productions will bring the visitor, by way of stills and projections, closer to the historical figures behind these gripping and heart-warming movies and TV series.

The History @TheMovies exhibition takes a look at the internal workings of a number of historic films. Highlighted by thirty original costumes from well-known British productions. Apart from settings and decors, costumes play an essential role in evoking a period in time. Where else does the term *costume drama movie* come from?

For those who every week look forward to the next episode of the British TV series *The White Queen*, Elizabeth Woodville, or at least her costume, along with that of our very own Veerle Baetens who plays the role of Margaret of Anjou in the series, can be seen at the exhibition. Visitors will also learn the real story behind the War of the Roses between the Lancasters and the Yorks. And then we have *The Tudors*. At the exhibition, visitors will be able to actually see the majestic costume of King Henry VIII: it embodies the aura of a Machiavellian prince, while at the same time is a personification of the fickle and calculating lover in the series.

The details in the costumes of Hugh Grant and Emma Thompson in *Sense & Sensibility* take us back to the gossip, wealth and glamour of the English upper classes around the 1800s. Against a backdrop of the romantic dialogue between Edward and Elinor, we discover the historical context of Jane Austen's novels. Also present however, is Charles Dickens with *David Copperfield* and we are faced with the question what on earth does he have in common with Harry Potter. With *The King's Speech*, we look for the story behind the film. The costumes of Colin Firth as King George for example, evoke the atmosphere of the years just before World War II. And so we review even more important historical characters from well-known and lesser-known films and TV series.

Each time the story of one or more of these historic protagonists is presented, and contemporary actors give us a vivid rendition of a legendary, romantic or difficult past. But where does the fiction end and reality begin? How closely does Jonathan Rys Meyers resemble the real Henry VIII? Is there room for the romantic passages of Jane Austen in the England of her time? And what about the real lords of Highclere Castle?

History @TheMovies will excite anyone who loves history and film. The exhibition gives history a face but at the same time ensures that you look at it critically and go in search of the truth behind the fiction. So this is a very typical theme for Historic Houses Gent and indeed, our houses have frequently served as a backdrop for historical films. This too is an aspect which is dealt with in the exhibition.

### **Children**

On an outing with the kids? At the exhibition they can try on hats from the time of Jane Austen. Moreover, they receive their own History @T

heMovies guidebook in which they can learn all sorts of special facts about the exhibition. In fact all under-19s have free admission to the exhibition.

### **Prices and opening hours**

Tue – Sun: 10.00 – 18.00

Adult: 8 euro

Groups (min. 15 pers.): 6 euro

Students (19-25) : 2 euro

Child (-19 years): free admission

**Guide tours** for groups, schools (secondary), max 25 persons: 85 euro / (schools 75 euro)

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