

Fashion in the Age of Queen Victoria



This exhibition features a selection of Victoria era fashion showing the development of women's clothing from petticoats to crinolines to bustles and then towards the more liberated body shapes of the twentieth century. This exhibition is exclusive to the Victorian Era Festival in Canberra.

The exhibition is accompanied by some special events including a talk by Aylwen Gardiner-Garden and another by Melanie Green and also dance workshops, balls and costuming workshops. Definitely worth a trip to Canberra - further information can be found [at www.earthlydelights.com.au](http://www.earthlydelights.com.au). Season ticket discounts (\$150) are available for the month of August by using the discount code VIC2009.

Fashion in the Age of Queen Victoria is the first exhibition of this collection in Australia. Showcasing more than 25 dresses dating from the 1830s to 1900s, the exhibition provides extraordinary examples of day and evening wear from this period

Aylwen Gardiner-Garden began collecting costumes five years ago and the collection now comprises more than 50 items from the late Baroque and early Regency period to the 1900s. For the last twenty years Aylwen has been sewing and researching costumes from the Renaissance to Edwardian Eras and is now considered quite an expert in her field.

The Victorian era witnessed dramatic changes in terms of the evolution of industry ('from the hand-made to the machine-made') and society ('the rise of the middle class'), anticipating the earliest beginnings of modern times. Changes which occurred at that time still resonate with our lifestyle today. The Industrial Revolution had an enormous impact not only on technological advancements, but also on social and moral systems. Cities grew exponentially during this time and there was a vast increase in the number of poor people living in metropolitan areas. But it was also a time when the middle classes, with their new-found power, began to influence society.

The richness and diversity of this era is mirrored by its fashion. We see a multitude of changes in shape and size in parallel to the rapidly changing society – cage crinolines (from metal) and spring bustles, machine-made lace and braiding. We witness a dramatic change in women's roles from the early Victorian period through to the end of the nineteenth century. As evidenced by their clothes, in the 1840s, women were expected to be gentle demure 'creatures' with no need to engage with strenuous activity – they wore tight, confining costumes which allowed only limited movement. By the turn of the century women were more actively involved in daily life and their clothes reflected this. They had become less confined and constrained – and so had their clothes, and in some cases they were even permitted to wear pants!