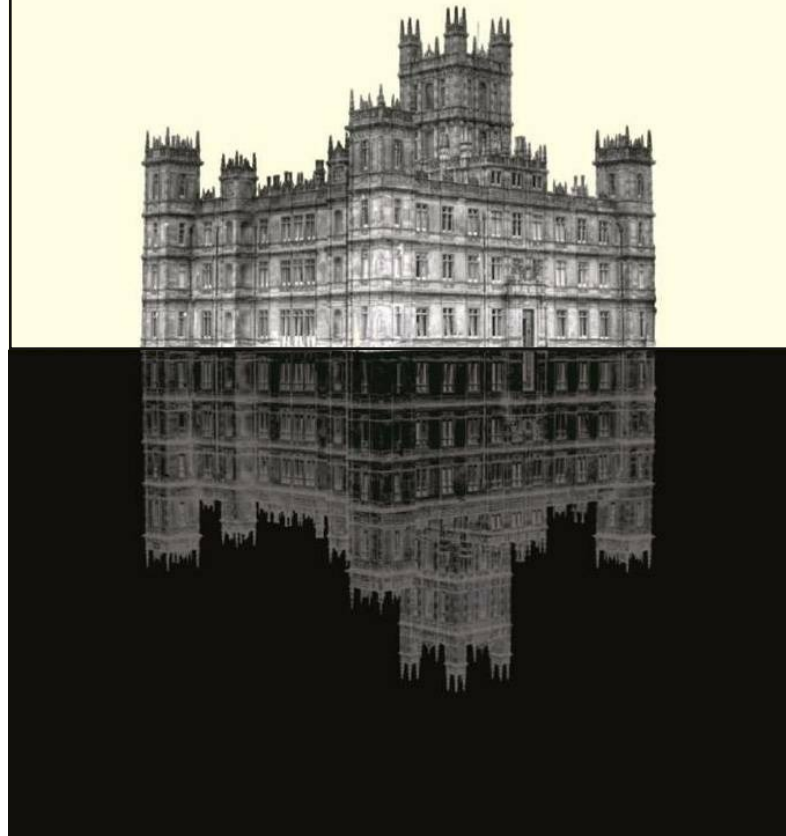


DOWNTON ABBEY



Downton Abbey

Tours the World

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POKOLBIN



Singapore is not a destination that one would normally associate with Downton Abbey, however I was fortunate enough to be there for a weekend in early July when “Downton Abbey: The Exhibition” was on at the Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre. The “fully immersive” experience had opened its world premiere there in June, with many of the cast and writer Julian Fellowes in attendance.



Cast with writer Julian Fellowes at the opening

This wonderful exhibition is a way for the much loved television series to live on. It is a journey through the grand home of Downton Abbey, and an interactive glimpse into the lives of the Crawley family and their staff and associates.

The Exhibition is beautifully displayed in several very large rooms. Following a “welcome” from writer Julian Fellowes, we enter a room full of information about the show, the characters and history about British culture and society from the start of the series, the Titanic disaster, through World War 1 and the associated trials and tribulations of the family. What a remarkable demonstration of the phenomenon that is Downton Abbey.



Entry to the show with a room full of information relating to the characters and history.



There are iconic sets from the most recognisable locations on the show, including Mrs Patmore's kitchen - I learnt that neither Mrs Patmore nor Daisy have any idea how to cook in real life!



Lady Mary's bedroom is reproduced – a lot of action took place there – as well as many of the fantastic costumes worn by men and women in the show.



We see the post-Edwardian outfits of nobles, the ladies, ladies' maids, footmen and valets, riding boots, evening gloves, jewellery and hats and even two memorable wedding dresses for both Mary and Edith– don't forget that Lady Mary was widowed and remarried, and poor Edith was jilted at the altar, and then finally married.



Lady Mary marries Matthew Crawley



Lady Edith's first wedding dress – jilted at the altar!

Perhaps even more endearing are the outfits worn by Mr Carson and Mrs Hughes for their wedding – after all those years of “downstairs” interactions. You may remember that Mrs Hughes wears a wedding coat that originally belonged to Lady Grantham (Cora). It took over 100 hours to make the coat due to the embellishment of 1920s lace, clusters of pearl beads and handmade flowers. The coat had to have believably belonged to Cora but lend itself to suit Mrs Hughes.



Mrs Hughes marries Mr Carson - after all those years of "downstairs" interactions



*Another couple that captured viewers' hearts ...
the lovely Anna and the initially mysterious Mr Bates.*

The TV series won 12 Emmys which is a feat for a British show. This Exhibition demonstrates why – perfect detail in the back story of the times in which it was set, faultless detail to costuming and characters, and magnificent sets, many of them reproduced here.

One of my favourite minor characters is Martha Levinson, Cora's American mother - played brilliantly by Shirley MacLaine – here described as "a rich woman who wears the weight of her money with ease".



Martha Levinson, Cora's American mother - played brilliantly by Shirley MacLaine

Martha, like Mrs Isobel Crawley, provides a perfect foil for our all time favourite character, The Dowager Countess of Grantham, played superbly by Dame Maggie Smith.



“ No Englishman
would dream of
dying in someone
else's house ”

“ What is a
Weekend? ”



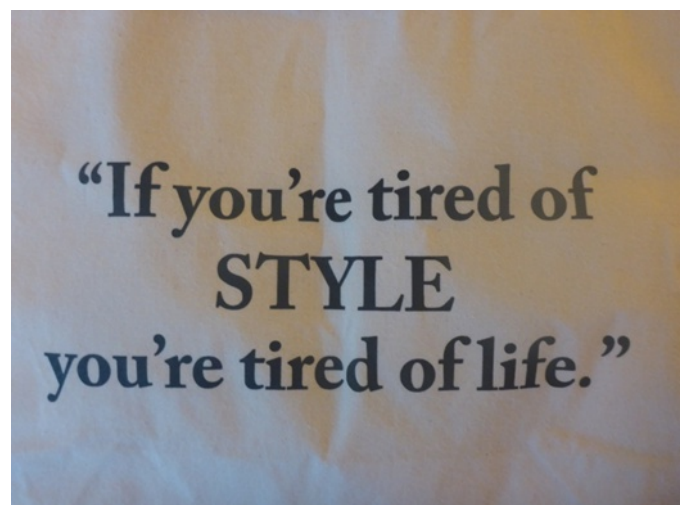
The Dowager Countess of Grantham is memorable for her snobbishness, great one-liners and underlying compassion.

Everyone adores Lady Sibyl, who tragically died in childbirth. Her character exposes many stories of the times – difficulty with medical care, the “Irish troubles”, the suffragette movement, and women of all classes looking to rid themselves of the starchy confines of their era.



Lady Sibyl is fabulous in the scene where she shows off a new fashion – an embroidered bodice and saucy pantaloons.

It is not clear whether this exhibition is coming to Australia; however it is now travelling to Toronto in Canada followed by New York. Watch out for a wonderful experience if it hits our shores!



Of course, Mr Carson must have the last word