DISCOVER THE
VILLA EMPAIN
IN A FUN WAY !

THE GRAFFITI

① During the restoration, the workmen cleaned some walls covered with graffiti. They rubbed very hard, but you can still see the remains of drawings in the stairwell. This is a testimony to the Villa Empain's past.

1

THE MILK WAY

② The drawing on glass on the ceiling of the Grand Salon d'Honneur is original. It is made up of 21 square plates of thick glass. The motifs represent the Milky Way and the signs of the Zodiac.

2

THE CAFÉ

③ The fish in the café is actually a fountain. It was stolen while the Villa was abandoned and an identical copy was made during its restoration.

3

4

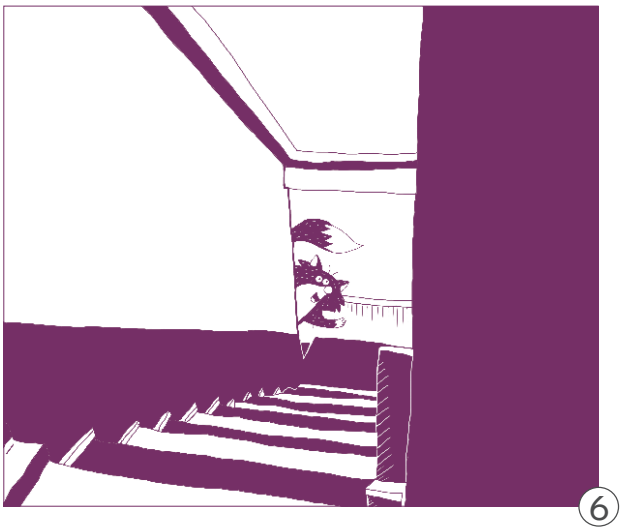
THE ARMOURY

④ Louis Empain loved to spend time training in his Armoury. He had this rectangular room built specifically to practice his favourite sport: fencing.

5

MOSAICS

⑤ Here you are in the blue bathroom. Step up close to the window. Some mosaic tiles are original while others are replacements. Can you tell the difference?



6

THE STAIRCASE

⑥ There is a secret staircase connecting the Café on the ground floor with Louis' bedroom. This staircase allowed him to withdraw discreetly to his private apartments.

ART DECO

Louis Empain had a passion. He was fascinated by an architectural style called Art Deco. Louis was 22 years old when he started building a sumptuous villa on Franklin Roosevelt Avenue, or Avenue des Nations, as it was then called. He asked the architect Michel Polak to build his Villa in the Art Deco style, both inside and outside. Construction of the Villa Empain was completed in 1934 and Louis could move in and entertain his family and friends.

LOUIS EMPAIN

Louis' father, Baron Édouard Empain was a Belgian businessman who built the Paris metro and railways in Congo, China, Egypt and many other countries. One day, he even decided to build a new city in Egypt. He called this city Heliopolis (which means 'city of the sun') and had it built in the middle of the desert. Just like his father, Louis Empain had lots of imagination and undertook amazing projects all over the world.

BOGHOSSIAN FOUNDATION

The Boghossian Foundation is a Centre for Art and Dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures. This means that you can visit the Villa Empain for exhibitions, dance, films, concerts and other cultural events. The Boghossian Foundation wishes to introduce artists from all over the world. Since 2010, the Villa Empain has received nearly 500,000 visitors.

"FAMILY DAYS" AND CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS

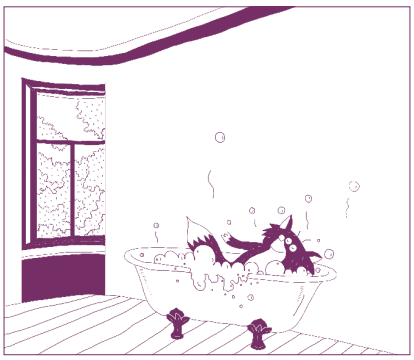
Did you enjoy your visit to the Villa Empain?
Ask your parents to consult the list of creative workshops and story-telling afternoons that the Boghossian Foundation organizes for children at WWW.VILLAEMPAIN.COM

Illustrations © Keong-A Song

A MIXED HISTORY

The Villa Empain has had a thousand lives. It's a house that has had many owners! After living there for just six months, Louis realized that he preferred to live somewhere smaller and quieter. He was a devout Christian and now wanted to dedicate his time and money to educating young people. Louis decided to leave Brussels and change countries. From 1934 he left to travel in Canada. Before leaving, Louis Empain donated the Villa to the Belgian State to serve as a Royal Museum of Contemporary Decorative Arts. Later, the Villa was occupied by German soldiers during the Second World War and hosted a little later the Russian embassy. It even housed a TV station: RTL. The television station remained in the Villa Empain until 1990. As the years went by, no one really cared about the Villa. It was resold to different owners. Little by little, the Villa was abandoned and damaged.

Colour in the drawing

RESTORATION BY THE BOGHOSSIAN FOUNDATION

In 2006, the Boghossian Foundation purchased the Villa Empain and decided to restore it. Over a period of four years, it undertook a major restoration, bringing in highly qualified craftsmen to care for the Villa. Everything was cleaned, replaced, restored. The Boghossian Foundation renovated the house from floor to ceiling, including the swimming pool and garden. It repaired it so well, and the Villa became once again so pretty, that the Boghossian Foundation received the Europa Nostra prize for restoring the Villa Empain to its former splendour.