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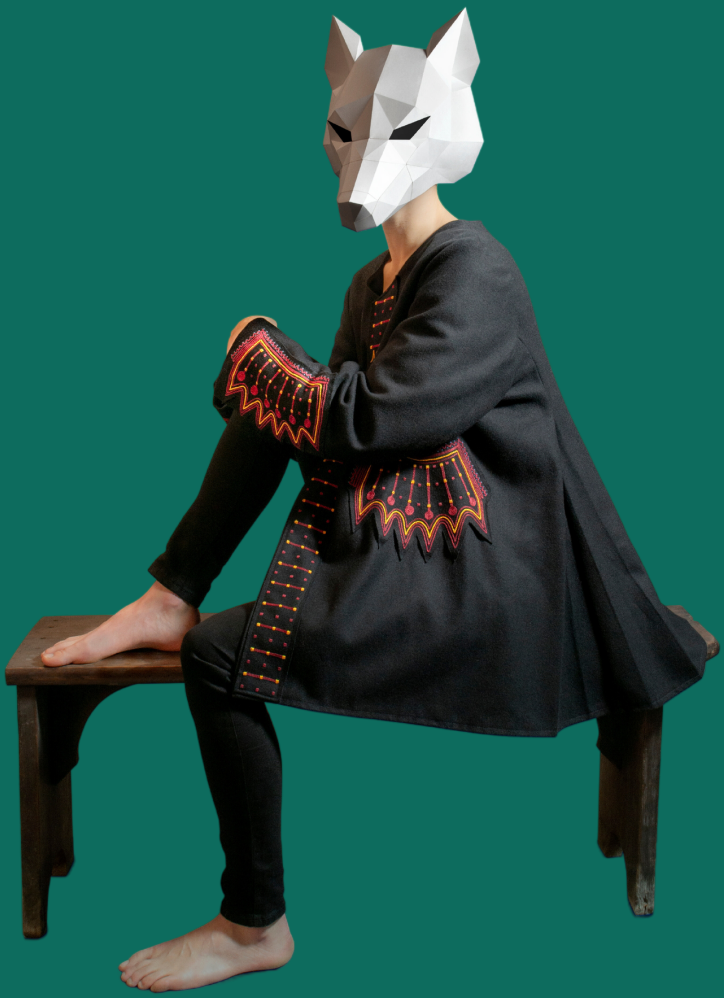
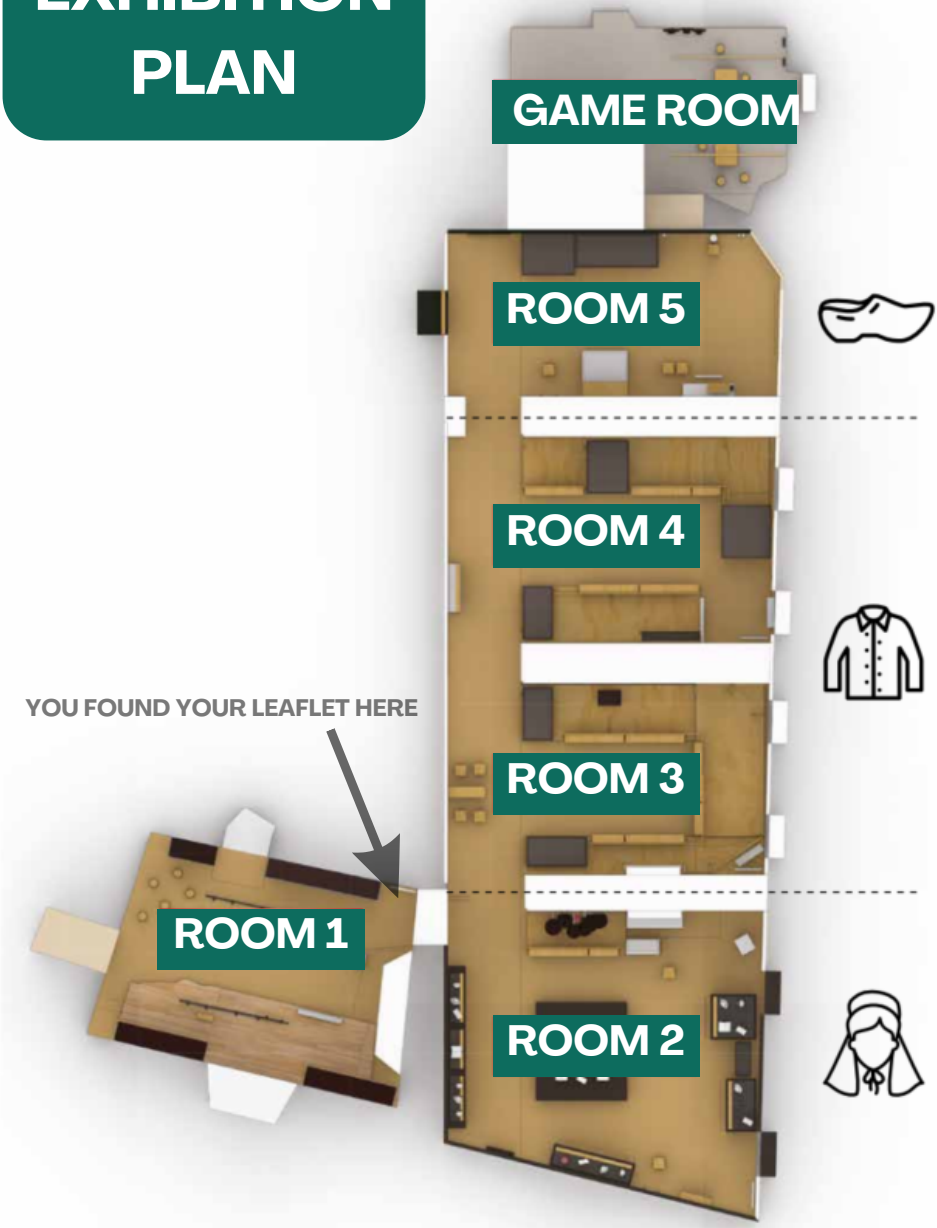


EXHIBITION
WILD LIFE IN THE WARDROBE

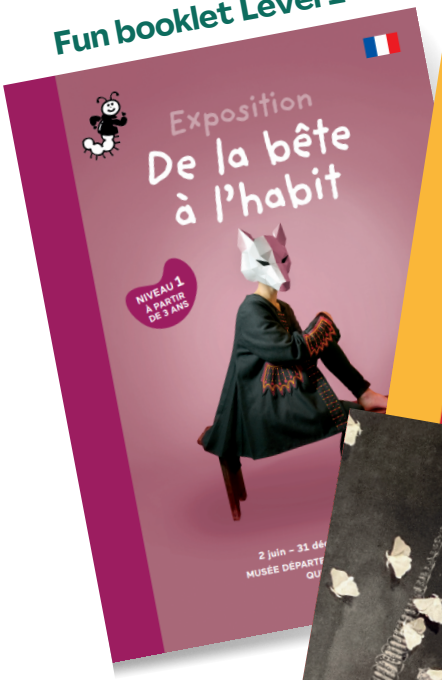
MUSÉE DÉPARTEMENTAL BRETON
QUIMPER

EXHIBITION PLAN

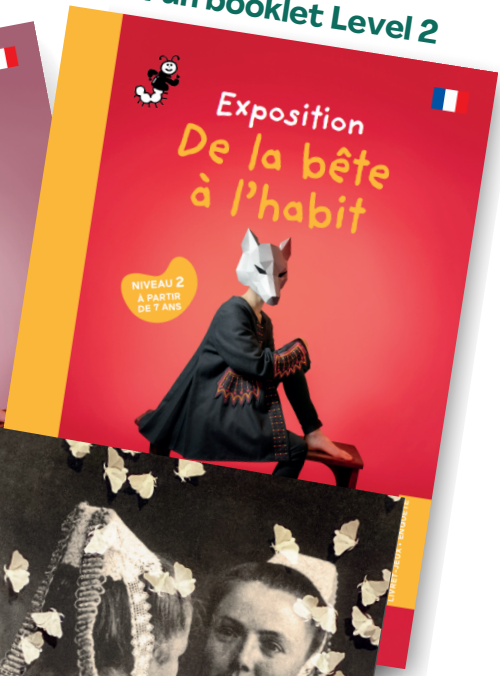


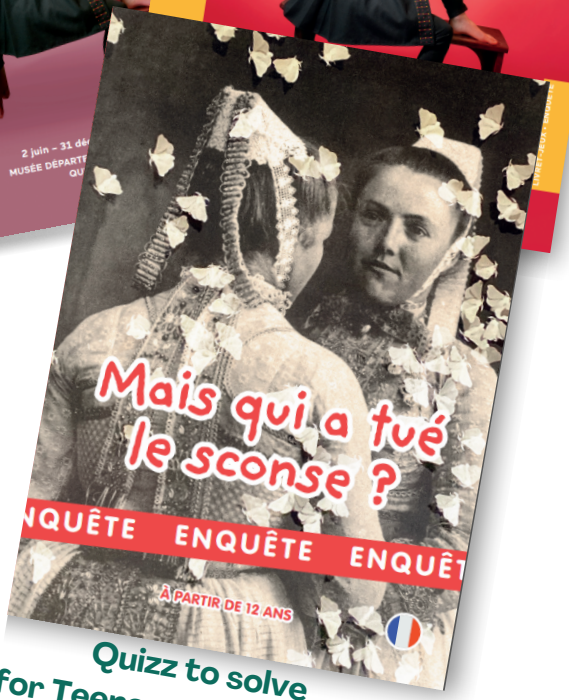
Please help yourself !

Fun booklet Level 1



Fun booklet Level 2





Quizz to solve
for Teenagers and Adults

ROOM 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What is the connection between animals and costumes found in a traditional Breton wardrobe?
The answer doesn't exactly leap out at you ! But animals can be found hiding behind labels in all parts of the Breton wardrobe from hats to clogs.

The *kabig*, an iconic Breton garment which is still very much in fashion, is made of woollen cloth. Behind the main fabrics used in 19th and 20th century costumes, like wool, leather and fur, lurk sheep, cows, rabbits and foxes.
Animals are not only found in materials but also in styles of headdress, like the crawfish tail or the ray, and in embroidery motifs, like ram's horns.
Ostriches, beavers, silk worms : during the 19th century, exotic animals arrived in Finistère wardrobes, highlighting the position of this remote part of the world in what was already global trade.
By looking at the presence of animals in traditional Breton costumes, the exhibition *Wildlife in the Wardrobe !* shows how animals were a common source of raw materials for clothing production, the close relationship between people and local fauna, both domestic and wild, and also how Breton fashion was affected by international influences.

The exhibition *Wildlife in the Wardrobe !* is an invitation to discover Breton costumes and rich textile collections from a rather unusual angle.

The exhibition is interspersed with plant decorations and animal figures by the artist and embroiderer Mathias Ouvrard. His paper creations forge ties between wildlife and the collections on display.

1.2 COUNTERPOINT

As you go through the exhibition, keep an eye out for some rather unusual exhibits, indicated by purple info cards.

Pascal Jaouen established himself in the world of Breton embroidery as a designer and founder of the Quimper School of Embroidery (l'école de broderie quimpéroise). His "Haute broderie" creations were inspired by, and are revisits of, traditional styles used in needlework.
Many designs feature the dainty, brightly coloured peacock feather, perhaps an allusion by Pascal Jaouen to the "plume de paon" motif, typical of Bigouden embroidery.

ROOM 2

2.1 A STING IN THE TAIL

Many names for headdresses (known as 'coiffes') come from the animal kingdom in the form of nicknames which were sometimes rather cruel. Some of them are obvious from their shape, like the ray of Baud, the crawfish tail of Morlaix and the cockerel of Dinan. Occasionally it comes from local people as in the case of the *penn-sardin* ("sardine head"), the name given to cannery workers in the traditional ports of Cornouaille. The name of certain headdresses remains a mystery like the "marmot" of Landerneau.

2.2 BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND BEES IN YOUR BONNET

The richness and originality of a 'coiffe' is due to its embroidered and lace motifs. Here the spotlight is mostly on floral decorations. Representations of animals were far less common and centred on ethereal species such as birds and butterflies for some unknown reason. The choice of motifs was based on a myriad of influences : social and professional tradition, aesthetic leanings, beliefs and superstitions, the everyday presence of certain animals, etc.

These familiar animals also found their way into names of shapes and abstract techniques like the 'beehive' ceremonial headdress of Dinan and the 'cobweb stitch' lace found on certain headdresses of the Aven area, Pays Bigouden and in Morbihan.

2.3

Bigouden headdresses were decorated with plant motifs finely embroidered on cotton gauze. Sometimes the flowers appeared to resemble butterflies. This could be due to the creativity of the embroiderer, the wishes of the wearer or simply the imagination of the onlooker...

2.4 HOLD ONTO YOUR HAT

The fabrics used to make headwear changed over time. At the beginning of the 19th century, the 'capot', a wrap-around hood, was commonplace throughout Brittany. It was made from hessian or rather thick woollen cloth.

One century later, both forms and fabrics had diversified. The weatherproof hood was now worn on top of the lighter, everyday cotton 'coiffe' which continued to evolve. Depending on the region, it was trimmed for weddings with new textures and decorations including leather, silk, feathers and wax flowers.

2.5

At the beginning of the 20th century, the edges of Châteaulin 'coiffes' were decorated with down and garlands of artificial flowers made from fabric dipped in wax or very fine leather.

2.6 COUNTERPOINT

The diversity of headgear across civilisations and ages is infinite. Animals are often present, as in this warrior headdress from the Marquesas Islands, decorated with numerous cockerel feathers. This headgear offered a means of protection and showed social status and military power. Wearing material from an animal was a way of assuming its powers, strength and character.

2.7

The development of industrial plastic at the end of the 19th century provided an economic way of replacing materials of animal origin.

At the turn of the 20th century, the so-called 'tortoiseshell' comb, which had become an essential accessory in the Quimper and Pays d'Aven styles of headwear and also in several others in Upper Brittany, was in fact made of celluloid acetate. Discovered in 1865, the material was used to imitate the scales of the hawksbill turtle, a species today under threat of extinction.

Paraffin, a by-product of oil, was mixed with beeswax before replacing it completely in the making of orange blossom for wedding finery. In the mid-19th century, factories making artificial flowers opened in France. In Brittany the workshops at Saint-Joachim en Brière, Josselin and Rennes continued production until the 1960s.

2.8 KEEP IT UNDER YOUR HAT

Hats, caps and woolly hats have all been worn by men since the 18th century.
At the start of the 19th century, hats became the main everyday headgear. Solid and waterproof, they were chiefly made of felt, a fabric made by pressing and condensing sheep's wool or animal fur mostly from rabbits, beavers or moles. Various chemical additives, often toxic, were used to soften the fur.
Behind a generally uniform shape, hats varied according to the area of Brittany. Just like women's headdresses, they conveyed information about the wearer's origin via ornamental details such as chenille yarn, ribbons and decorated hat buckles. People living on the coast were easily recognised by their thick, coloured, woollen cloth hats, worn to keep out the cold.

2.9 COUNTERPOINT

Until the turn of the 20th century, mole-catching was a profession in its own right.

Mole catchers (*goheler* in Breton) used to go from farm to farm, catch the animals then sell the skins. Peddlers (*pilhaouer*) also traded mole skins.
Mole skins were used to make felt hats, giving them a particularly dense, silky appearance. One of the last hat makers in Finistère to use this material made the hat on display here.
The felt made from mole skins was called "taupé" (from *taupe* meaning mole in French). By implication, the term ended up being used to describe felt made from animal fur including rabbit fur which is far more commonly used in hat-making than mole skin !

ROOM 3

3.1 SEPARATE THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS

Collected every spring when sheep are shorn, woollen yarn made by spinning can be transformed into a wide range of materials by knitting or by weaving fabrics such as drugget or woollen cloth.

Drugget is a combination of plant fibres (hemp or flax) and wool. It is a thick, fairly coarse fabric, known as “garro” from the Breton word *garv* meaning coarse, rough or rustic.

Woollen cloth or serge is made exclusively from wool and considered to be better quality. It is produced in several stages : after the initial weaving process, soap and water are added and the material is compacted by rubbing until it becomes felt-like and waterproof. In the 20th century, almost all of the ceremonial costumes were made from merino wool, from the breed of sheep introduced into France in the 18th century.

3.2

Cashmere, a much rarer fabric, is a very soft, luxurious woollen cloth obtained from goats from the Kashmir region of Asia. Initially imported into Europe, woollen mills in Lyon started producing it in the mid-18th century. At the end of the 19th century cashmere shawls slowly began to become part of Breton traditional costumes, but were reserved for the better-off.

3.3

What a contrast between a 'Sunday best' outfit and a darned, knitted dress designed above all for keeping warm !

Having no other use except to protect the body, everyday clothes were darned, patched and almost always thrown away when they were no longer wearable. The different signs of wear-and-tear show the length of time they were used.

This is why undergarments and workwear feature a lot less in museum collections than the prestigious costumes handed down from generation to generation. So the dress displayed here is unique in the museum collection.

3.4

A commonly worn garment, the woven woollen shawl was worn only by women workers and shopkeepers in South Finistère, but by women of all professions in the rest of the region.

Made from manufactured fabric, shawls varied in shape and colour from area to area. Mostly black and plain, they were worn every day especially in winter. Shawls could also be worn for special occasions: they could be very long or very short, decorated with long fringes and often very colourful patterns.

In the Pays de Guérande, a short cape was worn instead of a shawl and its colour indicated the status of the wearer.

3.5 A FURRY STORY!

Until the 1970s, the profession of furrier was a flourishing one. Their job was to make garments from furs.

The origin of furs was very varied. Resulting from trade with North American trappers, beaver, fox and even skunk pelts flooded the European market in the 19th century.

At a more local level, pelts from hunting were traded at major fairs like Guingamp, a meeting place for peddlers, hunters and furriers. All sorts of pelts were found there : those of wild animals such as foxes, weasels, hares and moles, but also domestic animals like rabbits.

Following the drop in numbers of several over-exploited species, farmers started to acclimatise wild or exotic animals.

3.6 FOXY FASHION

For decades, fox furs were worn around the neck. Rabbit fur and skunk fur coats were less easy to identify.

Up until the 1970s, it was fairly common to take an animal skin to a furrier to be transformed into a bedside mat, a rug or a garment. There were many trades connected with this activity at the time: tanners, furriers and also peddlers and farmers.

The fashion for fur had an impact on species' numbers. To meet the increasing demand for animal skins, within a context of a fall in over-exploited species, fur farms began appearing in the 1860s.

Brittany was not to be outdone. In 1926 a fur farm began specialising in coypu, also known as 'Chilean beavers, at La Roche-Maurice. It also bred skunk, raccoons, muskrats, polecats, opossums, mink, weasels, martens and also Boukhara sheep for Astrakhan.

3.7 DON'T TAKE THE HUMP

The Museum has about forty « gouriz », unique items in the history of Brittany. These wide belts decorated with perforated metallic plates are truly spectacular.

In the historic archives concerned with « gouriz », the belts are said to be made from « camel leather ». They are mentioned elsewhere as being of « buffalo leather ». To be sure, micro samples from the three belts shown here were sent for laboratory analysis.

They are not camel leather at all ! Just particularly thick cow leather...

So why say they were made of camel leather? Your guess is as good as ours !

ROOM 4

4.1 A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP

Feathers became an essential part of women's wear, and especially hats in French cities from the 1830s.

In the face of public criticism concerning the destruction of wild animals and notwithstanding constant demand, the profession evolved from the 1870s onwards. Bird farms were set up to produce ornamental feathers. In addition, new techniques enabled feathers from common birds to be given an exotic appearance. This development enabled the Art Nouveau movement, which flourished in the years 1890-1914, to appropriate a material that had become more easily accessible.
Among Breton costume styles, feathers were used mainly around Châteaulin. Its costumes were recognizable by the use of diaphanous feathers, particularly on headdresses and bib fronts. Although they were known as « swan feathers », they were in fact ostrich and emu feathers from farmed birds !

4.2 COUNTERPOINT

In 2008 Charles Fréger photographed 'fantasias' (costumes) made by a Brazilian Samba School.
'Fantasias' are costumes made for « allegorias » (carnival floats) on a particular theme or « enredo », to give visual and narrative cohesion.

The photographer was looking to capture the garments in all their glory, showing the exuberance of their size, colour and detail.
In reaction to the beautiful plumage of these birds of paradise, he decided to take them out of the context for which they were made, the invariably urban cage in which they live, parade and die, and transplant them to an environment with which they were totally unfamiliar: a powerful backdrop alternating between lush forests and volcanic rocky scenery.
In Fantasias, the individual is neither transformed nor hidden behind the mask of clever make-up, but is totally swallowed up by the excessiveness of his attire. He has left his human skin to take on that of the animal."

4.3 AS SOFT AS SILK

The end product of the transformation of silkworm (bombyx) cocoons, silk yarn could be woven into several different types of fabric.
Silk tulle, a wide mesh weave, has a transparent, floaty appearance.
Silk satin, uses a special weaving technique to obtain a smooth, close-knit fabric, glossy on the top surface and matt on the back. When matt patterns are included in the weave, the satin is known as damask.

Silk velvet is made in two stages. First, two thicknesses of silk fabric are placed one on top of the other and woven together so that the two layers are completely joined by a dense network of perpendicular threads. Next, the two layers are separated : the fibres which join them are cut using a razor. The remaining tufts on the surface of the fabric create the velvet texture.
Velvet can be crushed, ribbed (corduroy) and even treated with acid to create patterns (dévoré or burnout), offering a myriad of varied fabrics.

4.4

In the 19th century, ribbon-making was centred on the factories of Saint-Etienne, which benefitted from the arrival of new looms which could produce several pieces at the same time. These manufactured ribbons were used on different costumes in Finistère, notably those of the Plougastel-Daoulas peninsula.

4.5 COUNTERPOINT

This Chinese skirt of embroidered silk is a 'mamianqun' (literally, horse's head skirt), probably so-called as it was worn by women horse-riders. Worn over trousers, its style allowed free movement of the legs astride a horse. It was an essential item of Chinese clothing for several centuries and was brought up to date as an identity-marking garment at the beginning of the 21st century.

In the autumn of 2022, Dior hit the headlines with a skirt in the same style which it described as the "emblematic silhouette of Dior". The garment was lambasted as a cultural usurpation, sparking a global controversy.

4.6 A WHALE OF A TIME

Gathering seashells, collecting beeswax from hives, making gelatine from animal skeletons... clothes make use of animals right down to the bare bones.

Hunted for their oil, blubber and even skin, whales were also used in the manufacture of umbrellas, corsets and underskirts. In the 18th century, the bodices worn by women salt marsh workers on the Guérande peninsula were stiffened with whalebone. While at the turn of the 18th century, it was used to bolster the stomacher of wedding dresses.

4.7 AN ANIMAL ABC IN THE WARDROBE

The bib fronts of traditional costumes generally featured plant and geometrical patterns. With names such as fishbone, peacock feather, ram's horn, viper's eye or wolf's teeth, the embroidered, fabric motifs sound more like an Animal ABC book for children.
Animal motifs were sometimes worked in fabric, as was the case for the *kilhog*, (cockerel in Breton) on bodices from Plougastel. Ready-made, multi-coloured, silk chenille ribbon was fixed to hats and garments of many Breton styles.

4.8

Although it is often easy to see how these names came about, there are occasional arguments about the origins of the motifs themselves. Some say the peacock feather typical of Pays Bigouden is simply a derivative of the Empire palmette motif, while others claim it to be an ancient motif inspired by the sun or even an ancient Celtic symbol.

4.9

Special occasions called for special garments. Scapulars and ornamental neckpieces enhanced the silhouettes of brides from Quimper and Porzay.

Arranged around a central, religious motif, these items featured a myriad of small, shiny decorations with a wide range of motifs including stars, flowers, birds, bees, butterflies and tiny mirrors.
All these small items of haberdashery, factory-made and arranged according to the demands of each local style, could be found in other costume styles in Brittany ; they were simply arranged in a different way

4.10 A WOLF IN THE SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Glazig (blue), *rouzig* (brown), *duig* (black) ... Colours were often used to refer to costumes and, by implication, the inhabitants of a particular area. In rarer cases, costumes were named after an animal.
So it was that people who lived in the Pays d'Elliant were known as "melenig" (greenfinches) as an allusion to the embroidery on their jackets, the same colours as the little green and yellow birds. Men from Pays de Pontivy were called « white sheep » (*gwerndevez*). In the 19th century, they used to wear costumes of either brown or white woollen cloth. At the end of the century they finally opted for the white fabric onto which were sewn large pocket flaps of black velvet, with zig-zag or wolf's teeth cut-outs. This motif is old as it can be seen on the brown jacket from the same area dating from 1873.

ROOM 5

5.1 FROM HEAD ... TO TOE

Clog-makers and cobblers both met the essential need of providing footwear. Wooden clogs of all sizes for everyday wear were carved from beech wood and sold at markets.Leather shoes were kept for special occasions right up to the end of the 19th century.
Shoes were hand-made for a long time and continued to be so even after the appearance of the first shoe factories in the 1850s. At the start of the 20th century, Fougères had around forty shoe factories and established itself as the capital of French women's shoes. The numerous tanneries in Brittany, particularly around Landivisiau in Finistère, supplied production units ranging from individual cobblers to large factories.

After the First World War, ready-to-wear clothes and shoes gradually became the norm and leather shoes became more affordable. Manufacturing processes changed. Plastic materials were developed and were initially used for the soles. The number of shoe shops increased bringing with it a certain standardisation of styles. As was the case everywhere during the 20th century, the use of leather for shoes in Brittany became widespread and wooden clogs disappeared from use, replaced in the workplace by safety shoes.
During the 1960s, shoes produced in Brittany were exported to Spain, Portugal and Italy. At the end of the 20th century, the fashion for trainers made from synthetic materials conquered the market. Nowadays most shoe production, both leather and synthetic, takes place in Asia.

5.2

The wearing of traditional Bigouden slippers is not well-known. They were worn inside wooden clogs and the coloured edging remained visible. The decoration on the heel suggests that this also could be seen, so the slippers were worn with clogs open at the back.

5.3 PULL YOUR SOCKS UP!

Worn until the 1870s before being replaced by trousers, *bragou bras* (baggy) and *bragou berr* (narrow) were breeches worn to just below the knee. Gaiters made of wool, leather, linen or hemp completed the leg covering.

Gaiters were fastened by buttons – often made of bone or horn – or tied with woollen laces. Their shape and style varied from area to area. They reached more or less to the instep of the foot which would be protected by a clog or a leather shoe, with or without socks.

There were thus numerous combinations available depending on the area, local style, time of year, the occupation and financial means of the wearer.

5.4 IF THE CLOG FITS

Worn by country folk, clogs were an essential part of Breton clothing from a very young age.

The shape was adjusted for different professions : fishermen's clogs were reinforced with a 'pig's snout' at the tip to resist shocks, but people who worked on the land needed clogs with an upturned tip to stop them from becoming stuck in mud.

They could be fitted with an insole of intricately woven straw, worn over woollen slippers or thick socks.

Boutou-plouz were worn In the house. These were clogs made of woven straw lined with rabbit fur or sheep's wool, usually reserved for use by old people.

5.5

At the beginning of the 20th century, clogs were fitted with a leather strap for improved comfort. After the First World War, faced with competition from rubber, clogs became lighter. Women wore *boutou-klak* with cut-outs to make them easy to put on over slippers. Men wore clogs with wooden soles and leather tops. Leather shoes were kept for weddings.

5.6 AS TOUGH AS OLD BOOTS

These shoes are made from pieces of leather fixed together on a leather or sometimes wooden sole. The sole is fixed to the shoe with metal studs to give added strength, protect against wear and tear and provide grip.

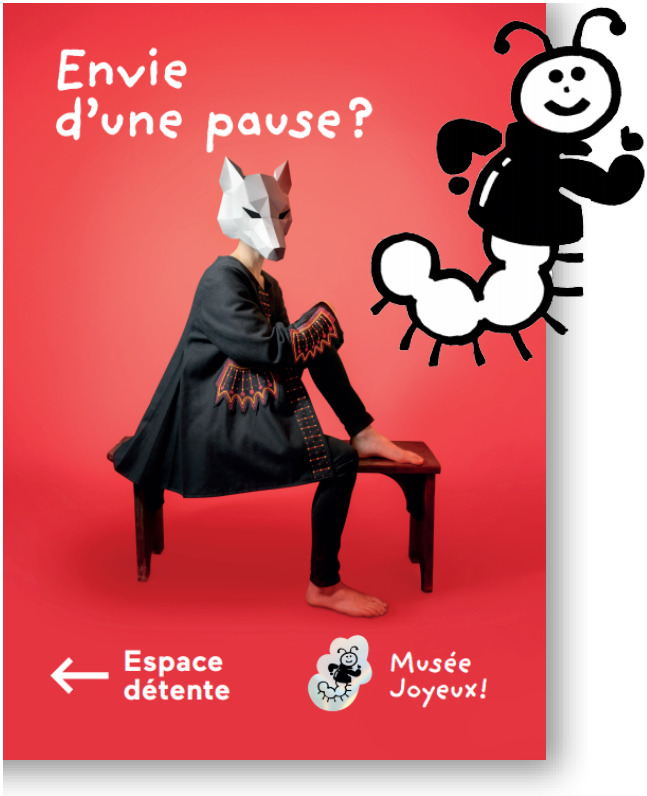
5.7 COUNTERPOINT

The 1980s saw the development of fashion in sport shoes, made from moulded synthetics. These types of shoe are usually made in Asia. The facts that the materials come from the petrochemical industry, that workers are underpaid and that transporting them causes pollution are tolerated as long as the requirements of fast fashion are met.

Social and ecological awareness have provoked a revival in interest for local distribution networks and natural materials, occasionally vegan, which both major and lesser-known brands are attempting to meet.

Thank you for your visit!

To conclude your visit, we invite you to join the relaxation room or the play area where you will find many activities related to the theme of the exhibition *Wild life in the Wardrobe !*



See you soon at the
Musée Départemental Breton.

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