

Val Saint-Lambert's bicentenary and digitisation project

Founded in 1826 in Seraing, the Val Saint-Lambert crystal works quickly established themselves as an international benchmark. From the very beginning, they produced richly illustrated sales catalogues, often accompanied by price lists. Some of these multilingual catalogues reflect the company's ambition to reach a broad international market, in keeping with its reputation. These 19th- and 20th-century publications now form a valuable documentary resource for researchers and specialist institutions. They belong to the Grand Curtius and are managed by the Heritage Collections.

Sales albums

The collection comprises 170 items: sales albums or catalogues, price lists and various brochures, all relating to items produced by the crystal works.

Some older volumes, particularly elaborate in design, are extremely rare. They are often linked to the publication of pieces produced for a special event: for example, the catalogue of decorative crystal pieces created for the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris was published to mark the factory's centenary in 1926.

Several publications document specific product ranges such as medical glasses or glass tiles. Others highlight new, contemporary techniques such as intricate cutting for luxury crystal, guilloché or pantographed decorations for more affordable pieces, or the Luxval range of stylish items made from pressed-moulded semi-crystal. Some albums are devoted to a single type of object: bathroom fittings, Rhine wine glasses (Roemers), electric lighting fixtures, etc.

This is not a closed collection, but a homogeneous body of work in constant evolution, depending on donations or acquisitions.

It brings together heritage items of diverse origins, in a variety of formats, paginations and media: A4-sized hardback albums, large A3-sized pages, small-format leaflets, etc. Their publication is irregular and directly linked to production: some years have no catalogue, whilst others see several published, sometimes accompanied by supplements.

Although the Grand Curtius does not hold the complete set of Val Saint-Lambert sales catalogues, its collection remains one of the most representative of the crystal works' output. Another major collection of catalogues is held at the Rakow Research Library at the Corning Museum of Glass (New York State).

A digitisation project

Frequently consulted, these catalogues are attracting growing interest. However, handling them makes them fragile. Digitising them has therefore emerged as the ideal solution, ensuring both their preservation and optimal accessibility, without risk to the originals, which are carefully packaged for conservation.

The digitisation of these precious documents is being undertaken by the Digital Heritage Department of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Two objectives guide the mission of the digitisation plan:

- Preserving the cultural heritage of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Digitisation campaigns aim to safeguard the cultural and heritage collections held in museums, archives, libraries, churches and other sites.

- Promoting this heritage by ensuring future access to digitised collections via a digital portal.

2026: a year dedicated to Val Saint-Lambert

The bicentenary of the crystal works will be celebrated throughout 2026 with a series of events.

The event, organised jointly by several Belgian museums and collectors, features a number of exhibitions in Liège, Charleroi, Brussels and Seraing. Satellite activities are aimed at a wide audience. An illustrated academic book, the result of a collective effort by a group of authors, is dedicated to the history and production of Val Saint-Lambert.

In the news: <https://www.grandcurtius.be/en/taxonomy/term/6/japonism-and-art-nouveau>

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