



News Release

V&A showcases Shenzhen design research at London Design Festival

Unidentified Acts of Design

15 September – 30 November

Press Preview: 9.15-11am, Friday 16 September

As the V&A prepares a dedicated V&A Gallery as part of a new design hub opening next year in Shenzhen, a display showing case studies from its wider ongoing research to engage with the region's design, manufacturing and creative industries will open during London Design Festival in the Museum's T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese art.

For *Unidentified Acts of Design*, the V&A has identified a series of alternative acts of design that have occurred or are emerging outside of the conventional studio context in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta, a major manufacturing area and hub of Chinese economic growth. This project is part of an innovative collaboration between the V&A and China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK) to establish a museum that will form the non-profit component of Design Society, a new cultural platform in Shenzhen due to open in 2017.

Originally shown at the 2015 Urbanism\Architecture Bi-City Biennale (UABB) in Shenzhen, for which it won a Bronze Dragon award, *Unidentified Acts of Design* will show case studies including Seed, a micro-controller company that offers a platform for makers, inventors and engineers to develop and prototype ideas; the robot making company Makeblock; the drone manufacturing company DJI; the sophisticated and multifunctional digital platform WeChat (Weixin); examples of 'shanzhai', innovative design within the open hardware and electronics manufacturing environment characterising Shenzhen; data coding of knitting machines at the Rose Knitting factory; reproduction techniques at Dafen Village and manufacturing workshops in urban villages. Each story is linked to a short film introducing the key-players in this expanded notion of design, such as inventors, manufacturers, web developers, engineers and hobbyists, who have not traditionally been considered central to the design process.

Tim Reeve, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of V&A, said: *"We are delighted to welcome colleagues from Design Society to the V&A, as part of our ground-breaking collaboration in Shenzhen. The London Design Festival is the perfect platform to share the research and ideas that we have been developing with Shenzhen's design, manufacturing and*

creative communities to inform the approach for the V&A Gallery which is due to open in Shenzhen in 2017.”

Luisa E. Mengoni, Head of the V&A Gallery in Shekou and Brendan Cormier, Lead Curator of 20th and 21st century design for Shekou from the V&A have curated the display to show how in a region of unprecedented growth, which has long served as ‘the factory of the world’, design acts can take on unconventional forms and occur in unpredictable places. The research challenges the notion that design in Shenzhen is limited to reproductions with little originality, and aims to expand and redefine our understanding of design history in the region.

This significant piece of research has been undertaken to determine an appropriate thematic, global, and historical reading of design for the new dedicated V&A Gallery and to inform its audience development. Due to open in 2017 as part of an innovative and inclusive cultural platform in Shenzhen established by CMSK, the gallery will present an exploration of how values drive design and how design is valued, through a highly diverse selection of objects from the V&A’s world renowned collection, including new acquisitions of contemporary design. Each of the eight design achievements signals a wider area of curatorial interest within the V&A’s new gallery.

To accompany the display, there will be a programme of talks, film screenings and a panel event.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- This is a free display in Gallery 44, The T. T. Tsui Gallery (China).
- For more information on London Design Festival, visit www.londondesignfestival.com
- The series of short films can be viewed online at vam.ac.uk/shekou

Related Events

Talk and Film screening

Unidentified Acts of Design: undercover engineers in the Pearl River Delta, China

Lecture Theatre, Thursday 22nd September, 11.30 – 12.30, Free

Exhibition curators Brendan Cormier and Luisa Mengoni will discuss eight diverse case studies which range from entrepreneurial engineers to the ‘shanzhai’ mobile phone industry. The talk will be interspersed with short documentary films created as part of this research project.

Chaired by Ole Bouman, Director of Design Society.

Film screenings

Unidentified Acts of Design: film screenings

Learning Centre foyer, Wednesday 21st, all day, Free

These films reveals the prevalence of design intelligence beyond the conventional design studio in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta where makers, engineers and hobbyists are leading in the creation of new and innovative products.

Gallery talks

Unidentified Acts of Design

Room 44, T.T. Tsui Gallery, Wednesday 21st September, 11.00 and 15.00, Free

Exhibition curators Brendan Cormier and Luisa Mengoni will discuss the eight diverse case studies on display which range from the 'shanzhai' mobile phone industry through to WeChat, China's most popular social media platform.

Panel event

Dialogue: Design and Practices of Social Innovation

Lecture Theatre, Wednesday 21st, 1:30pm, Ticketed (£10)

Design has the potential to catalyse and enable new ways of thinking and doing. Design Society, as a new comprehensive cultural institution in China, believes in a shared urgency to trigger and amplify design knowledge and tools to empower more people for a better society. The Director of Design Society, Ole Bouman, will invite practitioners from both China and the UK to explore how design practices enable social innovation, from the angles of new technology, education, and the role of international institutions.

Book online at <https://shop.vam.ac.uk/whatson/index/view/id/3504/event/Global-Design-Forum--Panel-Discussion--Design-and-Practices-of-Social-Innovation/dt/2016-09-21/eType/1/free/2>

About the V&A

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 5000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

The V&A holds one of the most important and comprehensive collections of Chinese art and design dating from 3000 BC to the present and continues to collect actively, with a focus on contemporary Chinese work. The Museum has held many successful exhibitions at various venues in China including the National Museum of China, the Palace Museum and the Capital

Museum in Beijing, the Shanghai Museum, the Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang, and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum National Museum of China.

The V&A has also played an important role in bringing an understanding of Chinese culture to Europe through exhibitions such as *Masterpieces of Chinese Paintings* (2013) which was the first comprehensive presentation of the topic in Europe since the 1930s and included some of China's national treasures. In 2008 the V&A held *China Design Now* a survey show of design and architecture being created in contemporary China, and in 2005 the first major display in the UK of contemporary Chinese photography and film in the exhibition *Between Past and Future*.

About Design Society in Shenzhen

Design Society, opening in 2017, is being led by China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK), and the V&A is founding partner of the not-for-profit Design Society Foundation to establish a new world class programme and platform dedicated to design. This pioneering collaboration with CMSK is the first of its kind between a UK museum and a Chinese partner. CMSK have commissioned renowned Japanese architecture studio, Maki & Associates, to design the architectural scheme which will be their first project in China.

Within Design Society will be a V&A Gallery devoted to 20th and 21st century international design, drawn from the V&A's unrivalled collection and will include new acquisitions of contemporary design. The range of objects presented (furniture, ceramics, glass, metalwork, fashion, textiles, graphics, architecture, product and digital design), will illustrate the scope and diversity of modern and contemporary design around the world and its impact on our lives.

There will also be a temporary exhibition space, in which the V&A will present two major touring exhibitions, one in 2017 and one in 2018. The V&A is also playing an advisory role in helping Design Society develop its staff training, collections care, exhibitions, education, and marketing, as well as providing guidance in the development of its standard operation procedures.

Design Society is located in Sea World Culture and Arts Center, within Sea World's coastal city complex in Shekou, Nanshan District, Shenzhen, near Nu Wa Coastal Park. It will feature four floors above the ground and two floors underground with spaces for galleries, a theatre, a multi-purpose hall, restaurants and cafes, and retail. Maki and Associates' design features three cantilevered volumes atop a deconstructed plinth, opening up horizons to the mountain, the sea and the city.

Follow the V&A team's blogs on the latest developments in Shekou at vam.ac.uk/shekou

Weibo - weibo.com/vamuseum

Youku - i.youku.com/vamuseum

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