



## News Release

### **You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966 - 1970**

In partnership with the Levi's® brand; Sound experience by Sennheiser

With additional thanks to the Grow Annenberg Foundation, Fenwick and Sassoon

10 September 2016 – 26 February 2017

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### **Exhibition Outline**

*You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966 – 1970* is designed in six distinct sections, each presenting a separate revolution within a highly atmospheric environment. An introduction highlights key events that had begun to challenge the prevailing conservative society of the early 1960s, set against the desire for a better world that has been present throughout history, illustrated with an original copy of Thomas More's *Utopia*, written 500 years ago in 1516.

The exhibition begins with a recreation of Carnaby Street, exploring revolution in youth identity in 1966. This was the year *Time* magazine dubbed London 'The Swinging City,' reflecting its sensational rise as a cultural centre for fashion, music, art and photography. The thriving fashion scene centred on new clothing boutiques on Carnaby Street and King's Road aimed at a younger generation, illustrated with a Biba minidress, Mary Quant skirt suit, flamboyant striped suit by Mr. Fish and a man's jacket from Granny Takes a Trip. The exhibition explores connections between boutiques and art galleries, with invitations to art 'happenings' alongside artworks by Bridget Riley and Yoko Ono. Costumes designed for Mick Jagger and Sandie Shaw highlight the importance of pop music during this time, with songs by The Kinks, Beach Boys and Martha Reeves & the Vandellas providing the soundtrack. The youthful London look was embodied by 'the Face of 66', the androgynous teenage model Twiggy; objects including a dress from her eponymous boutique and Cecil Beaton portrait indicate her fame and influence. Photography studios particularly flourished during the period, and works by David Bailey and Terry O'Neill depict figures from Michael Caine to The Rolling Stones, Robert Fraser and the Kray brothers. Film including *Blow Up* (1966) will be shown.

The second section of the exhibition focuses on clubs and counterculture and explores forms of experimentation, alternative lifestyles and the idea of revolution in the head through displays relating to drugs, psychedelia, the occult, underground literature and pirate radio. It will centre on an immersive evocation of London's UFO club, an experimental venue known

for combining live music with light shows and avant-garde film, where Pink Floyd were the house band and the UK's first macrobiotic food was on sale. Audio-visual material including Jerry Abrams' *Be-In* (1967) and examples of pioneering liquid light shows are presented against a backdrop of psychedelic music from Cream, Jefferson Airplane and Pink Floyd. Artworks by the most significant graphic designers of the period including Hapshash and the Coloured Coat, Bonnie MacLean, Rick Griffin and Stanley Mouse are also on display. Alternative lifestyles will be represented through countercultural publications like *The Long Hair Times* (precursor to *International Times*) and objects relating to the occult. The unprecedented influence of The Beatles is explored throughout, with an area dedicated to the ground-breaking band's momentous release of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in June 1967, including handwritten lyrics for *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, original illustrations by Alan Aldridge and George Harrison's sitar and 1967 diary.

The third section explores revolution on the street, showing how youth solidarity crossed causes and continents into politics, leading to physical protest during the late 1960s. It centres on the 1968 Paris student riots, a volatile period of civil unrest. Atelier Populaire posters pasted on walls during the protests are shown alongside newsreel footage and music relating to the dramatic demonstrations. The period was also marked by widespread opposition to the war in Vietnam; propaganda material collected by an American soldier in Vietnam and puppets used in theatrical anti-Vietnam demonstrations in San Francisco are on display. A wall of protest posters indicate the range of causes and calls for solidarity, featuring revolutionary figures from Che Guevara to Martin Luther King - all icons of the counterculture. Photographs, ephemera, literature, posters and footage relating to those calling for equality including gay rights' activists and women's liberation groups during this period are on display. These also show the Black Panthers' militarisation of the fight for social change, following on from the civil rights movement earlier in the decade.

Slogans, adverts and jingles introduce the fourth exhibition environment which explores revolution in consumerism, fed by a rapid increase in personal wealth and the arrival of the credit card. The 1967 Montreal and 1970 Osaka World Expos offered views of a consumer-led future and welcomed tens of millions of visitors to a vast showcase of mass design and technology products. Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome for the USA pavilion at Expo 67 presented a futuristic architectural vision. Film, sound and still footage from the expos are displayed alongside original marketing materials to indicate their widespread impact. Highlights of this section include a Pan Am air hostess uniform worn both on commercial flights and on Vietnam Service to transport soldiers into the warzone; futuristic furniture and fashion, from Oliver Goldsmith eyewear to a Pierre Cardin dress; and furniture by Eero Aarnio and Olivier Mourgue. This section also references the rise in television ownership which brought real-time news coverage of the Vietnam War and moon landings into people's homes and the space suit worn by William Anders, who took the defining 'Earthrise' photograph on the Apollo 8 mission, is on display alongside a moon rock on loan from NASA. A cinema area plays selections from a range of protest and avant-garde films including Yoko Ono's *Bed Peace* (1969) to Jonas Mekas' *Hare Krishna* (1966).

The fifth exhibition environment focuses on festivals and revolutions in gatherings, showing how record-breaking crowds gathered to listen to music, often driven by a utopian vision of living together in harmony and in nature. Instruments, costumes and ephemera are shown against a dramatic backdrop of large screens playing festival footage from Woodstock within a climactic double height gallery space. Woodstock in 1969 saw more than 400,000 people converge for four days of peace and music, and live tracks recorded at the event play throughout the space. Performers' costumes on display include a kaftan worn by American rock diva Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane, a native American style suit worn by The Who's lead singer Roger Daltrey and a jacket and guitar belonging to Jimi Hendrix. Also on show is hippie-style fashion, from a Thea Porter kaftan to Levi's® jeans styled with an Ossie Clarke shirt. The exhibition also looks behind-the-scenes at Woodstock, showing the organisation behind this largest ever gathering of young people, from artists' contracts to the canteen menu for staff. The exhibition also considers early UK festivals, including Glastonbury and the Isle of Wight Festival of Music in 1970, from which we are showing a letterpress printed programme.

The sixth and final exhibition environment looks at alternative communities living on the USA's West Coast during the period as the birthplace of a revolution in communications. Communities in California and elsewhere were grounded in psychedelic rock, sexual liberation, rejection of institutions and a 'back to the land' philosophy. They lived in parallel with a different sort of alternative community: the pioneers of modern computing. Both shared a belief that sharing human knowledge more equitably was the basis of a better world. This emphasis is epitomised by the *Whole Earth Catalog*, the American counterculture magazine published by Stewart Brand and later referred to by Steve Jobs as '*Google in paperback form*'. A soundtrack evoking the spirit of communal living includes *California Dreamin* by The Mamas & The Papas and The 5th Dimension's *Aquarius / Let the Sunshine In*. On display is a replica of the first ever computer mouse designed by Douglas Engelbart and a rare Apple 1 computer. The exhibition also looks at the emphasis on environmentalism beginning in the late 1960s, with a poster for the first Earth Day designed by Robert Rauschenberg presented alongside a psychedelic *Save Earth Now* poster.

*You Say You Want a Revolution?: Records and Rebels 1966 – 1970* closes by tracing the idealism of the late 1960s to its successors and consequences, from civil rights to multiculturalism, environmentalism, consumerism, computing, communality and neoliberalist politics. It asks visitors to reflect on how the ideals of the 1960s have shaped today - and encourages a rediscovery of an imaginative optimism to envisage a new and better tomorrow.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about the exhibition, please contact Lucy Hawes in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2500 or email [l.hawes@vam.ac.uk](mailto:l.hawes@vam.ac.uk) (not for publication)

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