

## News Release

# Inaugural exhibition, Values of Design, opens V&A Gallery at Design Society in Shekou, Shenzhen

2 December 2017 – The V&A Gallery at Design Society opens today with its inaugural site-specific exhibition, ‘Values of Design’. This exhibition presents a broad exploration of the relationship between notions of value and design, and marks the culmination of three years of extensive research conducted in London and in China, as well as community engagement in the region.

The V&A gallery is part of the unique international collaboration between the V&A and China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK) to support the establishment of Design Society, a new cultural hub dedicated to design.

Designed by Sam Jacob Studio and drawn from the V&A’s extensive collections, the exhibition features over 250 objects from 900 AD to the present, and originating from 31 different countries, to frame a global debate about how design is valued and how values shape design. The seven themes in the exhibition - performance, cost, problem solving, materials, identity, communication and wonder - provide a curatorial and critical framework for broad value statements that have been made in the past about design.

The diverse geographic and historical selection creates new associations, highlighting the common design values that shape different objects from around the world. For instance, a seventeenth-century Iranian astrolabe and a contemporary Swiss Army Knife will be paired to highlight the drive of combining multiple functions into a singular object. Nineteenth-century silk shoes, a paper dress from the 1960s, and a Stella McCartney H&M Jumpsuit from the last decade, will draw a longer historical trajectory about the value of low-cost design.

In a section exploring supply chains, a nineteenth-century comb made from plastic – first introduced as a substitute for tortoiseshell and ivory - and a modern mobile device called Fairphone, will look at our long struggle to ethically and sustainably consume resources. Furthermore, an eighteenth-century hall chair that was lacquered in China, shipped across the world as two flat planks, and assembled in the UK, and a stool by Open Desk which can be downloaded anywhere and locally produced, will look at our effort to design objects for their distribution.

The design of the exhibition has been led by London-based architects and designers Sam Jacob Studio and responds to these different ‘values’ by drawing on a rich variety of materials, processes and technologies. Each helps articulate and manifest the conceptual context for the objects, making the visitor experience more immediate and visceral. The gallery is organised as a series of open-sided rooms around a central space. A central pavilion sits within the space like a miniature building. Part cathedral, part mall, visitors explore this interior urbanism creating their own nonlinear path.

For the value of 'Performance' a wall is lined with 4m-high dichroic glass, whose surface quality changes as visitors pass by it. In the 'Cost' section, marble and plywood are juxtaposed, referencing both the entrance halls of the V&A's South Kensington museum and the packing crates used in the museums archives. The 'Communication' pavilion is lined with a custom printed giant halftone gradient pattern that recalls the technology of traditional mass media, while its exterior carries an electronic frieze where a moving LED text is embedded in the white wall of the architecture itself, borrowing from a familiar feature of the contemporary Shenzhen landscape as part of the cultural space of the gallery.

Crucial for the design, is the integration of media with the physical environment. A large format film by Alice Masters commissioned for the show introduces the idea of value and design. A second set of films show life-size Londoners and Shenzheners telling stories about how they value different personal objects, housed in a space is framed by a series of columns: a tree trunk, a sawn timber prop and an engineered laminated timber column that describe the different kinds of value the processing of raw materials creates.

Brendan Cormier, Lead Curator of the V&A Gallery, Shekou at Design Society, said: "It is very exciting to be part of this project to present Chinese audiences with an extensive selection of works from the V&A's permanent collection. The exhibition 'Values of Design' looks at objects that propose a different way of addressing a certain value and exploring what that says about design in our everyday life. Through this new show, and the upcoming thought-provoking exhibitions at the V&A Gallery, we hope to continue to collaborate with and inspire the local community."

Sam Jacob, Director of Sam Jacob Studio and lead designer of 'Values of Design', said "The new V&A gallery presents design as more than just a matter of 'good' and 'bad'. Instead the show creates an arena of different and sometimes conflicting possibilities. It argues that design performs many different roles depending on its purpose, its attitude and its context. The design of the gallery organises space, material and media to make this argument both intellectually rich and experientially visceral, advancing a sophisticated understanding of the way design shapes the contemporary world"

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Notes to Editors

For further press information about the V&A Gallery at Design Society please contact SUTTON PR, Fay Pang, [fay@suttonpr.com](mailto:fay@suttonpr.com), +852 2528 0792

For further information about the V&A please contact the V&A Press Office on [press@vam.ac.uk](mailto:press@vam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)20 7942 2502

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A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)

Values of Design  
V&A Gallery in Design Society  
2 December 2017 - 4 August 2019

#### Visitor Information:

Opening Hours: Monday to Sunday 10:00 - 21:00, last admission at 20:30

Ticketing: Tickets will be available at Design Society.

#### About the V&A

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance 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 5,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

#### About the V&A and Design Society

The V&A is the founding partner of the not-for-profit Design Society Foundation. This pioneering collaboration between CMSK and the V&A is the first of its kind between a Chinese partner and an international museum. The collaboration comprises the provision of professional advice and training; the concept, development and design of a V&A Gallery devoted to international design with the site-specific exhibition, *Values of Design*; and in addition the presentation of two major touring V&A exhibitions.

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

#### About Design Society

Design Society is a new cultural platform that generates a diverse public programme with the mission to activate design as a social catalyst. Design Society adheres to the pioneering spirit of Shekou and Shenzhen in creating a unique cultural experience and in programming a public space dedicated to design. It shows and tells the power of design through major exhibitions about the past, present and future of design, through curated galleries, shopping experiences and multi-faceted events. Entrepreneurial activities support and leverage the not-for-profit programme in order to build an innovative and sustainable new institution. Design Society is an open and collaborative platform, fostering synergies, connecting China and the world, and empowering the inter-connectivity between design and society, design and everyday life, and design and industry. Design Society will test new ideas, incubate new talents and explore new opportunities for creative industries. The encouragement of creative dialogues and collaborations aims to design a better society. Design Society and the Sea World Culture and Arts Center welcome collaborations openly.

[designsociety.cn](http://designsociety.cn)



#### About Sam Jacob Studio

Sam Jacob Studio for architecture and design was established in 2014 and has quickly gained a reputation as a progressive design practice creating idiosyncratic and striking projects underwritten with intelligent thinking.

SJS makes projects that spans scales from objects to architecture, urban and cultural projects. Our work is driven by research developing new relationships between contemporary approaches, history and culture.

Clients include cultural institutions such as the Design Museum, the Science Museum and the V&A, global brands including Mini, local authorities and commercial developers.

The studio's current projects include a mixed use building in London's Hoxton, public realm design and cultural strategy for a London market, an independent gallery space as well as a number of projects developing contemporary forms of workspace.

Our work is exhibited internationally including at the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the Graham Foundation, the London Design Festival and is published extensively including in AJ, Log, Domus, and San Rocco.

The studio is led by Sam Jacob who is Professor of Architecture at UIC and Visiting Professor at Yale School of Architecture. He was co-curator of the British Pavilion in Venice (2014), is columnist and critic for Dezeen and Art Review as well as Contributing Editor for Icon magazine. Previously, Sam was a founding director of FAT Architecture.

[www.samjacob.com](http://www.samjacob.com)

#### About CMSK

Design Society is founded by China Merchants Shekou (CMSK), a company engaged in comprehensive urban development under the century-old China Merchants Group. CMSK created this platform to connect creative partners from China and overseas, to advocate for innovation in making and creating, and to strengthen communication and ambition across multiple industries and disciplines.

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