



News Release

Thursday 7 June 2018

V&A announces first Mary Quant exhibition in 50 years with public call-out to uncover lost designs

vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/mary-quant | #WeWantQuant



Today, the V&A announces that it has been given unprecedented access to Dame Mary Quant's Archive to curate the first international retrospective on the revolutionary fashion designer in nearly 50 years. Opening in April 2019, the exhibition will focus on the years between 1955 and 1975, when Quant revolutionised the high street with her subversive and playful designs for a younger generation, from hot pants, miniskirts and trousers for women to accessories, tights and make-up.

The exhibition will bring together over 200 objects, the majority of which have never been on public display. It will reveal the real stories behind the myths to explore how Quant democratised fashion and empowered women through her determination, ingenuity and unique personal style, which she exported around the world. The exhibition will be drawn from the V&A's extensive fashion holdings, which includes the largest collection of Mary Quant garments in the world, as well as the designer's personal archive and important international loans.

Jenny Lister, curator of *Mary Quant* at the V&A, said: "*Mary Quant liberated fashion in the late 1950s and early 60s. Known for establishing high street fashion, inventing hot pants and popularising the miniskirt, she freed women from rules and regulations, and from dressing like their mothers. This long-overdue exhibition will show how Mary made high fashion affordable for working women, and how her youthful, revolutionary clothes, inspired by London, made British streetstyle the global influence it remains today.*"

Dame Mary Quant said: "*The V&A is such a precious and iconic organisation for which I have the utmost admiration and respect, and it is a huge honour to be recognised by them with this dedicated exhibition and book. It was a wonderfully exciting time and despite the frenetic, hard*

work we had enormous fun. We didn't necessarily realise that what we were creating was pioneering, we were simply too busy relishing all the opportunities and embracing the results before rushing on to the next challenge! Friends have been extremely generous in loaning, and in many cases, donating garments and accessories to the V&A which they have lovingly cherished for many years, so it will be fascinating to see what else will emerge! I am enormously grateful to have been involved with so many talented people whose contribution to that ground-breaking, revolutionary and memorable era will also be recognised."

The V&A exhibition will chart Mary Quant's rise to success, yet also share real stories from those who loved the Mary Quant brand and wore her distinctive designs in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. To help the V&A bring the exhibition further to life, the museum is launching a public call-out to track down rare Mary Quant garments and gather these personal stories. Garments that the V&A is looking for include:

- Rare and early one-off designs sold between 1955 and 1960 in Quant's renowned *Bazaar* boutiques. Located in Chelsea, Knightsbridge and Bond Street, the boutiques were famed for their eccentric window displays and irreverent, 'club-like' atmosphere.
- Early experimental garments in PVC, especially from Quant's 'Wet' collection, unveiled in 1963, when the material was still a work-in-progress.
- Seminal styles from 1964 and 1965 with Peter Pan collars.
- Mary Quant knitwear, swimwear and accessories.
- Garments made using Mary Quant Butterick patterns. The patterns launched in 1964, for the first time making it possible for thousands of home dressmakers on a budget to wear Quant's designs.

To unearth these elusive garments, capture these amazing stories, and for the chance to feature in the exhibition, the V&A is urging people to get in touch by email at maryquant@vam.ac.uk, and to share their pictures and memories on social media, using the hashtag #WeWantQuant.

Jenny Lister continues: *"We want to hear from women who wore Mary's radical designs and experienced the appeal of the Mary Quant brand at first-hand. To help us tell these incredible stories, we are asking people to check attics, cupboards, as well as family photo albums, for the chance to feature in our exhibition."*

The V&A exhibition will showcase Mary Quant garments and accessories alongside archive sketches, personal testimony, patterns, cosmetics, magazines, photographs, film and catwalk footage to reveal how Quant revolutionised fashion as we know it today.

Dame Mary Quant is one of London's most iconic fashion designers, and her forward-thinking, entrepreneurial spirit was recognised with an OBE in 1966. Quant's minimal and androgynous graphic look rejected the formal, 'debutante' styles of previous generations and created radically different visions of femininity. Beginning her career in demi-couture, Quant quickly moved into ready-to-wear, creating clothes that played with gender stereotypes, allowing women to move freely. Popularised by Jean Shrimpton, Pattie Boyd, Cilla Black and Twiggy, Quant's distinctive personal style found a ready market among young women in London. In 1962, Quant took on her first international collaboration with American department-store chain JC Penney, and in 1963 the company, Mary Quant Limited, expanded into the UK mass market with the diffusion line, Ginger Group. In 1966 Quant extended her business further to include cosmetics, and went on to add interiors, hosiery and jewellery, among other products, which she exported around the world.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Mary Quant* runs from 6 April 2019 – 8 March 2020. Tickets will go on sale in Autumn 2018.
- To share your Mary Quant stories and photos, please email maryquant@vam.ac.uk or post these on social media using the hashtag #WeWantQuant.
- *Mary Quant* is curated by the V&A's Jenny Lister and Stephanie Wood. It will be accompanied by a new V&A publication, priced £35.
- The exhibition is the latest in the V&A's series of revelatory fashion exhibitions and follows *Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion* (2017 – 2018), *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (2016 – 2017) and *Shoes: Pleasure and Pain* (2015 – 2016).
- The V&A's fashion collection is designated as the UK's National Collection and is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of dress in the world.

For further PRESS information about *Mary Quant* please contact Laura Mitchell on l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 4509 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk