

Exhibition Highlights

Tim Walker: Wonderful Things

Galleries 38a and 38

21 September 2019 – 8 March 2020

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Tim Walker: Wonderful Things invites visitors into the fantastical imagination of Tim Walker, one of the world's most inventive photographers. The largest exhibition of Walker's pictures to date, it celebrates his extraordinary contribution to image-making over the last 25 years and the inspirational role that the V&A's collection plays in his process.

At the heart of the exhibition are 10 major new photographic projects, directly inspired by treasures in the V&A's vast and eclectic collection, from illuminated Medieval manuscripts and stained glass, to the possessions of poet Edith Sitwell, a 65-metre-long photograph of the Bayeux Tapestry and an Alexander McQueen dress. Also on display are some of Walker's most ambitious fashion stories and portraits of luminaries Sir David Attenborough, Margaret Atwood, Peter Blake and David Hockney, as well as a constellation of performers from Riz Ahmed to Cate Blanchett, Björk, Timothée Chalamet, Beth Ditto, Daniel Day-Lewis, Claire Foy, Saoirse Ronan and Solange Knowles.

Encompassing Walker's photographs and the V&A objects that inspired them, short films, photographic sets and props, scrapbooks and sketches, the exhibition takes visitors on a unique journey through Walker's enchanted world.

Gallery 38A – retrospective

Tim Walker, *The Dress/Lamp Tree*, Eglington Hall, Northumberland, 2002 © Tim Walker Studio



“As a boy, I arranged scenes and took pictures in the garden. I’d imagine something then try to build and photograph it... That’s never changed.” – Tim Walker

Tim Walker, Karen Elson and Atlas the Lion. Fashion: Dolce & Gabbana Alta Moda. Headpiece by Julien d'Ys. Shotover House, Oxfordshire, 2013 © Tim Walker Studio



“As a young photographer, my first simple imaginings gradually became enormously complicated fantasies. I’d stop at nothing to drive them into the 35mm film canister – the more impossible the better.” – Tim Walker

Tim Walker, Joanna Lumley ‘lights up’. Fashion: Moschino, La Crasia. London, 2016 © Tim Walker Studio



“When I take someone’s portrait, I do a lot of research about them. I ask myself, ‘Who is this person, what do they represent and believe in?’ Portraiture is about exploring someone’s identity and that’s a very tender, vulnerable thing. The portrait is a handshake, the embrace, the agreement where we meet halfway along a collaborative path.” – Tim Walker

Tim Walker, Mari Hirao & Yui Yamamoto operate Gen H-4 flying machines, Nagano, Japan, 2016 © Tim Walker Studio

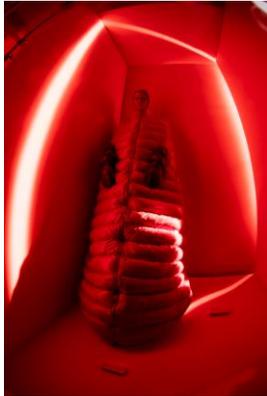


“When you have a camera, there is always a reason to go somewhere, to have an adventure. Sometimes when you’re taking a picture, an extraordinary combination of luck and chaos takes over and you have to dance with the surprising moment. It propels you to take pictures that you couldn’t have imagined in your wildest dreams. That is the magic of photography.” – Tim Walker

Gallery 38 – new work inspired by the V&A’s collection

Illuminations

Tim Walker, *Illuminations*, ‘Sara Grace Wallerstedt’. Fashion: Moncler 1 Pierpaolo Piccioli. London, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



“The stained glass at the V&A is a kaleidoscope of glorious transparent colours, where each panel tells a different story. Illuminated red makes me think of my mother. When I was little, she made five big red silk lampshades for our sitting room. A warm glow came out of the house on winter evenings. For me, that colour represents coming home. Translucent colour provokes an immediate emotional response in me and is central to this photoshoot.” – Tim Walker

***Tobias and Sara*, about 1520, Cologne, Germany, glass with paint and silver stain, probably from the cloister of the abbey of St Apern © Victoria and Albert Museum, London**



“This stained-glass panel in the V&A’s collection dates to 1520 and illustrates the story of Tobias and Sara from the Old Testament. The couple are sleeping peacefully under a blue bedspread, with a little dog curled up at their feet. Behind them hangs a deep red curtain. I was surprised by the domesticity and intimacy of this scene and felt inspired to incorporate the bed and the bold primary colours into my photographs.” – Tim Walker

Cloud 9

Tim Walker, *Cloud 9*, 'Radhika Nair'. Fashion: Halpern and Dolce & Gabbana. Pershore, Worcestershire, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



"Exploring the V&A's historical paintings from South Asia reminded me of how I feel when I'm in that part of the world. These photographs are a celebration of the country's vibrancy and mysticism and its rich history of storytelling. Luckily, England was experiencing a heatwave when we made the pictures, and the Worcestershire delphinium fields were illuminated in an intense Indian light." – Tim Walker

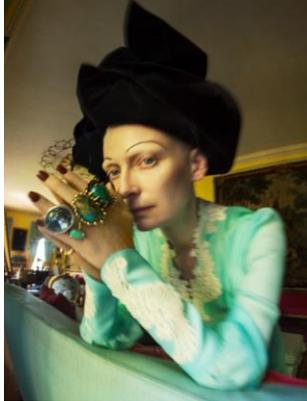
Krishna and Indra, about 1590, Mughal Empire, probably Lahore, watercolour painting and gold on paper © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



"When I first saw these perfectly preserved paintings, the ambiguous animals, rainbow-coloured rocks and powdery blue sky entranced me. The image is part of a bigger group illustrating the 'Harivamsa', a text that follows the great Sanskrit epic Mahabharata and recounts the life of the Hindu god Krishna. The tales explore loyalty, morality and virtue." – Tim Walker

Why not be oneself?

Tim Walker, *Why not be oneself?*, 'Tilda Swinton'. Fashion: Gucci, Marc Jacobs. Jewellery: Lisa Eisner Jewelry, Vela, Uno de 50, A. Brandt + Son. Renishaw Hall, Derbyshire, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



"The poet Dame Edith Sitwell had a striking personal style and was incredibly photogenic, especially in her later years as she grew into her extraordinary looks. Her flamboyant wardrobe included flowing brocade robes, velvet gowns, turbans, golden shoes and huge colourful rings. For this series of portraits, actor Tilda Swinton, who is a distant relative of Edith's, inhabited the role of the poet at Renishaw Hall, the gothic house built by the Sitwell family in the 17th century. These pictures are a celebration of age and individuality – it's a misconception that beauty is confined to the young. As Edith once said, 'Why not be oneself?'" – Tim Walker

Edith Dawson (1862-1928), *Conservatory at Renishaw*, about 1885, watercolour and pencil on paper © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



"Inspired by this wonderful watercolour of the Sitwell's greenhouse, we chose Renishaw Hall's enchanting gardens with giant white Californian poppies and purple delphiniums as a backdrop for this shoot. As we walked around Renishaw, we could really feel the poet's presence. Portraits of her ancestors line the staircase and Tilda and I were instantly enamoured with the beauty of the home." – Tim Walker

Pen & Ink

Tim Walker, *Pen & Ink*, 'Duckie Thot, Aubrey's shadow'. Fashion: Saint Laurent. London, 2017
© Tim Walker Studio



"I've always been seduced by the inky blackness, confidence and eroticism of Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations. The V&A houses dozens of his prints. I wonder whether they're more shocking today than they were when they were first seen over a hundred years ago. Are we more prudish than the Victorians were? I've known his work for years, but when I saw the prints close up, I could visualise them as photographs immediately. The challenge was to represent his mark-making in three-dimensional space. It felt like we were drawing in the air with suspended wires and beads." – Tim Walker

Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), *The Peacock Skirt*, 1894, line block print on Japanese vellum paper © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



"This is one of Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's translation of the French play 'Salome'. For me, Beardsley's images enhance the themes of gender ambiguity, eroticism and temptation within the play. They make me think of Wilde's famous words: 'The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.'" – Tim Walker

Handle with Care

Tim Walker, *Handle with Care*, 'Karen Elson, Sgàire Wood & James Crewe'. Fashion: The Row, Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello, Daniela Geraci, Sarah Bruylant and Molly Goddard. London, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



“These pictures are a love letter to the conservators, curators and archivists at the museum. The work they do is vital. Seeing the dress by Alexander McQueen exquisitely wrapped up at the V&A Clothworkers’ Centre, it became a beautiful ghost. I imagined the characters in these photographs as mannequins coming to life in the museum. When I work with great models like Karen Elson, I often feel as if they control my

camera – we perform a telepathic gestural dance.” – Tim Walker

Alexander McQueen (1969-2010), *Dress from ‘The Horn of Plenty’ Autumn Winter collection, 2009 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London*



“When I saw the Alexander McQueen dress wrapped up at the V&A’s Clothworkers’ Centre, it became a new, ghostly object of beauty in its own right.” – Tim Walker

Box of Delights

Tim Walker, *Box of Delights*, 'James Spencer', London, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



“We all have a need to store our secrets in a private world that we love. A diary, a scrapbook, or even a phone. The V&A’s embroidered casket which dates to 1675 feels like an expression of that need. An object of fantasy and transformation, it suggests a world in which you can safely be whoever you want to be, like the London club scene where freedom of expression reigns supreme. James Spencer, the central figure in this photoshoot, burst out of his family home and into that world dressed as a beautiful woman.” – Tim Walker

Embroidered Casket, about 1675, England, wood covered with satin, silk and metal thread, mica and glass beads © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



“About four hundred years ago, teenage girls created embroidered boxes to show off their needlecraft skills. What I found particularly delightful about this box is the intricate miniature garden which lies inside, with fruit trees, flowers and ivory figures. Doors open on the lower section to reveal little drawers which might once have stored the owner’s most treasured, secret items.” – Tim Walker

Lil' Dragon

Tim Walker, *Lil' Dragon*, 'Ling Ling and the Dragon'. Fashion: Marta Hermsillo Lopez and Eelko. London, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



“The V&A has a dazzling collection of intricately decorated snuffboxes. As soon as I saw this one with a dragon on it, I visualised an empress walking her pet dragon at night and picking a flower that only blooms at full moon. The rainbows within the shells on the snuffbox inspired set designer Shona Heath to suggest UV lighting for the photographs, which put an exciting twist on her set design and took me to a world I hadn’t been to before.” – Tim Walker

Snuff box, lacquer panels about 1745, gold mounts about 1800, gold, lacquer, inlaid hardstones and burgau shell, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



“I was drawn to the lacquer panels on this snuffbox with their lustrous shell inlay and carved stones. Japan and China produced lacquerwares to feed the Western taste for ‘chinoiserie’, a European take on Chinese and East Asian art. Snuffboxes like this were used to demonstrate wealth. It is one of many beautiful things Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert collected over several decades and lent to the V&A.”

Soldiers of Tomorrow

Tim Walker, *Soldiers of Tomorrow*, 'Josephine Jones'. Styling: Jack Appleyard. Knitting: Josephine Cowell. London, 2018 © Tim Walker Studio



"Among the 800,000 photographs in the V&A's collection is one that measures 65 metres long. It's the biggest photograph I've ever seen, and it depicts the Bayeux Tapestry, an object that's always fascinated me. It inspired me to produce photographs that evoke both the chaos and the beauty of the tapestry. As the fashion industry can be very wasteful and polluting, I liked the idea of everything being recycled, homemade and hand-knitted for this shoot. We re-used things in different ways – old ironing boards became shields, vacuum cleaners became madcap medieval instruments... The figures are eco-warriors, the soldiers of tomorrow." – Tim Walker

Photograph of the Bayeux Tapestry, 1873, Cundall & Co., hand-painted Woodburytype © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



"The Bayeux Tapestry tells the story of the events that led up to the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The colours of the original tapestry were accurately copied by students of the Royal College of Art, who hand-painted this photograph. This section shows a climactic battle scene where guards are pierced by arrows and soldiers are crushed by tumbling horses. In our photographs, we

wanted to convey not only the violence, but also the fine detail, texture and colour of the centuries-old tapestry." – Tim Walker

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Tim Walker: Wonderful Things*, curated by the V&A's Susanna Brown and designed by Shona Heath, runs from 21 September 2019 to 8 March 2020.
- It is accompanied by a new eponymous V&A publication edited by Tim Walker and Susanna Brown and designed by Melanie Mues. Featuring contributions from 20 of Walker's creative collaborators, the book gives unique insight into Walker's creative process, inspiration and the creative partnerships that help bring his photographs to life.
- *Tim Walker: Wonderful Things* is the latest in the V&A's series of major photography exhibitions, including *Paul Strand: Photography and Film for the 20th Century* (2016), *Julia Margaret Cameron* (2015), and *Horst: Photographer of Style* (2014).
- The V&A holds the National Collection of the Art of Photography, one of the largest and most important photographic collections in the world. It encompasses approximately 800,000 works by leading historic and contemporary photographers. The museum has collected photographs since its foundation in 1852 and continues to collect today, with many acquisitions funded through the generous support of the V&A Photographs Acquisition Group.

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For further PRESS information about *Tim Walker: Wonderful Things* 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