



News Release

Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser

27 June 2020 – 10 January 2021

The Sainsbury Gallery

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The V&A's landmark exhibition in 2020, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will celebrate one of the most iconic, imaginative and inspiring stories of all time. Offering an immersive and mind-bending journey down the rabbit hole, this fantastical exhibition will explore Alice in Wonderland's origins, adaptations and reinventions over 158 years, charting its evolution from manuscript to a global phenomenon beloved by all ages.

Through over 300 objects spanning film, performance, fashion, art, music and photography, the V&A will be the first museum to fully explore the cultural impact of Alice and her ongoing inspiration for leading creatives, from Salvador Dalí and The Beatles to Little Simz and Thom Browne. Highlights include Lewis Carroll's original handwritten manuscript, illustrations by John Tenniel, Ralph Steadman and Disney, stage costumes, fashion from Iris van Herpen and photography from Tim Walker and Annie Leibovitz.

Featuring theatrical sets, large-scale digital projections and immersive environments, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will take children and adults on a journey through the enchanting and extraordinary world of Wonderland, through Alice's eyes. Designed by award-winning designer Tom Piper – best known for his stage designs for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the V&A as well as his Tower of London poppies installation – the exhibition will reward 'curiouser and curiouser' visitors with secret doors and interactive displays.

Beginning with a descent into the V&A's subterranean Sainsbury Gallery via a theatrical interpretation of the story's famous rabbit hole, the exhibition will immediately transport visitors into an otherworldly experience. The exhibition's first section, **Creating Alice**, will trace Alice in Wonderland's origins in Victorian Oxford. Uncovering the people, the politics and the places that inspired Lewis Carroll, the exhibition will introduce visitors to the 'real' Alice and her family. Shining a spotlight on creative partnership between Carroll and John Tenniel, the exhibition will bring their original drawings together as well as their inspirations, including 'The Ugly Duchess' portrait by Quinten Massys (1513), which informed the illustrations of the Duchess in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Filming Alice will chart the creative development of Alice on screen throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, starting with the earliest film based on the books in 1903. Displaying film clips, designs, animation cels, scripts and costumes, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will provide a comprehensive look at the life of Alice on film from surrealist visions to family favourites. Set against a giant caterpillar, the concept art from Walt Disney's seminal *Alice in Wonderland* film in 1951 – arguably the most recognisable Alice ever created – will take centre stage alongside a look at Tim Burton's 2010 blockbuster adaptation.

Drawing on 1960s surrealism and psychedelia, **Reimagining Alice** will celebrate reinventions of Wonderland through works by Salvador Dalí, Yayoi Kusama, Max Ernst and Peter Blake as well as the music of The Beatles. A mind-bending visual experience will take place at a Mad Hatter's

tea party, brought to life through psychedelic and playful digital projections. It will be followed by an invitation to a game of Flamingo croquet.

Staging Alice will explore how the books have naturally found a home within dance, music and performance. Bringing past performances to life; concept designs, set models, props and costumes will be on display allowing visitors to see, closer than ever before, the most iconic depictions of this story on stage. Costumes from international productions in Switzerland and Russia will feature alongside the National Theatre's *wonder.land*, which explored the boundaries of online and offline, as well as Bob Crowley's towering costume for the Queen of Hearts from the Royal Ballet's 2011 production.

From Tim Walker to Annie Leibovitz, Gwen Stefani to P Diddy, the final section **Being Alice** will explore the modern-day fascination and reinvention of Alice in Wonderland across art, science and popular culture. Featuring fashion collections from Iris van Herpen and Viktor & Rolf, photographs of political protests, album-artwork for Little Simz, and Japanese sub-culture fashion, this section will demonstrate the varied interpretations and personal importance that the themes within this century-old story still hold today. Tim Walker's celebrated 2018 Pirelli Calendar recreating Wonderland with an all-black cast including RuPaul, Naomi Campbell and Adwoa Aboah will also prominently feature.

The exhibition will close with a newly commissioned 'through the looking glass-inspired' digital art installation. Descending down into the rabbit hole on arrival and leaving through the looking glass, the exhibition hopes to inspire visitors to conjure ideas of their own Wonderland.

Kate Bailey, Senior Curator of Theatre and Performance at the V&A, said: *"With our world-class collections of art, design and performance and founding mission to inspire the next generation, the V&A is the perfect place for an exhibition on the cultural impact of Alice in Wonderland across artistic disciplines. Alice encourages us all to question, to learn, to explore, and to dream – discovering why she's an endless source of inspiration for some of the world's most creative minds has been an extraordinary adventure. We look forward to welcoming visitors of all ages into Alice's magical and mind-bending Wonderland, to imagine their own world on the other side of the Looking Glass."*

Since the publication of the original manuscript of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, the books have never been out of print and remain one of the most influential texts in the world. One of the most ambitious exhibitions ever staged by the V&A, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will provide a fun-filled and illuminating visit to Wonderland for visitors of all ages.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

For further PRESS information about *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* please contact Catherine Poust on c.poust@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)207 9742 2683 (not for publication). A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

- *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will run from 27 June 2020 – 10 January 2021. Tickets £20. Children under 12 will go free. A range of other concessions will apply.
- The exhibition has been curated for the V&A by Kate Bailey. It will be accompanied by a major new V&A publication, featuring specially commissioned interactive illustrations

by Kristjana S. Williams and contributors including Stephen Fry, Tim Walker, Little Simz and Chris Riddell.

- The exhibition is the second V&A exhibition for adults and children, following on from *Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic* (2017-2018), also designed by Tom Piper and RFK architects.