



## Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser

22 May 2021 - 31 December 2021

The Sainsbury Gallery

£20, concessions apply

[vam.ac.uk/alice](http://vam.ac.uk/alice) #InspiredbyAlice

The V&A's landmark exhibition in 2021, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will celebrate one of the most iconic, imaginative and inspiring stories of all time. Offering an immersive and fantastical journey down the rabbit hole, the V&A invites visitors to delve into the origins, adaptations and reinventions of Alice in Wonderland over 158 years, charting the book's evolution from manuscript to a global phenomenon beloved by all ages.

Through over 300 objects, across five Alice-inspired worlds arranged thematically – spanning film, performance, fashion, art, music and photography – the V&A will be the first museum to fully explore the cultural impact of Alice in Wonderland and its ongoing inspiration for leading creatives, from Salvador Dalí and Yayoi Kusama, to The Beatles, Vivienne Westwood and Little Simz.

Highlights include Lewis Carroll's handwritten manuscript, illustrations by John Tenniel, Ralph Steadman and Mary Blair for Walt Disney's iconic 1951 film adaptation, to Royal Opera House stage costumes, fashion from Iris van Herpen and photography from Tim Walker.

Featuring theatrical sets, immersive environments, and a special experience in Virtual Reality within the exhibition, *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 spaces and playful displays and an invitation to join a mind-bending game of croquet in VR.

Beginning with a magical descent into the V&A's subterranean Sainsbury Gallery, 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 will take centre stage alongside Tim Burton's 2010 blockbuster adaptation.

Revealing Christian Dior's 1947 collection best known for its distinctive silhouettes as the inspiration for Mary Blair's recreation of Alice, to Tim Burton and Colleen Atwood's recreation of 1860s inspired-costumes in honour of the decade in which the story was first published, visitors will uncover lesser-known details behind iconic reinterpretations of this beloved tale. Alongside, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will explore the creative partnership between Tim Burton and his long-time collaborator and Oscar-winning costume designer, Colleen Atwood – examining their distinctive visual style and characters that honoured Tenniel's illustrations whilst taking inspiration from a variety of eclectic sources.

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 1966 BBC film directed by the late Sir Jonathan Miller. A weird and wonderful visual experience will take place at a life-sized Mad Hatter's tea party, brought to life through psychedelic and playful digital projections.

**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 and designs from international productions in Switzerland, Copenhagen and Russia will feature alongside the National Theatre's *wonder.land*, which explored the boundaries of virtual and physical, as well as Bob Crowley's towering costume for the Queen of Hearts from the Royal Ballet's 2011 production.

Visitors will be invited to descend a further rabbit hole in Virtual Reality, entering a hall of doors, before emerging into the Queen of Hearts' croquet ground to pit their wits in 'A Curious Game of Croquet'. Marking the first V&A exhibition ever to offer a Virtual Reality experience, it is the result of an innovative partnership between the V&A and HTC VIVE Arts, produced by immersive games studio Preloaded. The visuals are based on new artworks created by Icelandic artist Kristjana S. Williams, commissioned for the V&A's exhibition publication.

From Tim Walker to Thom Browne, to Japanese subculture and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), 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 Alice inspired street-style garments, 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, P Diddy and Adwoa Aboah, styled by Edward Enninful will prominently feature.

The exhibition will close with a 'through the looking glass-inspired' digital art installation. After a journey down the rabbit hole and through *Wonderland*, visitors are invited to leave through the looking glass. With 2021 marking the book's 150th anniversary, the V&A 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, even taking the museum into a new dimension of Virtual Reality for the first time. 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](mailto: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](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)**

- Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser opens 22 May 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 is 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, available to buy for £30 [here](#).
- Curious Alice – an extended version of the V&A’s new VR experience for the exhibition is available to download. It features enriched animation, additional scenes and narrative elements, including the presence of the iconic ‘white rabbit’ as your own personal companion. Based on Icelandic artist Kristjana S. Williams’ specially commissioned illustrations for the exhibition’s publication, this new VR experience will be available in English and traditional Chinese. Curious Alice is available for users to download through VIVEPORT, as well as through other major online VR platforms.

Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition supporters. The exhibition is supported by HTC Vive Arts with further support from Unwin Charitable Trust.

#### **About HTC VIVE Arts**

VIVE Arts harnesses cutting-edge technology to transform the way culture is experienced, delivering one-of-a-kind projects that can be accessed anywhere in the world. It fosters digital innovation, working with leading artists, museums and cultural organisations to create immersive artworks and exhibits using the latest technology. Since its launch in 2017, VIVE

Arts has established nearly 50 partnerships with leading cultural institutions and organisations including Tate Modern in London, The Louvre, Musée d'Orsay and Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the ArtScience Museum in Singapore as well as the Venice Biennale Arte. For further information, please visit: [arts.vive.com](http://arts.vive.com)



### **About Unwin Charitable Trust**

Since its formation in 1975 the Trust has sponsored many projects and initiatives in the fields of publishing, bookselling and printing. The Trust continues to support causes that benefit and promote publishing and the distribution of the printed word, and schemes that encourage literacy and the enjoyment of reading.