

Contents

Gallery Description

Level 1 Gallery Map

Accessible Formats

Revealing a World in Flux 

Empowering Through Design 

Rethinking Systems 

Reimagining Traditions 

Voicing Dissent 

Gallery Description

This gallery is located on Level 1 of V&A East Museum. It is approximately 16 metres wide and 21 metres long.

There is one set of double doors to enter and exit the gallery. The gallery is one open space with a doorway at the rear, leading to a film room. There are accessible toilets and a quiet room on this level, near the terrace.

There are around 250 objects displayed in the gallery in glass cases, on plinths and fixed to the walls. In the centre of the gallery is a large case that is 7 metres long.

Continued on the next page →

The displays are arranged in five sections.
Each has a title sign hanging from the ceiling.

Revealing a World in Flux 

Empowering through Design 

Rethinking Systems 

Reimagining Traditions 

Voicing Dissent 

Each section has a large panel with text on a coloured background that matches the symbols listed above. Objects have metal labels with black text.

There is no set route through the gallery, and we encourage you to explore freely.

Access Guide

All labels in this gallery are included in this large print guide. Labels can also be accessed digitally via the QR codes on the section panels.

There is an ambient soundscape projected throughout the gallery.

Film and audio-only points either play on a loop or require visitors to navigate an interactive menu. Audio is delivered through handsets or projected. Audio points have an induction loop available.

All films originally recorded in English have closed captions and British Sign Language. Film labels provide QR codes that link to audio descriptions. Audio-only labels have QR codes that link to transcripts.

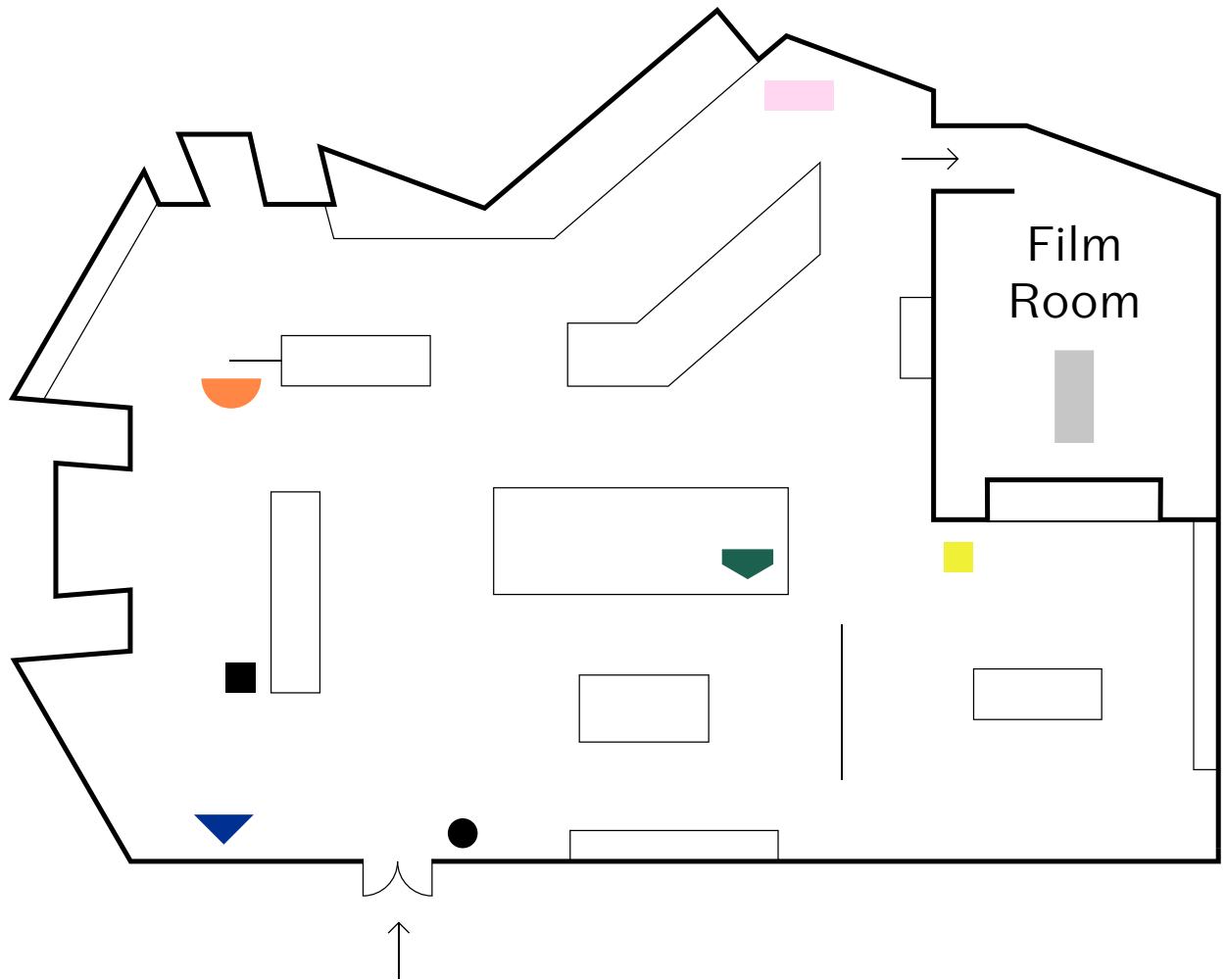
There are three tactile objects with braille and audio description across the gallery. There is a tactile map of the gallery located on the table opposite the doors.

The gallery is wheelchair accessible. Seating is located around the activity stations and inside the film room at the rear of the gallery.

Scan the QR code for more access information, audio descriptions and transcripts.



Gallery Map



Revealing a World in Flux 

Empowering through Design 

Rethinking Systems 

Reimagining Traditions 

Voicing Dissent 

Seating 

Large Print Guides 

Tactile Map 

Introduction

These galleries draw together objects from the V&A's collection of art, design and performance to explore the power of creativity to transform the world we live in.

Across two floors, the galleries tell stories of practitioners and their work, from a range of countries, cultures and times, and reveal agendas that can drive creative practice.

Don't feel you have to see everything today.

Why We Make is free to visit any time.



The soundscape in this gallery invites you to explore the sound worlds of the objects on display. From the rustling of trees and the humming of workshop tools, to the buzz of voices in street protests, listen to the environments that inspired makers and hear objects being made. Composed from over 60 'audio portraits' from around the world, this sonic landscape is generative and ever changing.

Scan the QR code to discover more

London, 2025

Created by Coda to Coda for V&A East



Revealing a World in Flux

Artists and designers can be observers that illuminate the complex world we live in. From documenting political events to revealing hidden systems, their works inspire reflection on broader forces of social and environmental change. These projects often experiment with the tools of making, reimagining what painting, photography and mapping can be.



The creativity of mapping

For centuries, creating maps and diagrams has offered new ways to make sense of our world. Whether recording significant sites and geographies or visualising data patterns, mapping can create shared understanding, document historic moments and reveal hidden truths. From vast paintings to digital animations, creative practitioners today continue to develop new forms of maps.



Anatomy of an AI System, 2018

Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler

Australian Kate Crawford and Serbian Vladan Joler are researchers exploring the hidden networks behind artificial intelligence (AI). ‘The scale of this system is almost beyond human imagining. How can we begin to see it?’ This diagram dissects the Amazon Echo device that enables its AI voice assistant Alexa. Readable from multiple directions, the diagram reveals the device’s extraordinary dependency on vast networks of human labour, data and the Earth’s resources, from production to disposal.

USA

Display print from digital poster (vector file)

Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler

Museum no. CD.26-2019



Flight Patterns, 2009

Aaron Koblin

American artist Aaron Koblin translates publicly available data into dynamic visualisations that reveal the scale and impact of human activity. 'Our lives are being driven by data and the presentation of that data is an opportunity to make some amazing interfaces that tell great stories', he says. Here, Koblin shows the flight paths of 205,000 aeroplanes across North America over 24 hours. Each colour corresponds to the type of plane, and who and what it is carrying, building a complex web.

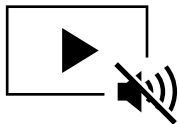
USA

Time-lapse digital animation

Given by the artist

Running time: 1 minute

Museum no. E.1185-2012



Painting of Mount Shatrunjaya, about 1870–1900

Unrecorded maker

Pilgrimage paintings, known as *tirtha pata* have a long tradition in the Jain religion. Created to hang in temples during pilgrimage season, these paintings enable a virtual journey through the power of the imagination. This one depicts Mount Shatrunjaya in Western India, which is among Jainism's most sacred pilgrimage sites. The detailing in the map helps reenact the experience of journeying to the hilltop site for those unable to travel.

India

Painting on cotton, attached to a linen backing

Purchased with the assistance of the V&A

Jain Art Fund

Museum no. IS.32-2012





Listen to Samani Pratibha Pragya, a Jain nun and scholar, discuss how this painting is used to guide Jain pilgrimages and discover key moments along the journey.

Scan the QR code for transcript and Gujarati and Hindi versions

USA, 2025

Running time: 3 minutes



Documenting through decorative traditions

Across centuries, makers have reimagined decorative objects as tools to document significant historical events. From capturing records of war and conflict to illustrating colonial encounters, evidence and ornament can come together in striking documentary artefacts. Made in varied contexts, these objects reveal the surprising ways that political messages can circulate.



Screen depicting arrival of Portuguese ship in Japan, 1600–30

Unrecorded artist, likely from the Kanō school of painting

The arrival of European traders in Japan in the mid-1500s sparked great fascination, providing artists with a popular new subject. This *byōbu* (folding screen) depicts a Portuguese ship arriving in the port of Nagasaki. It was probably painted for a wealthy Japanese merchant excited by the unexpected cultural and economic encounter. While decoratively documenting real events, the theme also related to the traditional lucky motif of a treasure ship.

Kyoto, Japan

Ink, colours and gold leaf on paper,
with silk mount, wooden frame

Museum no. 803-1892



Second Revolution Khayamiya, 2011–12

Imran Qureshi

Egyptian textile artist Hany ‘Abd al-Kader made this work in secret after witnessing the events of the 25 January Revolution in Cairo’s Tahrir Square. ‘I felt the need to describe what I saw.’ He reimagined the centuries-old Egyptian tradition of decorative tent textiles, known as *khayamiya*, as a way to document political events. He used the hand-stitching technique to record protesters clashing with police during the 2011 uprising.

Cairo

Hand-stitched cotton appliqué textile

Presented by Art Fund

Museum no. ME.4-2016

Art Fund_



Landscape, 2011

Imran Qureshi

‘My work is always about what is happening around me’ says artist Imran Qureshi. He reimagines traditions of miniature painting from his native Pakistan, dating from the 1500s and 1600s, to comment on present-day politics of war. ‘Miniatures aren’t outmoded for me – it’s like I’m talking in my mother tongue.’ This painting features missiles hidden behind greenery, a recurring symbol in Qureshi’s work representing the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan.

Lahore, Pakistan

Opaque watercolour, lettraset transfer
and collage on Wasli (handmade paper)

Museum no. IS.7-2003



Inventing tools for documenting the world

A research project can often turn into a design challenge. For practitioners investigating complex events and landscapes, this can mean designing their own tools to capture and document findings. These projects reveal how design thinking pushes the boundaries of what research can be and expands the role of designers.



*Contextual map showing Transects:
Allahabad to Varanasi from the Ganges
Water Machine project, 2014–15*

Anthony Acciavatti

The *Ganges Water Machine* redefined how waterways can be mapped. Based at Allahabad University, American architect and geographer Anthony Acciavatti produced a 'dynamic atlas' of India's Ganges River Basin, which is home to 600 million people. Unlike traditional maps with fixed details, Acciavatti's atlas illustrates the river's seasonal changes. His project developed new ways of recording how human and natural forces shape this unpredictable terrain, where equitable access to water is increasingly at stake.

India/USA

Display print from digital drawing

Museum no. CD.24-2023



A decade of fieldwork: Collecting environmental data

Anthony Acciavatti

Acciavatti travelled a 1000 km stretch of the Ganges River and its floodplains to collect soil samples for his research. Along the way, he designed new tools by adapting existing objects like wrist guards and toy cars into wearable and motor sample collection devices. ‘Born from necessity, and often made with things I had on hand like packaging tape and hairpins, I couldn’t have made the drawings or written *Ganges Water Machine* without them.’

On wall above

Concept drawing of *Surface
Accumulation Sleeve*, 2005–06

India/USA

Display print from digital drawing

Museum no. CD.23-2023

Continued on the next page →



- 1 *Surface Accumulation Sleeve*, a tool with satellite tracking for collecting soil samples on land, 2005–06
India
Mixed-media devices with polyester sleeve, electronic elements (Nokia mobile phone, Garmin eTrex GPS navigator), re-configured plastic tape dispenser, tape
Museum no. CD.17-2023
- 2 Hoe, a device used for sample collection, 2005–06
India
Metal, plastic
Museum no. CD.39-2023
- 3 Concept drawings for *Ganga Dip Sock* in sketchbook, 2005–06
India
Ink drawings on paper, bound leather sketchbook
Museum no. CD.20-2023
- 4 *Ganga Dip Sock* in plastic sample bag, a tool for collecting soil samples in water, 2005–06
India
Cotton, silt (in zip lock plastic bag used for storage)
Museum no. CD.19-2023
- 5 Anthony Acciavatti using the *Ganga Dip Sock*
Photograph courtesy of Anthony Acciavatti



- 6 *Surface Accumulation Rover*, a tool for collecting soil samples on land, 2005–06
India
Mixed-media device with base from remote-control toy car, digital camera, tripod, antennae, re-configured plastic tape dispenser, torch
Museum no. CD.18-2023
- 7 Tracks in soil left by *Surface Accumulation Rover*
Photograph courtesy of Anthony Acciavatti
On wall above
Transects: Allahabad to Varanasi
(set of six drawings), 2014–15
India/USA
Display print from digital drawing
Museum nos. CD.25-2023

On wall above

Transects: Allahabad to Varanasi
(set of six drawings), 2014–15
India/USA
Display print from digital drawing
Museum nos. CD.25-2023



Studying sacred geographies: The case study of Varanasi

Acciavatti's project studied the many ways local communities interact with the Ganges, from farming to religious rituals. His atlas includes in-depth case studies, like the section of the Ganges that runs from Allahabad to Varanasi, a Hindu pilgrimage site. Acciavatti explored the river's sacred meaning for Hindus, speaking with locals, consulting pilgrim maps and examining temple architecture. The water systems used for religious ceremonies are among the hundreds of details annotated in Acciavatti's maps.

Detail from drawing *Varanasi Morphological Evolution in Layers*, 2014–15

Anthony Acciavatti

India/USA

Display print from digital drawing

Museum no. CD.26-2023

Study drawing of temple architecture from sketchbook, 2005–06

Anthony Acciavatti

India

Ink drawings on paper, bound leather sketchbook

Museum no. CD.21-2023

Continued on the next page →



Figure of Shiva, with the Ganges flowing
from his head, 1800–1900

Unrecorded maker

Jaipur, India

Painted marble

Museum no. 892(IS)

Figure of Shiva Nataraja with the goddess
Ganga in his flowing hair, 1825–1900

Unrecorded maker

Southern India

Bronze

Museum no. IS.10-2025

Models of *kund* (pond) at Varanasi (1:25 scale)
and model of mechanised tubewell (1:25 scale)

Display prints from digital file for 3D printing

Acrylic resin

Museum nos. CD.28, 27-2023



Panorama of the Ganga River Basin, 2007-17

Alongside designing tools for fieldwork, Acciavatti used photography to document his findings. Over nine years, he took more than 25,000 photographs of the Ganges. These collectively document a continuous, eye-level panoramic view of the cities, farms, factories and infrastructure lining the Ganges riverbed, from the Gangotri Glacier to Patna in the Gangetic Plains. This photographic collage stitches together hundreds of images to create one panorama, what Acciavatti calls 'jumppcuts' from the full journey.

India/USA

Display print from digital photographic collage
Museum no. CD.22-2023



Columbarium Habitabile, 1989–90

Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin
Russian architects Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin create fantastical designs that critique the destruction of historic architecture in Soviet Russia. Drawings are their main tool for communicating ideas. This design echoes a typical columbarium, a room for storing funeral urns. Instead, the duo imagines a room for storing historic buildings that are threatened with demolition. Brodsky and Utkin's work expresses criticism of the rapid modernisation that removed historic buildings from cities like Moscow.

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics, USSR (now Russia)
Etching on paper
Museum no. E.1495-2010



Meditating on moments of urban loss

Jessie Brennan

East London-based artist Jessie Brennan created these drawings in response to plans to demolish Robin Hood Gardens housing estate in Poplar. The drawings' subtitles quote the council's demolition order. Brennan photographed the building, then crumpled the photographic prints and used them to develop these drawings. 'The imminent demolition is visualised: it's fairly simple in visual terms and I like that, it's quite striking, and yet it raises complex issues about the politics of urban living.'

Drawings from the series
'A Fall of Ordinariness and Light', 2014

The Order Land

London

Pencil on paper

Museum no. E. 2748-2016

The Scheme

London

Pencil on paper

Museum no. E.2749-2016

Continued on the next page →



The Enabling Power

London

Pencil on paper

Museum no. E.2750-2016

The Justification

London

Pencil on paper

Museum no. E.2751-2016

To explore more about the story of Robin Hood Gardens and its demolition, visit V&A East Storehouse. You can see a fragment of the building itself and hear stories of life on the estate from former residents.



Lady in yellow vest with trees in background from the series 'Talking to Ants', 2009–13

Stephen Gill

As a long-time resident of Hackney, British photographer Stephen Gill documented the unique character of urban nature in east London. Gill's experimental photographic technique places objects found on walks into the body of his camera. People, landscapes and physical fragments come together in single images. 'I hoped through this method to encourage the spirit of the place to clamber aboard the images and be encapsulated in the film emulsion.'

London

Pigment print

Purchased through the Cecil Beaton Fund

Museum no. E.645-2014



*American Elm, Eastern Parkway,
Brooklyn*, from the series 'New York
Arbor', 2012

Mitch Epstein

A centuries-old elm tree takes centre stage in this image by American photographer Mitch Epstein. The photograph was created as part of a series capturing the diverse trees that inhabit New York City's densely built environment. Seen through Epstein's lens, the tree is both constrained by its heavy, concrete support and towers majestically over the street. 'These pictures underscore the complex relationship between trees and their human counterparts', Epstein says.

New York City, USA

Gelatin silver print

Purchase funded by Mark Storey and Carey

Adina Karmel in memory of George Sassower

Museum no. E.620-2019



Research through drawing: Reflections on Mosque architecture

Shahed Saleem

British architect Shahed Saleem explores the architecture of migrant communities, investigating ideas around heritage and belonging. He is the founder of east London-based practice Makespace, which specialises in creating faith buildings for Muslim communities. Saleem's sketchbooks are filled with both observational and imaginative drawings. He uses them to document and respond to buildings and places he has seen, with drawings becoming part of his research process.

- 1 *The Oriental Mosque and the English Landscape*, 2013
London
Ink, graphite, watercolour, charcoal, oil pastel and acrylic paint on paper
Given by Shahed Saleem
Museum no. E.1046-2019



- 2 *The Mosque that is embedded within the townscape*, 2013
London
Ink, graphite, watercolour, charcoal, oil pastel and acrylic paint on paper
Given by Shahed Saleem
Museum no. E.1047-2019

 - 3 Sketchbook of drawings of places and people observed and remembered, 2015–16
London
Pencil, pen, felt tip and water colour on paper
Given by Shahed Saleem
Museum no. E.1048-2019

 - 4 Sketchbook of drawings of places and people observed and remembered, 2016–17
London
Pencil, pen, ink and water colour on paper
Given by Shahed Saleem
Museum no. E.1049-2019
- Digitised version of original bound sketchbooks, 2015–17
Given by Shahed Saleem
Museum nos. E.1048, 1049-2019



The social power of photography

Photographers play a vital role in observing and revealing truths about society. From candid eyewitness accounts of historic events to staged images of daily life, their works invite critical reflection on human experience. Photographers can also celebrate and elevate those who often go unseen, inviting empathy and awareness of others' lives.



Reporting from the frontlines

Dorothea Lange

For American photographer Dorothea Lange, the camera was ‘an instrument for recording something of importance’. In the 1930s, Lange worked as a photographer for the US government. She was tasked with documenting the economic depression and droughts in rural California and her work supplemented official reports. Her photographs recorded the true human cost of the crisis, inspiring public empathy and influencing the distribution of emergency aid.

Young cotton picker Kern Country migrant camp, California, November 1936 (printed 1973)

California, USA

Gelatin silver print

Acquired from The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Museum no. CIRC.90-1973

Continued on the next page →



Dispossessed Arkansas farmers. These people are resettling themselves on the dump outside of Bakersfield, California, 1935 (printed 1973)

California, USA

Gelatin silver print

Acquired from The Library of Congress,
Washington, D.C.

Museum no. CIRC.92-1973

*Cotton picking in south Texas,
August 1936 (printed 1973)*

Texas, USA

Gelatin silver print

Acquired from The Library of Congress,
Washington, D.C.

Museum no. CIRC.102-1973



Documenting community

Photographer Tom Hunter captures life in east London through references to historic painting. This intimate portrait is from a series documenting his neighbours in a Hackney squatting community. It shows a mother reading an eviction summons. 'The whole idea was to elevate the status of my sitters; to take the attributes of classical painting.' Here, Hunter's staging mimics Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer's 1657 painting *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*.

Woman Reading a Possession Order,
from the series 'Persons Unknown', 1997

Tom Hunter

London

Dye destruction print

Purchased through the Cecil Beaton Royalties Fund
Museum no. E.407-1998

Photocopy of High Court Eviction
Summons, issued 17 January 1997

London

Ink on paper

Purchased through the Cecil Beaton Royalties Fund
Museum no. E.408-1998



Empowering Through Design

Everyday objects can be revolutionary when they improve people's daily lives. For some designers, this belief has inspired them to share tools and expertise, empowering people with creative agency to make for themselves. For other designers, this ideal has inspired them to reimagine mass-produced goods and how they meet people's needs.



A social vision for mass reach

Design can have an impact through the number of people it reaches. For designers committed to social projects, new technologies and mass production can serve their aims of widening access to lifechanging products. Scaling up production and thinking carefully about materials can keep prices low, while collaborating with users can enrich how designs meet people's needs.



DSS stacking chairs, 1950

Charles and Ray Eames/Herman Miller Furniture Co.

For American duo Charles and Ray Eames, the objective of design was 'getting the best to the greatest number of people for the least'. These lightweight and durable chairs adapt a design the Eames' developed for the *Low-Cost Furniture Design* competition held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1948. The designers made use of new technologies for mass production using fibreglass. Countless numbers were sold to stadiums, hospitals, schools, colleges, universities and government offices.

USA

Moulded glass-fibre seat with chromium-plated tubular steel leg frame

Museum nos. CIRC. 397, 398, 401-1970



Selection of OXO Good Grips kitchen tools: peeler, masher, jar opener, can opener, ice cream scoop, 1990–2022 (designed), 2024 (made)

Sam Farber/Smart Design

‘It’s hard to think of a vegetable peeler as radical, but I guess it was’, says American industrial designer Sam Farber. He had an idea to improve metal vegetable peelers after seeing his wife Betsy struggle to use them with her arthritic hands. Together, they designed a non-slip rubber grip inspired by bicycle handles. The design sparked a line of Good Grips kitchen utensils, now mass produced and sold at an affordable price.

USA

Rubber, stainless steel

Museum nos. NCOL.174 to 178-2024



LifeStraw, 2005 (designed),
2016 (made)

Vestergaard

The LifeStraw is a portable, hand-held water filter that has transformed access to drinking water. The design emerged from a research project tackling waterborne diseases in Mali, led by American public health organisation The Carter Centre with Swiss manufacturer Vestergaard. It was inspired by how Tuareg nomads in Mali adapted water filters into easy-to-use straws. Now mass-produced, LifeStraws are distributed by charities worldwide where contaminated water is a health risk.

Switzerland

Plastic

Given by Vestergaard

Museum no. CD.98-2016



The social vision of Utility fashion in wartime Britain, 1940s

The Utility Scheme was a pioneering British government initiative to provide affordable clothing and furniture during the Second World War. In the context of wartime materials rationing, the scheme set production standards to ensure fair use of scarce materials. Fashion designers and manufacturers contributed a range of garments. Checked for quality and pricing, Utility clothes were stamped with the symbol CC41, standing for 'Civilian Clothing' and 1941, the year the scheme launched.

Men's three-piece suit, 1948

Burtons for Utility

England

Tweed

Given by Mrs J. Anderson

Museum no. T.17 to B-1984

Original no. 16 skirt suit, 1942

Digby Morton for Utility (prototype for a Couturier Scheme to involve luxury designers)

London

Wool, metal buttons, silk ribbon

Given by the Board of Trade

Museum no. T.45-1942

Continued on the next page →



Corset, 1942-49
Avro for Utility
England
Coutil, boning, metal, elastic and lace
Given by Mr Ian Chipperfield
Museum no. T.170-1998

Pair of silk stockings, 1940s
Tor Lace for Utility
UK
Silk
Given by Mrs S.L. Gravett
Museum no. T.234&A-1984

Pair of socks, 1940s
Morley for Utility
UK
Knitted wool
Given by Clive Rogers
Museum no. T.641:1, 2-1995

Pair of *Colleen* shoes, 1940s
Maceses for Utility
UK
Leather
Museum no. T.20&A-1979



Dignity in housing

From social housing to playgrounds and fire stations to schools, designing civic buildings has been a career-long passion for Scottish architect Kate Macintosh. She worked predominantly for local authorities in London and Southeast England. This is an innovative housing scheme Macintosh designed for elderly and vulnerable people, also known as ‘sheltered housing’. Moving away from the typical institutional feel of these buildings, her design offers generous communal spaces, cosy rooms and peaceful garden views for residents, alongside all essential care facilities.

Elevations for Old People’s Home and Sheltered Housing, Bexhill, Sussex, 1979

Kate Macintosh

UK

Ink and pencil on tracing paper

Given by Kate (Catherine) Macintosh RIBA

Museum no. E.1096-2019

Continued on the next page →



Ground floor plan for *Old People's Home
and Sheltered Housing, Bexhill, Sussex, 1979*

Kate Macintosh

UK

Ink and pencil on tracing paper

Given by Kate (Catherine) Macintosh RIBA

Museum no. E.1094-2019

Exterior and interior views of *Old People's
Home and Sheltered Housing in Bexhill, Sussex*

Photographs courtesy
of Robert Kirkman



Transforming women's lives with the *Pakistan Chulah* stove

Pakistani architect Yasmeen Lari believes in collaborative approaches to design, 'working with people so they can help themselves'. Her design for an earthen, fuel-efficient *chulah* (stove) provides safe kitchens that women in rural areas can build themselves. Rooted in Lari's humanitarian work, this design project supports women's health and dignity in the home. A growing network of *Chulah Adhis* (Stove Sisters) make a living by training women to construct their own *chulah*. Since 2013, over 60,000 have been built.

Completed *chulahs* built by the Stove Sisters
Photographs courtesy of the Heritage
Foundation of Pakistan

Design drawing of the *Pakistan Chulah*, 2010
Yasmeen Lari and the Heritage Foundation
of Pakistan
Pakistan

Gift of Dr Yasmeen Lari, CEO,
Heritage Foundation of Pakistan
Display print from digital file
Museum no. E.248-2026

Continued on the next page →

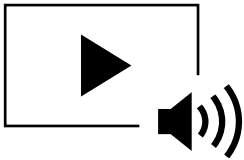


Teaching manual for *chulah*
construction, 2010 (in use until 2013)
Yasmeen Lari and the Heritage
Foundation of Pakistan
Gift of Dr Yasmeen Lari, CEO,
Heritage Foundation
of Pakistan
Display print from digital file
Museum no. E.249-2026

Revised training manual for *chulah*
construction, 2023 (in current use)
Yasmeen Lari and the Heritage
Foundation of Pakistan
Pakistan
Gift of Dr Yasmeen Lari, CEO,
Heritage Foundation of Pakistan
Display print from digital file
Museum no. E.252-2026

Model (1:3 scale) of a *Pakistan Chulah*,
designed in 2010, made in 2026
Designed by Yasmeen Lari and the
Heritage Foundation of Pakistan,
made by Ms Dani Khomo
Pakistan
Unfired clay, partal wood
Gift of Dr Yasmeen Lari, CEO,
Heritage Foundation of Pakistan
Museum no. E.247-2026





Hear from architect Yasmeen Lari about training women to build *Pakistan Chulahs*, smokeless earthen stoves.

Scan the QR code for audio description

Pakistan, 2015–21
Running time: 3 minutes



Community printing workshops

Printing workshops can empower a community to experiment, socialise and campaign for causes. Many artists and designers have dedicated their careers to setting up these communal spaces. Granting access to tools to handmake posters and magazines, these workshops are transformative spaces where people learn new skills and come together through acts of making.



Bank notes from the Bank Job project:
*Five Traceys, Ten Garys, Twenty Sairas,
Fifty Steves, 2018*

Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn/ Hoe Street
Central Bank

British artist and filmmaker duo Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn saw Bank Job 'as a community heist taking on the economic discourse'. Part publicity stunt and part fundraising campaign, their initiative created an alternative bank on Hoe Street in Walthamstow. The project involved residents in printing specially designed banknotes that celebrated four people involved in local services. Sold at face value, the banknotes raised funds for community services and to settle residents' debts.

London

Screenprint, with letter press and
foil blocking, on paper

Museum nos. E.3290,
3297, 3300, 3303-2018



Get together and get things done
poster, 1984

Tony Minnion and Basement Community
Arts Workshop

The Tower Hamlets tenant association commissioned British artist Tony Minnion to design this campaign poster. Here a paintbrush sweeps through a photomontage of demonstrations outside Burdett Estate and Samuda Estate. For Minnion, this 'transforms a colourless environment into one of colour ... a place where people live'. Basement Community Arts Workshop produced the poster and Tower Hamlets Council distributed copies to encourage involvement in local housing decisions.

London

Photostencil, printing paper, plastic laminate

Given by Greenwich Mural Workshop

Museum no. E.571-2013



A feminist printing collective

See Red Women's Workshop

For the founders of See Red Women's Workshop, Pru Stevenson, Julia Franco and Suzy Mackie, printing posters was a tool for fighting for women's rights in the 1970s. Based in London, See Red provided screen-printing facilities for women. They learnt and exchanged technical printing skills and designed posters collaboratively to speak out about their experiences. 'It was important for us that women from different backgrounds came in, shared struggles they were interested in.'

Alone We Are Powerless... Together

We Are Strong poster, 1976-77

London

Screen print in black and red on paper

Gift of the American Friends of the V&A;

Gift to the American Friends

by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and
Alice Schreyer Batko

Museum no. E.659-2004

Continued on the next page →



Sister! Question Every Aspect of Our Lives

poster, 1977

London

Screen print in green on paper

Given by Suzy Mackie, Pru Stevenson

and Bronwen Rice

Museum no. E.87-2011

Women Hold Up More Than Half The Sky poster, 1986

London

Laminated screen print in green and black on paper

Given by the Greenwich Mural Workshop

Museum no. E.491-2013



Building a self-publishing community

East London-based creative collective OOMK (One of My Kind) strives to ‘keep the spirit of radical publishing alive through collaboration and creation of free resources’. Their self-published zines explore topics of faith, activism and identity. These zines were printed at Rabbits Road Press, a community risograph printing facility and open-access workshop set up and run by OOMK since 2014. It is based at the Old Manor Park Library in Newham.

OOMK zine, Issue 6: *Food*, 2017

Sofia Niazi (editor), Rose Nordin and Heiba Lamara (art directors), Rabbits Road Press (publisher)

London

Inkjet on paper

Museum no. 38041024013179

Women’s work: Interviews

with innovative South Asian women, 2019

Aleesha Nandhra and Sofia Niazi (editors),
Abeera Kamran (book designer), Rabbits
Road Press (publisher)

London

Risograph on paper

Museum no. 38041024013328

Continued on the next page →



Three Points Press: A conversation on radical self-publishing, mutual learning and perspectives + insights into different challenges we each face as artists who run community focused presses, 2021

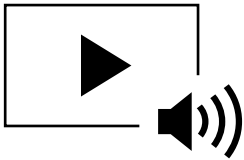
Sofia Niazi, Saffa Khan, Sumuyya Khader
(contributors), a-n The Artists Information
Company (publisher)

Newcastle, UK

Risograph on paper

Museum no. 38041024013310





Step inside the community printing workshop at Rabbits Road Press and hear from its founders Heiba Lamara, Sofia Niazi and Rose Nordin.

Scan the QR code for audio description

London, 2024

Running time: 3 minutes
and 45 seconds



Amplifying community voices

Greenwich Mural Workshop

London-based artists Carol Kenna and Stephen Lobb believed in ‘a way of working as artists that was not on “the edge of society” but as fully integrated into society’s needs as a doctor in the NHS.’ In the 1970s, they set up the Greenwich Mural Workshop as a hub for community art projects. Alongside creating murals, the duo ran public screen-printing workshops for people to design and make posters for local events and protest campaigns.

Nuclear Deterrent Isn't Working poster,
1982 London
Print on paper
Given by the Greenwich Mural Workshop
Museum no. E.118-2011

Announcing Greenwich Youth Day poster,
1985 London
Print on paper
Given by the Greenwich Mural Workshop
Museum no. E.124-2011



Graphics for all

Graphic design can be a powerful democratic tool, from unifying movements to creating shared symbols that resonate across cultures and languages. User-friendly toolkits can be made accessible through digital platforms and easy-to-follow guides, empowering citizens to use graphic design in campaigns for change.



Extinction symbol, 2011

ESP

East London artist ESP created this symbol as a unifying sign about extinction that he believed was missing from existing environmental campaign graphics. 'The circle signifies the planet, while the hourglass inside serves as a warning that time is rapidly running out for many species', he says. ESP first chalked the symbol on Brick Lane and then made it free to download online. It was later adopted by environmental group Extinction Rebellion.

London

Display print from digital file

Museum no. CD.16-2019



Designing a voice for a movement

Extinction Rebellion Arts Group

‘It was important to have a consistent look, so we could be an umbrella movement that everyone could come underneath.’

The Extinction Rebellion Arts Group’s design programme encouraged anyone joining the movement to create protest material at events and at home. It provided a free design toolkit to ensure a collective graphic identity. This included guidance for using ESP’s Extinction symbol alongside a suite of striking colours and slogans.

On wall above

Flags, 2018

Unrecorded maker

London

Lining fabric (pink and blue), black ink,
wooden flagpole

Given by Extinction Rebellion Arts Group

Museum nos. CD.11, 12-2019

Continued on the next page →



- 1 Printing blocks, 2018
London
Milled plastic mounted onto plywood;
machine-cut plywood
Given by Extinction Rebellion Arts Group
Museum nos. CD.2, 3-2019

- 2 *Tell The Truth* patch, 2018–19
London
Blue offcut fabric, black Permaset fabric ink
Given by Extinction Rebellion Arts Group
Museum no. CD.7-2019

- 3 *Beyond Politics* patch, 2018–19
London
Yellow offcut fabric, black Permaset fabric ink
Given by Extinction Rebellion Arts Group
Museum no. CD.6-2019

- 4 *Act Now* patch, 2018–19
London
Red offcut fabric, black Permaset fabric ink
Given by Extinction Rebellion Arts Group
Museum no. CD.9-2019



- 5 Extinction Rebellion logo patch, 2018–19
London
Green offcut fabric, black Permaset ink
Given by Extinction Rebellion
Arts Group
Museum no. CD.5-2019

- 6 Design Programme, 2018
London
Display print from digital file
Museum no. CD.15-2019



Protest posters for land and water protectors, 2016–ongoing

Onaman Collective

Distributed in the thousands, these posters have become iconic in indigenous protest movements for land rights and climate action across North America. They were created by Onaman Collective, an indigenous art initiative founded by Métis artist Christi Belcourt and Anishinaabe artist Isaac Murdoch in southern Ontario. The posters are ‘free to download and use for all water and land protection actions’. They feature symbols from indigenous myths, translating Ojibway rock paintings into a digital format.

Various locations including North Dakota, USA and Anishinaabe territory, Ontario, Canada

Display print from digital drawing

Courtesy of Onaman Collective, Christi Belcourt, Isaac Murdoch

Museum no. NCOL.205 to 209, 213-2025



Design manuals that put making in the users' hands

Designers can empower people to make by sharing the tools and skills of design. For many, sharing this knowledge becomes a creative design challenge in itself. To address this, designers have reinvented manuals as sources of creative inspiration for do-it-yourself projects. These guides are often rooted in a desire to share designs that are more affordable and use materials responsibly.



A wave of do-it-yourself furniture manuals

Playful in format and filled with easy-to-follow instructions, these furniture-making manuals emerged from a movement to empower through design. They were created by designers in America and Europe seeking to challenge capitalist consumer culture in the 1970s, encouraging people to be self-sufficient and make for themselves. The manuals offered affordable furniture-making techniques that people without experience or specialist tools could use, buying standard materials from their local hardware stores.

Proposta per un'autoprogettazione
(Proposal for 'self-design'), 1974, 2014 (printed)
Enzo Mari

Italian designer Enzo Mari created instructions for 19 furniture designs using only rough boards and nails. He encouraged users to send him their variations.

Milan, Italy
Printed and bound paper
Museum no. NCOL.225-2023

Continued on the next page →



*Nomadic Furniture 1 and
Nomadic Furniture 2, 1973–74*
James Hennesey, Victor Papanek
USA
Printed and bound paper
Museum no. NCOL.223, 224-2023

How to Make Furniture without Tools, 1975
Clement Meadmore
USA
Printed and bound paper
Museum no. NCOL.221-2023

How to Build Your Own Living Structures, 1974
Ken Isaacs
USA
Paper, ink
Museum no. NCOL.369-2023



Hack Care: Tips and tricks for a dementia-friendly home, 2020

Lekker Architects, in collaboration with Lanzavecchia + Wai with support from Lien Foundation

With this project, Singapore-based designers Lekker Architects and Lanzavecchia + Wai explored ‘how to democratise design so people feel they can do it too’. The free online catalogue enables dementia caregivers to adapt or ‘hack’ IKEA furniture to help the people they look after. ‘The cool thing about hacking is that you are tweaking and not designing entirely from scratch. It was a lively process of adjusting things for different conditions, bodies and preferences.’

Singapore

Digital publication

Courtesy of Lekker Architects,

Lanzavecchia + Wai, Lien Foundation



A pioneering information service

Stewart Brand

The *Whole Earth Catalog* series was a revolutionary model for mass-sharing information. Its American creator Stewart Brand said he wanted the publication to empower people through ‘access to tools’. Each issue was many things at once: a how-to manual, directory for products and reviews, and advice column. Topics ranged widely from natural sciences to home repairs. Covers celebrated new photography of the Earth, connecting to environmental debates at the time.

Whole Earth Catalog, 1969

Published by Portola Institute

USA

Printed and bound paper

Museum no. 38041020010880

The *Last Whole Earth Catalog*, 1971

Published by Portola Institute

USA

Printed and bound paper

Museum no. NCOL.222-2023



Making furniture on demand

‘Our idea is to rethink how goods are made for the benefit of everyone – the maker, the customer ... and the designer’, says Joni Steiner, east London-based designer and co-founder of Opendesk. The company’s online library offers digital designs for furniture that users anywhere in the world can download and send to local manufacturers for production. The on-demand service uses a computer-controlled fabrication process called CNC machining to create furniture like this stool and can be assembled without tools.

Airfix kit for *Edie* stool, 2013 (designed),
2016 (made)

David and Joni Steiner for Opendesk/
Made by Machines Room

London

CNC-cut birch plywood

Museum no. NCOL.730-2016

Edie stool, 2015–16

David and Joni Steiner for Opendesk/
Made by Machines Room

London

CNC-cut birch plywood

Museum no. NCOL.729-2016



Rethinking Systems

Making responsibly requires us to rethink the life cycle of objects. From interrogating materials' origins to questioning concepts of 'waste', makers and designers can help shape debates about what 'sustainability' is. Their investigations draw on many sources of inspiration, from the natural world to historic craft traditions, taking design in new directions.



Reimagining 'waste'

Alert to the negative environmental impacts of mass production and mass consumption, many designers are turning their attention to lifecycles of objects. In doing so, they are radically rethinking concepts of 'waste'. Practices are emerging to imagine new uses for many discarded materials. Designers are reinventing themselves as material innovators, waste-stream investigators and critics of economic systems at large.



Malai bag and material sample pack, 2019

Malai Biomaterials

Zuzana Gombosova and CS Susmith co-founded Malai Biomaterials in Kerala to develop new materials from 'waste' streams in local coconut farming. This bag uses their Malai material. It is made by a fermentation process where rescued coconut water is used to grow bacterial cellulose. Natural fibres like hemp, sisal and banana stems are added to refine it into sheets of material. Malai products can decompose naturally in soil, without harming the environment.

India

Malai leather

Museum nos. NCOL.283, 286-2023



From lab to highstreets: Innovations in grape leather, 2016–21

Vegea is an animal-free leather company, founded by Italian architect Gianpiero Tessitore. They developed this material from the stalks, seeds and skins of grapes left over from wine production. Italy discards around 1.8 million tonnes of this as 'waste' each year. This leather-alternative has evolved from a lab prototype to a commercially viable fabric. The dress here was produced for Vegea's launch in 2017 and clothing brand H&M has since used the material for special collections.

Dress, 2017
Tiziano Guardini for Vegea
Italy
Grape leather
Museum no. PROV.4337-2017

Puffer jacket, 2021
Design by John Boyega for H&M (with Vegea leather)
Italy/UK
Grape leather
Museum no. NCOL.1420-2021



The challenge of making 'sustainable' trainers

Creating trainers with less environmental impact is a complex design challenge. Every decision around materials, manufacturing and distribution counts but they don't all produce truly 'sustainable' results. Large companies like Nike pursue technical innovations to reduce material waste while continuing to mass produce their designs. French company Veja produce at scale but also focus efforts on long-term farming initiatives that regenerate soil and natural landscapes in Brazil. London-based designer Helen Kirkum creates designs using only discarded trainers in a radical effort to make more with less.

Pair of *Vapormax Flyknit trainers*, 2016
Nike

Nike's Flyknit technology enabled the creation of a lightweight, woven textile upper without material offcuts, while the *Vapormax* performance sole uses less rubber.

Designed in USA, made in China
Upper of knitted polyester, transparent
synthetic rubber sole
Given by Mark Parker
Museum no. T.20-2018

Continued on the next page →



Pair of *Volley* trainers, 2005 (designed),
2025 (made)
Veja

Veja made a long-standing commitment to fair trade cotton and rubber with their first *Volley* model in 2005.

Designed in France, made in Brazil
Upper of organic cotton and C.W.L.
(Cotton Worked as Leather), vegan leather,
recycled polyester lining
and laces, Amazonian rubber sole
Museum no. NCOL.126-2025

Pair of bespoke trainers made using
upcycled trainer components, 2019
Helen Kirkum Studio

Reused components include a Reebok rubber sole,
a Nike cotton tongue, Hi-Tec deconstructed leather
as the toe box and *Nike LunarEpic Flyknit* shoelaces.

London
Upper of leather, suede and cotton,
with rubber and PU sole
Museum no. NCOL.23-2025



Ensemble, 2021

Richard Malone

East London-based Irish designer Richard Malone believes ‘nothing should be considered luxurious or desirable that is harmful or exploitative’. His label produces limited-edition clothes from responsibly sourced fabrics. Malone creates entire looks from recycled and leftover (deadstock) textiles. Through ingenious pattern cutting, he transforms these materials into sculptural garments, like this curved jacket. Each piece is handmade in the UK and every collaborating maker is paid fairly, above London Living Wage.

London

Recycled PET polyester, wool and recycled wadding jacket and trousers, cotton and silk shirt, leather boots

Museum nos. T.85:1 to 6-2022



Ensemble (Look 55) from Sting collection, 2019–20

VIN + OMI

UK-based duo VIN + OMI bring together design and environmental activism. ‘Our message is education, innovation and to push the boundaries of what we can do to save the planet.’ Their studio experiments with new plant-based textiles and re-using ‘waste’ streams to spark debates around fashion systems. For this project, VIN + OMI created textiles from stinging nettles, a plant often discarded from gardens. The trousers are upcycled, embellished with printed patches critiquing throwaway fast fashion.

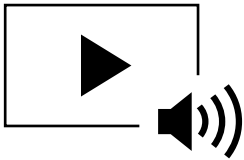
UK

Nettle fibre jacket, printed polyester jersey trousers with hand-printed linen patches, recycled advertising banner bag, leather boots with spray paint, headpiece of salvaged woods

Given by VIN + OMI

Museum nos. T.83-2022, PROV.1536-2023,
NCOL.13-2024





Explore two films:

Hear about environmental activism through fashion with VIN + OMI.

London, 2024

Running time: 4 minutes and 30 seconds

Richard Malone invites you to his studio in Hackney to discuss making with textiles.

London, 2024

Running time: 3 minutes and 15 seconds

Scan the QR code for audio description



Katatsumuri light from the 'IN-EI' range, 2012

Issey Miyake/Reality Lab for Artemide in
collaboration with Teijin Limited and Jun
Mitani, Professor of Computer Science,
University of Tsukuba

Japanese designer Issey Miyake established
Reality Lab in 2007 to develop 'environmentally
friendly and resource-conscious materials
to remake and recreate even better things'.
He placed technical innovations at the heart
of his designs. This lampshade is created
from a single folded sheet of ECOPET paper,
which is made entirely of fibres recycled from
PET plastic bottles. The lampshade is strong
enough to support itself without a frame.

Milan, Italy

ECOPET paper

Given by Issey Miyake London Ltd

Museum no. FE.32-2015



Reimagining bicycles as furniture, 2019

‘Unlike recycling, which converts products into raw materials for new productions, upcycling puts forward a new way of reducing waste’, says Chinese designer Xinyu Weng, founder of Berlin-based studio YUUE.

During a trip to China in 2018, Weng noticed thousands of rental bicycles discarded on the streets and in landfills. He initiated the *Upcycling Shared Bicycles* project with bicycle-sharing company Mobike, proposing how to turn their discarded bicycle parts into furniture.

Chair, lamp, table, candle holders, and desk organiser from the *Upcycling Shared Bicycles* project, 2019

Xinyu Weng, YUUE

China

Aluminium, stainless steel, leather, glass, plastic

Gift of Weng Xinyu, YUUE design studio

Museum no. FE.6 to 10-2022



Selection of bicycle parts from
recycling and repair station, 2019
Mobike
China
Aluminium, stainless steel
Gift of Weng Xinyu, YUUE design studio
Museum no. NCOL.336-2023

Think Globally, Act Locally poster, 1990
Friends of the Earth
London
Printed on wood-free paper
Museum no. E.3100-1991



RCP2 chair, 1992 (designed),
1996 (made)

Jane Atfield for Made of Waste
(now Smile Plastics)

British designer Jane Atfield founded Made of Waste in 1995 to address the growing problem of discarded plastic. Atfield says, 'I saw the potential of using this material – the ever-growing mounds of plastic waste around me – to construct furniture'. The chair's colourful, speckled pattern is made from chipped plastic from bottles collected via community recycling schemes. Today, Atfield's company lives on as Smile Plastics and produced the plastic boards in this gallery.

London

Recycled high-density polyethylene (HDPE)
board, metal screws

Museum no. W.4-1996



111 Navy chair, 2010 (designed), 2022
(made)

Emeco in collaboration with Coca-Cola

This mass-produced chair made from recycled PET plastic bottles broke new ground by turning a 'waste' stream into a longer-lasting product. Unlike typical PET recycling techniques that make soft materials like fabrics, furniture manufacturer Emeco's method produces a sturdy material suitable for furniture. As many as 111 Coca-Cola drinks bottles are used per chair. Yet this success story still raises questions: should single-use plastics be made in the first place?

USA

Injection-moulded recycled PET (estimated 65%)
and glass fibre (estimated 35%)

Museum no. W.13-2023



BA3 chair, 1945 (designed),
1946–48 (made)

Ernest Race, Race Furniture Ltd

Shortages and restrictions on the use of wood and fabric sparked innovation in furniture design in Britain during the Second World War. With the *BA3* chair, British designer Ernest Race created new uses for aluminium, a metal used in manufacturing wartime aircraft. He collaborated with the aluminium industry to make use of resmelted (recycled) aluminium in his design. The upholstery came in green, blue or brown – dye colours leftover from manufacturing military uniforms.

London

Cast aluminium, plywood, upholstery and dyes
Museum no. W.3-2010



Learning from the natural world

New design practices are looking to the natural world, where life forms and ecosystems have been tested and refined through 3.8 billion years of evolution. Known as biomimicry, these practices 'mimic' the efficiency of natural processes to solve human design challenges. From examining structures under the microscope to growing materials in a lab, practitioners are combining design and science to work towards more environmentally responsible making.



Comb, about 1900–50s

Unrecorded maker

This comb is an example of an early plastic. It is made from casein, a semi-synthetic material produced from milk curds hardened with the chemical formaldehyde. The material was first invented by French and German chemists in the 1890s. Designers adopted it to imitate scarce and expensive natural materials like ivory and tortoiseshell. Plastics like this led to increasing usage of synthetic materials. Once celebrated as a solution, these created new problems: over-production and pollution.

Possibly UK or Germany
Moulded casein formaldehyde
Given by Mrs J. Hull Grundy
Museum no. CIRC.18-1961



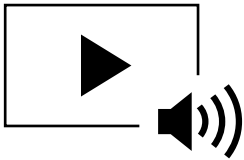
Architecture inspired by lightweight structures in nature

The Elytra Filament Pavilion combines biology and new robotic production to rethink how buildings are made. Research into elytra, the lightweight filament structures of flying beetle shells, inspired its design and construction. This cell is one of 44 that made up the pavilion canopy. Each is unique, made using a robotic winding process designed by the team. It mimics the efficiency of natural structures, only placing material where needed.

Cell from Elytra Filament Pavilion, 2016
Achim Menges, Moritz Dörstelmann,
Jan Knippers and Thomas Auer
Stuttgart, Germany/London
Glass and carbon fibre composite
impregnated with epoxy resin
Given by Achim Menges
Museum no. CD.104-2016

Concept model of pavilion cell, 2015–16
ICD/ITKE, University of Stuttgart
Stuttgart, Germany
Plexiglass, cotton thread
Given by Achim Menges
Museum no. CD.11-2018





Explore two films:

Discover the Elytra Filament Pavilion under construction and hear from its creators.

London and Stuttgart, Germany, 2016

Running time: 3 minutes and 30 seconds

Step inside Diana Scherer's studio where she grows textiles from plant roots.

Amsterdam, 2018

Running time: 3 minutes and 30 seconds

Scan the QR code for audio description



Revisiting natural plastics

Studio Formafantasma

For Italian designers Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin, investigating how products are made is a tool to rethink systems.

Their project *Botanica* seeks alternatives to polluting synthetic plastics used widely today. It explores recipes for natural plastics from the 1700s and 1800s that use plant and animal products from around the world. 'We're trying to understand the potential that the elements we discovered from the past can have in the contemporary time', they say.

Vessels, prototypes and material samples
from the *Botanica* project, 2011

Commissioned by Plart Foundation

Netherlands

Various materials (rosin, dammar, copal,
natural rubber, natural shellac, bois durci)

Museum nos. W.19, 20, 21, 22, 23:1 to 3, 23:5-2013



Rootbound #2 dress and sample roots textiles, 2017–18

Diana Scherer

Inspired by overgrown plant roots, Dutch artist Diana Scherer proposes radical ways of growing materials. ‘The most fascinating thing for me is the strength of the roots (...) I want to explore it and apply the intelligence of plants in my work’, she says. To create this dress, Scherer used a template to train oat grass roots to weave themselves into a 3D textile. Scherer only grows the material needed for each design, avoiding offcuts.

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Oat roots, plant fibre

Given by Diana Schererv

Museum nos. T.2344-2021, PROV.4522, 4523-2017



Reimagining 'waste' wool

Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma develops inventive ways to use 'waste' wool from Rotterdam sheep. Like much of European wool, fleece from this city flock is routinely discarded given its coarser texture. Through collaborations with textile industry specialists, and the invention of new fabrication techniques, Meindertsma developed prototypes for textile and furniture products. 'It helped to convince our local industry that it's actually good wool to work with because we really just need a prototype', she says.

- 1 A set of virgin wool samples from Rotterdam sheep, in various states of processing (left) and samples of wool from recycled surplus upholstery (right), 2022
Netherlands
Museum nos. T.41 to 44-2025
- 2 Cones of Rotterdam wool yarn from the project *Fibre Market – Donegal Tweed*, 2017
Christien Meindertsma with Donegal Yarns
Donegal, Ireland
Grey wool with recycled sweater fleck,
surplus upholstery fleck
Museum nos. T.35 to 40-2025



- 3 Swatch blanket from the project
De Zachte Stad (The Soft City), 2022
Christien Meindertsma with Molloy & Sons
Donegal, Ireland
Wool from Donegal Yarns
Museum no. T.32-2025

- 4 Model 4800 Sofa (1:10 scale) from the
project *De Zachte Stad (The Soft City)*, 2022
Upholstery designed by Christien Meindertsma
for Gelderland, made by Molloy & Sons
Culemborg, the Netherlands
Donegal Yarns wool, surplus upholstery
wool, MDF, foam
Museum no. T.31-2025

- 5 Model chair (1:4 scale) from the project
Block Wool, 2023
Christien Meindertsma
Betuwe, the Netherlands
Machine-made, dry-felted Rotterdam wool
Museum no. T.33-2025

- 6 Model 3D-felted chair (1:4 scale), from the
project *FLOCKS Robot Research*, 2023
Christien Meindertsma
Betuwe, the Netherlands
3D-printed Rotterdam wool
Museum no. T.34-2025



The ingenuity of repair

For centuries, cultures across the globe have looked after objects in creative ways. From repairs out of necessity to those inspired by love for a cherished item, acts of mending enable users to become makers of their own objects. Innovative craft techniques and styles can emerge from re-use and restoration, saving objects from being thrown away and granting them new character.



Hand-knitted jumper based on
'Seawaves Jumper' No. 549 knitting
pattern from *Golden Eagle* magazine, 1942

Unrecorded maker

Many British women during the Second World War turned to hand-knitting in response to material shortages and government-imposed clothing restrictions. Free booklets with knitting patterns circulated widely, while wool rationing meant that makers were encouraged to unravel old, knitted garments and reuse yarn. The design and colours of this jumper show that imaginative knitters were able to create striking styles despite restrictions on materials.

UK

Hand-knitted wool

Given by Sue Stockwell

Museum no. T.27-1987



Blue Jumper and ball of yarn, 2012–20

Bridget Harvey

East London-based maker and activist Bridget Harvey has mended this blue jumper for years. Her work questions buying habits and celebrates the idea of mending more, buying less. For Harvey, ‘repair-making is social as well as material: a field of exciting actions, communities and politics, changing objects, mindsets and habits’. The intricate darning (repairing holes using thread) gives the jumper its unique character, capturing Harvey’s personal relationship with it as wearer and ‘repairer-maker’.

London

Merino wool darned with hand-dyed viscose yarn

Given by Bridget Harvey

Museum no. T.2342:1&2-2021



Kurta, about 1855

Unrecorded maker

Across South Asia, clothes-making practices have involved reusing textiles and their precious decorative features. This woman's *kurta* (shirt) is made of delicate muslin, edged with bands of silver and gold embroidery along the neck, cuffs and hem. Due to its fragility, it was common for a *kurta* like this to have a short life span and go on to be recycled. Tailors would salvage and reuse the costly metal edgings for new garments.

Sindh, Pakistan

Cotton muslin with applied metal
embellishments, silk and gold-wrapped thread
Museum no. 6157(IS)



Base for a shisha pipe, converted from a bottle, 1650–1700 (made), 1800–75 (repurposed)

Unrecorded makers

Once a ceramic bottle, this base for a *qalyan* (shisha pipe) reveals how historic objects were valued in Iran in the 1800s and repurposed for new uses. The bottle would have been prized for its iridescent surface that features a type of metallic glaze known as lustre. Over 100 years after it was made, a hole was added in the side along with metal mounts to convert it into a shisha pipe.

Iran

Chased brass mounts on lustre-glazed fritware

Museum no. 2544-1876



Repairing with gold

Kintsugi, meaning ‘joining with gold’, is a centuries-old Japanese art practice used to mend broken ceramics. Specialist *kintsugi* practitioners use lacquer dusted with luminous gold, silver or platinum powder to fill cracks. The visible mends honour breakages as beautiful transformations, whether caused through a vessel’s use or age. *Kintsugi* is a costly and specialist practice used here to repair precious objects, like these historical ceramics from China and Korea.

- 3 Blue and white bowl, 1550–1650
(repair date unrecorded)
Unrecorded makers
China, repair location unrecorded
Gold lacquer repair on porcelain
Given from the Bloxam Collection
Museum no. C.123-1928

- 4 Wine cup and stand, 1100–50,
(repair date unrecorded)
Unrecorded makers
Korea, repair location unrecorded
Gold lacquer repair on stoneware with
celadon glaze
Museum nos. C.332-1912



- 5 Bulb bowl, 1200s, (repair date unrecorded)
Unrecorded makers
China, repair location unrecorded
Gold lacquer repair on glazed stoneware
Given by the National Art Collections Fund
and a body of subscribers
Museum no. C.700-1920



The repair craft of the *patragars*

These teapots and bowl show years of repair and reuse. They were imported from the Gardner Porcelain Factory in Russia and used in Afghanistan. Cultures of tea-drinking in the country gave rise to a skilled profession of porcelain menders known as *patragars*. These craftspeople specialised in using metal fasteners and replacement spouts to restore porcelain goods. Today, replacing objects is more common than repair and the skills of the *patragars* are disappearing.

- 1 Repaired teapots and bowl, made 1880–1920, repair dates unrecorded
Unrecorded *patragars*
Russia, with repairs in Afghanistan
Metal rivets
Given by Menno Bouma
Museum nos. C.7, 8, 10-2018



A replacement handle for cups, 1921

Frederick Warren Wilkes

To extend the life of broken cups and jugs, Birmingham-based inventor Frederick Warren Wilkes created this universal replacement handle. In the 1920s, Wilkes patented the design in the UK and the US, where he called it an 'Emergency Handle for Domestic Receptacles'. Wilkes' solution was easy to use and could be produced quickly and cheaply from sheet metal. The handle fitted cups of many sizes, making them usable again without the need for custom repairs.

2 Birmingham, UK

Earthenware cup, Staffordshire or Sunderland, around 1880, with a metal replacement handle clipped onto the rim

Given by Andrew Baseman

Museum no. C.109-2014



A disruptive smartphone

Fairphone

‘What if the next time your smartphone broke, you could fix it yourself?’ ask Fairphone co-founders Bas Van Abel, Tessa Wernik and Miquel Ballester. The Fairphone is a pioneering smartphone designed to be easily taken apart by any user. It subverts dominant business models of short product lifespans and e-waste (electronic waste) by placing the ‘right to repair’ in the consumer’s hands. Made using conflict-free minerals, Fairphone was the first certified fairtrade smartphone.

Fairphone with packaging, user guide and post cards, 2013

China

Tin soldering paste, tantulum capacitors, tungsten, gold printed circuit board, print on paper
Given by Fairphone

Museum no. CD.3-2015

Parts for Fairphone 2 including circuit board, back cover and battery, 2015

China

Tin soldering paste, tantulum capacitors, tungsten, gold printed circuit board

Museum no. NCOL.226-2023



Rethinking city design

To meet the challenges of climate crisis, planning cities needs to involve designing in harmony with natural environments and thinking efficiently about local resources. For architects and urban designers, this means considering wider systems beyond a single building. From supplying food to residents to growing natural materials for buildings, design practices are evolving in line with pressing environmental agendas.



Competition model for *Guangming Smart City, 2007*

C J (Chwen Jeng) Lim, Studio 8 Architects
'We should bring in more of nature to create resilience', says Malaysia-born, London-based architect C J Lim. This model illustrates a birds-eye view of Lim's competition proposal for a 'Smart City' in the Guangming district of Shenzhen, China. The design offers a radical vision for integrating farming into the design of cities. Lim believes that producing food locally can boost the health and security of urban communities facing climate crisis.

London

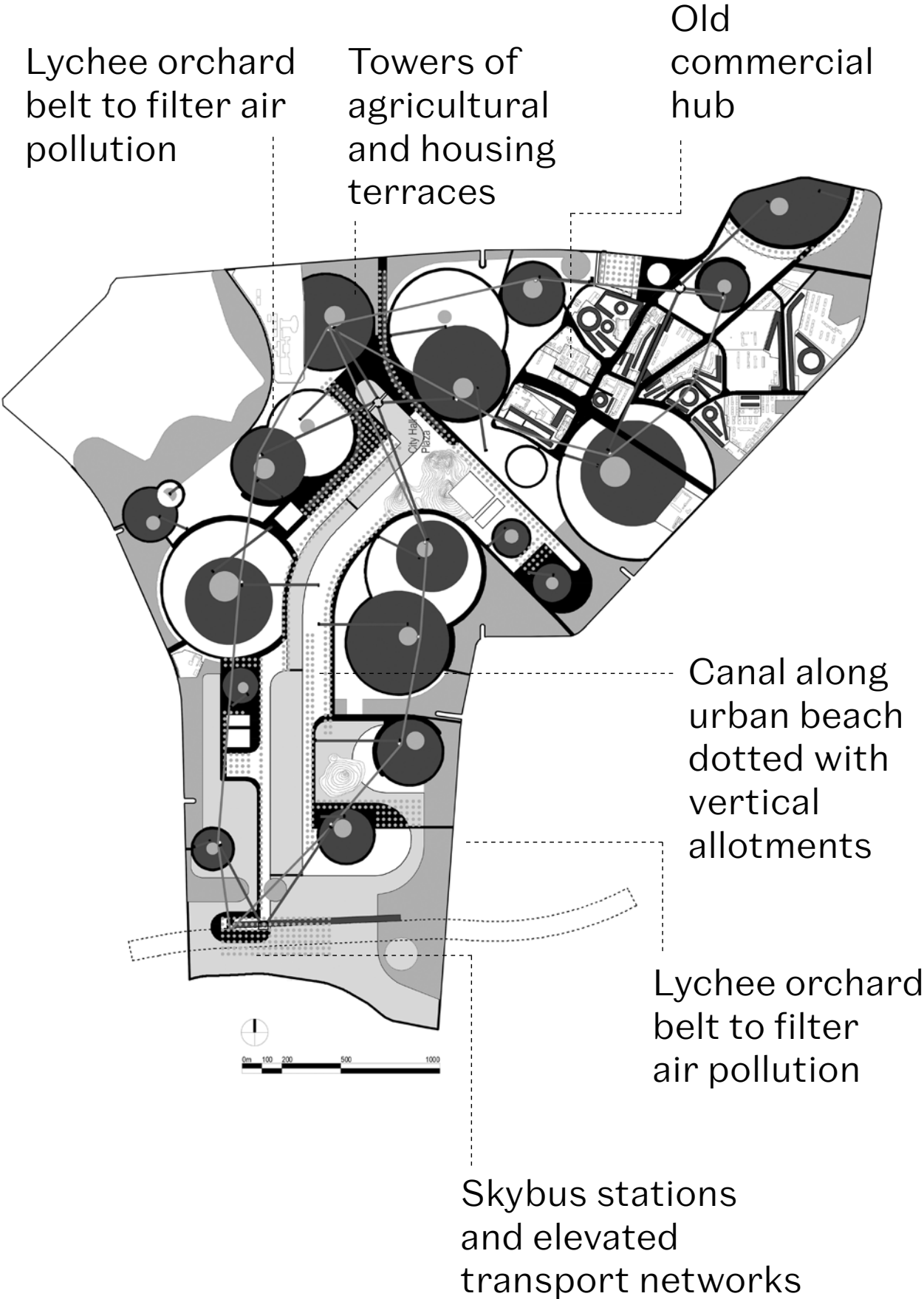
Wood, card, paper

C J Lim/Studio 8 Architects

Museum no. E.844-2014



Details in the plan for Guangming Smart City



Model of *Edible Schoolyard: Public School 216, Brooklyn, New York, 2014*

WORKac Architects

‘We have the power to turn that daily school lunch from an afterthought into a joyous education’, says Alice Waters, American chef and founder of The Edible Schoolyard Project in California. The project commissioned New York-based WORKac Architects to transform the cement car park of this Brooklyn school into a thriving vegetable garden and kitchen classroom. The design includes water collection systems and greenhouses, all used as part of school teaching programmes.

USA

Paper, card, paint, acrylic, timber, Styrofoam

Museum no. CD.26-2015



*Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees
and the Propagation of Timber in His
Majesty's Dominions, 1776*

John Evelyn

British gardener and scholar John Evelyn called out the negative impacts of deforestation in the 1600s. A pioneering environmental thinker in his day, Evelyn campaigned for the responsible management of forests as a vital natural resource for the nation. His influential illustrated book, *Sylva*, encouraged learning about and caring for native tree varieties. His writings on the importance of maintaining trees for future generations are astonishingly close to debates about ecological responsibility today.

London

Leather binding with gold tooling, paper

Museum no. L.1267-1948



Drawings from the proposal *The
Reforestation of the Thames Estuary and
the John Evelyn Institute of Arboreal
Science and Technology*, 2010

Tom Noonan

Architect Tom Noonan's imaginary vision for a future London takes inspiration from the writings of John Evelyn, exhibited nearby. Created as a student project at the Bartlett School of Architecture, Noonan's proposal explores reforesting the Thames Estuary. He imagines wood becoming London's main building material and the Thames a working river for transporting it. His designs include a wooden high-rise building in Greenwich.

London

Black pen and Indian ink on architectural drafting film; digital inkjet print on paper

Given by the artist

Museum nos. E.126, 129, 133-2012



Reimagining Traditions

For many artists and designers, innovating for the future can mean learning from the past. Centuries-old traditional forms of making from across the globe are providing vital sources of design inspiration. From practices rooted in ecological knowledge to projects reviving historic crafts, designers can reimagine traditions in new and unexpected ways.



Contemporary takes on tradition

Revisiting traditional making techniques can inspire their rebirth in new and surprising forms. Many designers and makers carry out expansive research into historic craft practices, bringing together diverse sources of inspiration into one project. These designs often reimagine traditional crafts with a contemporary eye, connecting them to new ideas and trends.



Celebrating textile crafts: The vision of Aneeth Arora

‘Today “Made in India” stands for more than just a label. It delves into the diversity of this vast country, of its crafts and cultures, traditions and rituals’, says Udaipur-born fashion designer Aneeth Arora. Her brand, Péro, takes inspiration from several traditional Indian textile techniques including tie-dye and ikat, as well as jamdani weaving, as seen in this sari from the 1800s. Handmade by artisans, Péro’s clothes connect tradition and modern trends.

Dress and shirt, 2010
Aneeth Arora for Péro
West Bengal (woven), Delhi (tailored), India
Jamdani weave cotton, with machine embroidery and handstitched details
Given by Aneeth Arora for Péro
Museum nos. IS.8, 9-2014

Half of a sari, 1855–79
Unrecorded maker
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Jamdani weave cotton
Museum no. 9632(IS)



Taking traditions in new directions: Issey Miyake and Pleats Please

For designer Issey Miyake, traditions of clothing and craft in his native Japan inspired innovation. He often experimented with new manufacturing technologies to reimagine techniques of pleating, folding and draping for a modern context. Together with textile designer Makiko Minagawa, he experimented with polyester and developed a mechanical way to pleat it permanently. These are early examples of what became known as the Pleats Please label, which is still produced today.

From left to right

Dress from *Hello, Pleats!* collection, 1991

Issey Miyake

Japan

Pleated polyester

Given by the designer

Museum no. T.262-1994

Dress from *Rhythm Pleats* collection, 1990

Issey Miyake

Japan

Pleated polyester-linen blend

Given by the designer

Museum no. T.231-1992



Reviving crafts at risk

Today, many rare and intricate crafts risk becoming extinct. They face many threats, from disappearing knowledge to the loss of the natural environments to which they connect. Designers can revive these crafts, reconnecting with skilled makers and histories of local materials. Bridging past and present, they reimagine meanings for traditional techniques.



Tile panel from the series 'Impression//Impression', 2018

Sara Ouhaddou

'My practice is based on collaboration with crafts communities', says French Moroccan artist Sara Ouhaddou. For this tile panel project, Ouhaddou reconnected local artisans to traditions of making ceramics with red clays from Morocco's Ourika Valley. This material is fast disappearing as industrial construction transforms the landscape. Artisans also increasingly work with imported clays and face pressures from the tourist trade. The project provided time for experimentation, away from these demands.

Morocco

Hand carved, unglazed red clay

Presented by Art Fund

Museum no. ME.1-2021

Art Fund_



Tiles from the series 'Kashi and Kashan', 2019

Abbas Akbari

'I give new life to the past', explains Tehran-based artist Abbas Akbari. At first glance, these tiles look like they were made in the 1200s. They echo traditional star and cross tiles from Iranian architecture and demonstrate Akbari's revival of historic ceramic glazing techniques. Closer inspection reveals a contemporary twist. Akbari replaces traditional decorative motifs with guns, bulldozers and cars to comment on the destruction of the natural environment and artistic heritage in Iran.

Iran

Clay tiles painted with lustre
pigment over a transparent glaze
Museum nos. ME.43 to 47-2020



Barniz de Pasto: An evolving tradition

The colourful decorative technique of *barniz de Pasto* (varnish from Pasto) has its origins in ancient, indigenous knowledge of tropical rainforest plants. This craft is unique to the Putamayo and Nariño regions of southwest Colombia. For centuries, specialist makers have used *mopa mopa*, a translucent resin harvested at altitude from a local tree, to create the elaborate surface decorations seen here. These examples were made during Spain's colonial occupation of the area.

Cabinet, 1640–60, metal mounts 1900s
Unrecorded makers

The cabinet's surface is teeming with fantastical creatures, local plants and symbols, showcasing the technique's potential to create intricate, layered decoration.

Colombia

Given by Dr Robert MacLeod Coupe and Heather Coupe in memory of their brother, Philip MacLeod Coupe

South American cedar with *barniz de Pasto* decoration, iron mounts

Museum no. W.5-2015

Continued on the next page →



Dish, 1650–1750

Unrecorded makers

Colombia

Wood with *barniz de Pasto* decoration

Museum no. 1262-1855

Flask, 1650–1750

Unrecorded makers

Colombia

Gourd with *barniz de Pasto* decoration and silver

Museum no. 268-1879



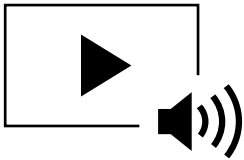
Brooch from 'Urcunina Series: 3', 2022

Tatiana Apráez with Germán Obando
Colombian designer Tatiana Apráez works with *barniz de Pasto* master Germán Obando to apply this traditional technique to her jewellery designs. This series is named after an active volcano near San Juan de Pasto, the city where *barniz* is made. For Apráez, the brooch's shape reflects the volcano 'as a guardian of city' and highlights 'the coexistence in the *barniz de Pasto* technique of ancestral knowledge with contemporary creativity, preserving our cultural inheritance'.

Colombia

Turned Pau d'arco wood with *barniz de Pasto* decoration
Museum no. W.6-2023





Discover the traditional technique of *barniz de Pasto* and hear about Tatiana Apráez's experience of revisiting it for jewellery design today.

Scan the QR code for audio description

Nariño, Colombia, 2023
Running time: 3 minutes
and 30 seconds



Learning from traditional ecological knowledge

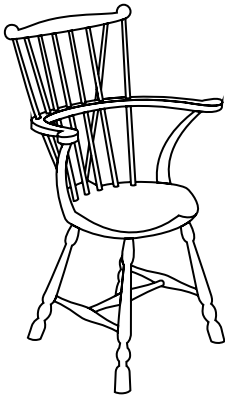
Across the world, diverse natural environments have inspired making traditions. Handed down through generations, these practices are often rooted in care and connection to the natural world. Today, they offer enduring insights on local, natural materials and using these in less intensive ways. Revisiting these traditions can inform how designers tackle many current environmental challenges.



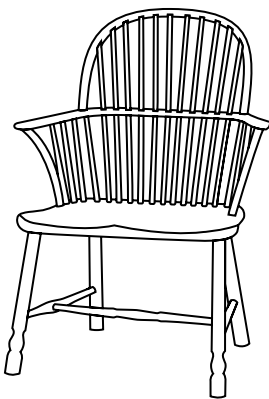
Making inspired by the forest

Making stick-back chairs, often known as Windsor chairs, has been an evolving tradition since the 1700s. The chairs were first produced in England by specialist craftspeople who used several local, native woods in a single chair, choosing each timber to suit specific parts. Their process relied on freshly cut green wood. By the 1900s, this woodworking technique inspired romanticised ideas of making in the forest known as 'bodging'. Today, it continues to inspire furniture makers.



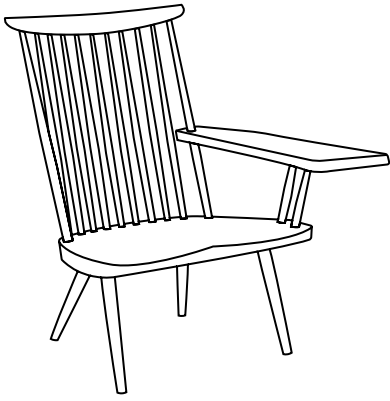


- 1 Oliver Goldsmith
Thames Valley armchair (sometimes known as a Windsor Chair), 1760–65
Unrecorded makers
Thames Valley, England
Seat, arms and back rail probably of elm;
top rail probably of elm; legs, uprights and stretchers of beech
Given by Lady Hawes
Museum no. 538-1872



- 2 Windsor armchair, about 1790–1810
Various makers
Thames Valley, England
Seat and frame of ash, hooped top rail of yew, upright back rails of beech
Given by F. L. Lucas
Museum no. W.8-1918





3 Windsor style chair, 1956
George Nakashima

Japanese American furniture maker George Nakashima revisited Windsor Chair traditions. In this design, the striking armrest celebrates the natural beauty of trees.

USA

Walnut

Museum no. W.72-1982



Bodge Bench, 2010

Gitta Gschwendtner

East London-based designer Gitta Gschwendtner created this bench in Clissett Wood in a workshop exploring 'bodging'. Working over five days, it was her first experiment with handmaking furniture in the style of Windsor chairs. 'In a world where we understand less and less how things work and are being made, it's nice to maintain some very basic making traditions.' She made her playful two-seater bench from a mix of local woods.

Clisset Wood, Herefordshire, UK

Ash and sycamore

Purchased through Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures, supported by John Makepeace OBE

Museum no. W.1-2022



Shoulder bag, 2018

Osklen

For Brazilian manufacturer Nova Kearu, fishing traditions inspired a new textile. This bag is made from the skin of pirarucu, a fish native to the rainforest rivers of the Amazon Basin. For indigenous communities in regions like Rondônia and Mamirauá, pirarucu fishing is integral to diet and employment, with government initiatives supporting this activity. Nova Kearu use the discarded pirarucu skins, producing a leather for Brazilian brands like Osklen who design bags with it.

Brazil

Pirarucu fish skin lined with pigskin leather, cotton
Given by Osklen and Instituto-E
Museum no. T.31:1-2018



Above

Dress, 1999

Dai Rees

British designer Dai Rees reimagines cane weaving as a dressmaking tool. For Rees, fashion can be a space for reviving traditional craft practices, imagining them ‘in a completely different kind of context’. This striking dress revisits historic techniques of weaving with natural cane, the hollow stem of tall grass, often used in basket and furniture making. The design explores the material’s natural ability to bend into complex shapes.

UK

Natural cane

Given by Dai Rees

Museum no. T.908:1-2000



Salmon skin coat, about 1900

Unrecorded Nivkh woman maker

Intricately woven from the skin of 60 salmon, this coat is a unique product of its subarctic environment. For centuries, salmon was a precious local resource for Nivkh people. No part went unused and it was central to their food and clothing traditions. This coat demonstrates Nivkh skills in creating lightweight, waterproof clothing from fish leather. For women, the ritual of sewing these coats enacted beliefs around respectful human-animal relationships.

Amur River estuary, eastern Siberia, Russia

Sewn salmon skin, with painted and applied silk decoration

Museum no. 626-1905



Model of Sharma Springs residence in Bali, Indonesia, 2011

IBUKU

‘Bamboo has had a long tradition as a building material in Bali. What we are doing is reinventing the rules and standards of what a building can look like’, says Elora Hardy, founder of Bali-based architecture practice IBUKU. The company works with Balinese artisans to harvest bamboo locally and design and construct buildings with it on a scale never done before. IBUKU champion bamboo as a sustainable, fast-growing plant and unique building material.

Bali, Indonesia

Bamboo and twine on a Styrofoam base

Given by the IBUKU Studio

Museum no. E.955-2019



Totomoxtle tile panels, ongoing since 2013 (2021 edition)

Fernando Laposse

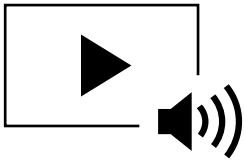
Designer Fernando Laposse created Totomoxtle to support farming traditions in his native Mexico. He believes in design 'as a communication tool to give a voice to farmers'. This project tackles the negative impacts of food monocultures by bringing back native corns. Together with indigenous Mixtec communities in Tonahuixtla, Laposse created a new veneer material from these corn husks, used for objects like these panels. Their dazzling colours celebrate the biodiversity that Totomoxtle seeks to revive.

Mexico

Panel of 12 Totomoxtle corn husk tiles in
polygonal pattern on a cork backing

Purchased through Make Good: Rethinking Material
Futures, supported by John Makepeace OBE
Museum no. W.18-2024





Explore three films:

See how IBUKU are reimagining bamboo architecture.

Bali, 2011

Running time: 3 minutes and 45 seconds

Discover the story of Fernando Laposse's collaboration with farmers.

Tonahuixtla, Mexico, 2023

Running time: 3 minutes and 45 seconds

Hear from Gitanjali J Angmo about building a new university town in the Himalayas.

London and India, 2019–24

Running time: 3 minutes and 30 seconds

Scan the QR code for audio descriptions



A locally rooted university to meet the challenges of climate crisis

The Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL) is a new university dedicated to local young people and mountain communities in northern India. Its founders, Sonam Wangchuk and Gitanjali J Angmo, created a vision to build the campus as a new, sustainable town. HIAL's teaching is rooted in deep care for the natural environment, drawing on local traditions and spiritual practices.

Masterplan drawing of HIAL campus, 2024

HIAL with Future Institute

Ladakh, India

Display print from digital drawing

Gift of the Founders of Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (Sonam Wangchuk and Gitanjali J. Angmo)

Museum no. E.255-2026

HIAL teaching aid, 2022

Designed by Gitanjali J. Angmo,
produced by students at HIAL

Ladakh, India

Hand-painted wood

Gift of the Founders of Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (Sonam Wangchuk and Gitanjali J. Angmo)

Museum no. E.253-2026



Learning from natural building traditions

Every HIAL campus building puts the vision of locally rooted, responsible design into practice. HIAL students learn through making architectural models like this, and get involved in constructing campus buildings. The design of this building draws inspiration from centuries-old techniques that use raw, unfired soil (known as rammed earth). All materials seen here come from natural sources in the region and need minimal energy to process.

Model of HIAL Staff Quarters building, 2022

Students of HIAL

Ladakh, India

Gift of the Founders of Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (Sonam Wangchuk and Gitanjali J. Angmo)

Rammed earth, balsa wood, paint, glue

Museum no. E.862-2022

Sample materials for natural earth building, 2022

Students of HIAL

Ladakh, India

Timber, clay, pashmina wool, hay, Perspex

Gift of the Founders of Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (Sonam Wangchuk and Gitanjali J. Angmo)

Museum no. E.254-2026



Designing ice stupas: Water as a sacred resource

‘We wanted to integrate traditional practices and beliefs with innovative technology, because climate change cannot be handled by engineering alone’, says Sonam Wangchuk. One of HIAL’s engineering design innovations are ice stupas. These are artificial glaciers created by university teams and locals to provide a reliable water supply for mountain communities. Inspired by stupas, sacred structures in the local religion of Buddhism, the glaciers echo their shape and symbolise water as a sacred resource.

The Ice Stupa Manual, 2018

Sonam Wangchuk (editor), with contributions
from Simant Verma, Athulya Pillai
And Sonam Dorjay, Padma Rigzin,
Ice Stupa volunteers

Ladakh, India

Display print from digital file

Gift of the Founders of Himalayan Institute
of Alternatives, Ladakh (Sonam Wangchuk
and Gitanjali J. Angmo)

Museum no. E.263-2026



Ice stupas in locations across Ladakh
Photographs courtesy of the Himalayan
Institute of Alternatives Ladakh

Clay stupa (*chorten*), about 1873

Unrecorded maker

Ladakh, India

Painted clay with modern replica parts

Museum no. 1770(IS)

Relic container in the form of a stupa, 100–499

Unrecorded maker

Gandhara (now northwest Pakistan)

Carved schist

Given by Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. Cobb OBE

Museum no. IS.140-1954



Voicing Dissent

From enabling personal activism to amplifying political movements, making objects can be a powerful tool of resistance and solidarity. For centuries, subversive graphics and rebellious accessories have accompanied protest. Even the smallest object can make a statement, inspiring ways to voice dissent.



Graphics that give a voice

Protest posters harness the visual power of memorable logos, striking contrasts and slogans to amplify the voice of a campaign. From placards on marches to billboard takeovers, printed graphics are circulated in varied formats to reach mass audiences. Communicating issues across diverse global contexts, some designers even defy censorship and risk punishment for their work.



Designing a decade of protest: Solidarity, 1980–89

Polish graphic designer Jerzy Janiszewski created the Solidarity logo in response to protests for worker rights and democratic freedoms in Communist Poland. Adopted by the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) trade union, the logo defined the organisation's campaigns in Poland and abroad. The logo also inspired the *Solidaryca* typeface. Contemporary designers used it to spell out different slogans over a decade of protest, from years of martial law to the first semi-democratic elections in 1989. Today, *Solidaryca* lives on as a national typeface.

Solidarity. Poland 80 poster, 1980
Jerzy Janiszewski

The logo was inspired by the word *Solidarność* (Solidarity) appearing as graffiti on walls in Gdańsk shipyards. It suggests the shape of a moving crowd.

Poland
Lithograph in black and red printed on paper
Museum no. E.3124-1990

Continued on the next page →



Solidarności Rok Pierwszy
(*Solidarity's First Year*) poster, 1981
Gerard Lewandowski, with logo by
Jerzy Janiszewski/ issued by Solidarity
Independent Trade Union
Poland
Lithograph printed in brown and red on paper
Museum no. E.2101-1990

Poster from the fundraising campaigns
in France in support of *Solidarność*, about 1982
Unrecorded designer
France
Lithograph printed in black and red on paper
Given by Antony Pospieszalski
Museum no. E.166-1991

Głosuj z nami (Vote with us) poster, 1989
Aleksander Król and Jacek Marczewski/issued
by Solidarity Independent Trade Union
Poland
Offset lithograph printed in black and red on paper
Museum no. E.2205-1990



Save the Arctic. Stop Shell poster
for Greenpeace, 2012 (designed),
2013 (printed)

Christian Uhlenfeldt

Here Danish graphic designer Christian Uhlenfeldt subverts the well-known logo of oil company Shell, inserting horns and splicing it with the face of an endangered polar bear. Using subvertising (subverting adverts) as a graphic tool, the poster highlights the negative environmental impacts of Arctic oil drilling. The design has since been blown up onto giant banners and used by environmental organisation Greenpeace in many high-profile stunts.

Denmark

Digital inkjet print on paper

Given by Christian Uhlenfeldt/Greenpeace

Museum no. E.41-2014



Save Our Planet, Save Our Cities! poster
from the 'Save Our Planet' series, 1971

R. Buckminster Fuller for Olivetti & Co. SpA
The first Earth Day, held across the USA on 22 April 1970, sparked many poster campaigns around environmental issues, with artists often contributing designs. American architect and inventor R. Buckminster Fuller created this poster for an anti-pollution campaign. It features a striking image from his work with Japanese architect Shoji Sadao. The *Dome over Manhattan* project was one of their experimental concepts for environmental challenges in New York City.

USA

Half-tone and screen-printed poster

Given by Olivetti Ltd

Museum no. E.137-1972



Inspiring solidarity across borders: OSPAAAL, 1968–74

The Organisation of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) was founded in Havana to unite international support for revolutionary liberation movements in the Global South. A mix of graphic designers and artists worked for OSPAAAL. Their designs featured bright, block colours and bold motifs, often favouring strong imagery over words to convey messages. OSPAAAL distributed posters to anti-colonial activists across three continents, folded inside their magazine *Tricontinental*.

Guinea and Cape Verde Solidarity
OSPAAAL, about 1974
Berta Abelenda Fernández

These designs communicate the importance of women fighters in liberation movements. This was a recurring theme in OSPAAAL posters.

Cuba
Offset lithograph poster
Purchased with the support of the
V&A Members Fund
Museum no. E.353-2018

Continued on the next page →



Che Guevara, 1968
Helena Serrano
Cuba
Offset lithograph poster
Purchased with the support of the
V&A Members Fund
Museum no. E.472-2018

*Day of Solidarity with Afro-American
People/August 18, 1968*
Daysi García López
Cuba
Offset lithograph poster
Purchased with the support of the
V&A Members Fund
Museum no. E.456-2018

AFRICA, 1970
Gladis Acosta
Cuba
Offset lithograph poster
Gift of the American Friends of the V&A;
Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith
and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batko
Museum no. E.796-2004

*International Week of Solidarity
with Latin America, 1973*
Asela Perez
Cuba
Offset lithograph poster
Purchased with the support
of the V&A Members Fund
Museum no. E.432-2018



Wearing protest

Wearable objects can define and unify protest movements, from subtle jewellery to statement clothing worn on a march. Across centuries, the design of these special accessories has been used to communicate political messages. Expressing dissent can bring together trained makers and people learning a craft for the first time.



Protest from prison:

The Free Zulu Zu-Tag, 2013–14

When he designed the *Zu-Tag*, American Kenny Zulu Whitmore had been in solitary confinement at Louisiana State Penitentiary for 35 years. Writing letters from his cell, Whitmore gained sympathisers worldwide. This tag was produced by prisoners in onsite workshops and sold to raise money for Whitmore's legal campaign. People wear it to express solidarity with his cause. In 2015, Whitmore's appeal was upheld and he was moved into a communal dormitory.

- 1 *Zu-Tag* pendant, 2013
Designed by Kenny Zulu Whitmore,
made by unrecorded prisoners
Louisiana, USA
Chrome-plated steel
Given by Catherine Flood
Museum nos. M.3:1, 2-2018

- 2 Letter to V&A visitors, 2014
Kenny Zulu Whitmore
USA
Photocopy ink on paper
Given by Catherine Flood
Museum no. M.3:3-2018



Please be aware that this object contains imagery of violence suffered by enslaved Black Africans.

Handbag with anti-slavery emblem, about 1825

Female Society for Birmingham,
with print by Samuel Lines

Produced in their hundreds, bags like this became a wearable statement of solidarity with the anti-slavery cause. They were made by members of The Female Society for Birmingham, the first anti-slavery group for women in the UK. The society ran sewing groups to craft accessories communicating campaign messages, often drawing attention to the abuses inflicted on enslaved people. Members distributed pamphlets inside these bags, including first-hand accounts from enslaved people.

- 3 Birmingham, UK
Printed silk satin with glazed cotton lining (handle missing)
Given by Mrs Foster
Museum no. T.227-1966



Pussyhat, 2017

Courtney Case

Craft and activism came together in the design for the *Pussyhat*, a knitted pink hat worn during the 2017 Women's March protesting US President Trump. Conceived by Americans Jayna Zweiman and Krista Suh, the *Pussyhat* Project turned the march into a 'sea of pink', using hats as a unifying visual statement. Courtney Case was one of thousands to knit and wear one, using patterns from the Project's website. Her striped *Pussyhat* celebrates the diversity of women.

- 4 New York City, USA
Variegated pink hat, acrylic yarn,
stocking stitch with ribbed hem
Given by Courtney Case
Museum no. CD.67-2020



Screen printing in the streets

As protests sparked in Lebanon in October 2019, Lebanese graphic designer Farah Fayyad felt compelled to act. With friends, Fayyad set up a manual screen-printing press in the streets of Beirut. 'An instant, urgent and spontaneous collective was formed', she recalls. Over four days, they offered free, on-the-spot printing of clothes and accessories with a range of protest images. Lebanese illustrator Tracey Chahwan contributed this design, celebrating feminist activists in the uprising.

T-shirt, 2019

Design by Tracey Chahwan, screen-printed
by Farah Fayyad and Siwar Kraytem

Lebanon

Screenprint on cotton

Given by the artists

Museum no. ME.10-2022

Why are we celebrating?, 2021

Farah Fayyad and Tal G

Lebanon

Digital film

Given by the artists

Museum no. ME.14-2022

Running time: 5 minutes and 57 seconds



Secret statements of political loyalty

Following the English Civil War, King Charles I was executed for treason in 1649. The monarchy was dissolved for over ten years, sparking a trend for commemorative jewellery among people loyal to the royal family. Rings like this, with Charles I's portrait, were worn in secret by supporters as statements of mourning and solidarity. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, the rings became public symbols of allegiance to Charles' son, King Charles II.

- 1 Ring with portrait of Charles I,
portrait probably 1600s, setting 1700s
Unrecorded maker
England
Gold with enamelled miniature,
enclosed by rock crystal
Bequeathed by Miss A. Cameron
Museum no. M.1-1909
- 2 Ring with portrait of Charles I, mid 1600s
Unrecorded maker
England
Gold, with enamelled detail, and
miniature enclosed by rock crystal
Given by Dame Joan Evans
Museum no. M.145-1962



The subversive politics of a stamp

Finland's postal service (Itella Posti Oy) released these stamps in 2014 to celebrate artist Tom of Finland. His illustrations from the 1950s of hyper-masculine men are considered icons of gay culture. As an act of protest and provocation, Finnish broadcaster Yle used these stamps to post packages, including this envelope, to Russia. Responding to Russia's law banning LGBTQ+ imagery, they said, 'we wanted to test how the Russian postal service and customs would respond.'

- 3 Set of Tom of Finland stamps, 2014
Timo Berry, Tom of Finland, Itella Posti Oy
Finland
Printed, adhesive paper
Given by Itella Posti Oy
Museum no. CD.54:6-2014

- 4 Envelope sent by Yle, Finland, to Russian resident, with Tom of Finland stamps, 2014
Finland
Pen on paper, adhesive stamps
Given by Yleisradio Oy
Museum no. CD.55-2014



Flyers from *The Trillion Dollar Campaign*, 2009 TBWA\Hunt\Lascaaris

When *The Zimbabwean Newspaper* was shut down for criticising President Robert Mugabe's regime, it found alternative ways to communicate its messages, working from exile. With South Africa-based advertising agency TBWA\Hunt\Lascaaris, the newspaper developed a campaign about the economic disaster in Zimbabwe. Alongside billboards and posters, it used banknotes as flyers, provocatively highlighting that the currency was worth less than paper. 'We needed an idea that would ... make the whole world sit up and take notice.'

5 South Africa

Letterpress and ink printed on Zimbabwean banknotes

TBWA\Hunt\Lascaaris

Museum nos. E.1081, 1082-2011

