

Touch Me

Design and Sensation

16 June - 29 August 2005

A V&A and Wellcome Trust Exhibition

This June the V&A, in collaboration with the Wellcome Trust, opens a uniquely touchable contemporary design exhibition, *Touch Me*, which explores the pleasures and sensations of touch, looking at the designed world around us now and what the future holds.

What would it be like to squeeze a doorbell rather than press it? Or stroke the TV to turn it on? Would people rather kiss when they meet or shake hands? From site specific art and design commissions to games, live science experiments and a garden of the senses, *Touch Me* is both fun and thought-provoking as it looks at contemporary design products and installations that relate to our sense of touch.

The first section displays around 90 designs in a series of roomsets including a living room, bedroom, kitchen, dining room, office and garden shed. In the kitchen are Julia Leihener's *Thups*, drinking glasses which rest on the thumb for the new 'thumb' generation of texters and computer gamers; BlackBerry mobiles are in the office; Yoshi Saito's *Hug chair* is in the living room, a contemporary take on the traditional kissing seat which encourages people to hug each other when they sit down, and pleasurable sensations are in the bedroom - from silks to jewellery.

An interactive garden of the senses fills the second section of the exhibition where visitors can play games, take part in live science experiments and engage all their senses in an immersive sensory room. Visitors will be able to challenge each other to a game of 'chicken' on the *Painstation*, play table tennis with a difference on MIT Medialab's *PingPongPlus* or take part in a human-scale 'PacMan' game using *Spacehoppers*.

'Their Lips Met' is a display curated by the artist Richard Wentworth, developed especially for *Touch Me*. Borrowing from both private and museum collections, Wentworth emphasises the mouth as the first organ of touch and taste, the place where infants start their exploration of the world and what it means.

Touch Me features work by a diverse range of international furniture, product, fashion and interaction designers including Hella Jongerius, IDEO, Karim Rashid, Marcel Wanders, Matali Crasset, Paul Cockledge, Gitta Gschwendtner, Tokujin Yoshioka, Naomi Filmer and Shelley Fox. The exhibition also showcases a range of innovative designs for the future - from the Royal College of Art, Central Saints Martins, the Interaction Design Institute Ivrea and MIT Medialab.

Touch Me explores the social, scientific, emotional and personal aspects of how we relate through touch and raises a series of questions about the future. Do we live in a touch-starved society? Can 'virtual' touch interaction ever be a substitute for real touch? What are designers doing to improve the quality of how we touch and use products of all kinds? Can our sense of touch help us develop stronger emotional and social relationships with each other?

Curators of Touch Me

Touch Me is curated by Hugh Aldersey-Williams and Lauren Parker.

Lauren Parker is a Curator of Contemporary Programmes at the V&A, specialising in new media and audio. She has curated several exhibitions and events programmes including the V&A's first ever audio exhibition, *Shhh...* (V&A, 2004). She is the author of *Interplay: Interactive Design* (V&A Publication, 2004).

Hugh Aldersey-Williams is a freelance writer and curator with interests in science, design and architecture. He curated *Zoomorphic: New Animal Architecture* at the V&A in 2003. His most recent book is *Findings: Hidden Stories in First-hand Accounts of Scientific Discovery*.

Notes to editor

- Touch Me runs from 16 June - 29 August 2005.
- Tickets: Full £5, Senior Citizens, full time students and 12-17 year olds £4.
- Touch Me has been designed by V&A designer Line Lund with graphics by Graphic Thought Facility.
- Selected items in the exhibition will not be touchable.
- Entry to the V&A is FREE.
- The Wellcome Trust is an independent, research-funding charity, established under the will of Sir Henry Wellcome in 1936. The Trust's mission is to foster and promote research with the aim of improving human and animal health. The Trust also runs an exhibition programme that invests in art that has public and scientific impact.
- An extensive series of events to coincide with the exhibition are listed on the web site: www.vam.ac.uk.

- High quality downloadable images are available free for press use on www.imagenet.co.uk (under 'Arts' and 'V&A') or call direct on 020 7841 0550.
- For general enquiries: 020 7942 2000. www.vam.ac.uk.

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