

Design Museum to bring the story of Surrealism in design up-to-date for first time in a major new exhibition



Salvador Dalí, Lobster Telephone, 1938. Photo West Dean College of Arts and Conservation.
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Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today

A Vitra Design Museum exhibition

14 October 2022 – 19 February 2023

the Design Museum

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- **This is the first time the Design Museum has explored the relationship of fine art to design on this scale in a major exhibition**
- **Nearly 350 objects will be on display, from Man Ray and Salvador Dalí to Sarah Lucas and Dior**

The Design Museum today announces full details of its landmark autumn exhibition exploring Surrealism's impact on the world of design.

For the first time in a major UK exhibition, Surrealism's relationship to the design world will be told up to the present day. Artworks and objects from Man Ray, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp and Leonora Carrington will be seen alongside pieces by Sarah Lucas, Björk, Tim Walker and Dior.

Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today will open at the Design Museum in London in October. It will survey the ground-breaking Surrealism movement and how it not only revolutionised art, but also design: from decorative arts and furniture to interiors, fashion, photography and film. This is the first time the Design Museum has explored the relationship of fine art to design on this scale in a major exhibition.

The exhibition will cover nearly 100 years, and close to 350 objects will be on display. Some of the world's most famous Surrealist paintings and sculptures – such as Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* and Man Ray's *The Gift (Le Cadeau)* – will go on show alongside dozens of contemporary pieces of art and design. Nearly a third of the objects on show are from the past 50 years. Most of the objects on show are on loan from the Vitra Design Museum in Germany, with other pieces coming on loan from private collections and leading institutions including Tate and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts.

Objects of Desire will be split into four sections, focussing on Surrealism's influence on everyday objects, interior design, fashion and the body, and the mind. It starts with an examination of Surrealism's beginnings from the 1920s and considers the crucial role that design played in its evolution from the very beginning. Everyday objects and interiors were embraced by the movement's early protagonists, as artists sought to capture the aura or mysterious side of ordinary household objects. Artists including Dalí, Magritte, Meret Oppenheim and Man Ray experimented with an entirely new form of sculpture, by creating absurd objects from found materials and items. Visitors will be able to see some of the most famous examples of these early surrealist sculptures, such as Man Ray's *Cadeau/Audace* (1921) comprising of a traditional flat iron studded with nails, Magritte's painting and sculpture *This is a Piece of Cheese (Ceci est un morceau de fromage)* (1936 or 1937), and Marcel Duchamp's *Porte-Bouteilles* (1959 re-edition of lost 1914 original), a so-called 'readymade' artwork made from a bottle rack and considered one of the most influential sculptures of the 20th century.

It was from the 1940s when inspiration began to move in the opposite direction, as designers began looking to Surrealist art for ideas to create surprising, even humorous objects. The humble bicycle became a common

motif, and visitors will see Gae Aulenti's *Tour* (1993), a table made from a glass top supported by four bicycle wheels set in chrome forks, Jasper Morrison's own 'readymade' *Handlebar Table* (1982) and *Sella* (1957), by brothers Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, which is composed of a bicycle saddle mounted on a post fixed into a hemispherical base, blurring the boundary between furniture and art.

The section on Surrealism and the body will examine the movement's embrace of the human form as a canvas. No other modern art and design movement has focused so intensively on the body, sexuality and desire. The exhibition includes photographs showing the likes of Marcel Duchamp dressed as his female alter ego, Rose Selavy, while Claude Cahun's *Self-Portrait (in the Mirror)* of c.1928 is a striking expression of her style and with a composition that blurs conventional gender indicators. Alongside these are contemporary works including Sarah Lucas' *Cigarette Tits*, which uses the language of the tabloids to expose stereotypes of female sexuality, and Najla el Zein's *Hay*, from her series 'Sensorial Brushes', which draws attention to the sensory pleasures offered by everyday materials.

The exhibition will also shine a spotlight on Surrealism's specific significance here in the UK. This includes the partnership between Salvador Dalí and the British poet and art patron, Edward James, whose friendship and collaboration resulted in the creation of world-famous Surrealist interior design pieces. These included the Mae West Lips sofas, described as the single most important piece of Surrealist furniture in the UK. Five versions were originally created in 1938 by Dalí on the suggestion of James. The version on show in the exhibition is on loan from Brighton Museums and will be seen in the exhibition alongside a pair of Champagne Lamps, another of their collaborations. These take the form of a Victorian standard lamp but subvert it with a base made from whimsically oversized 'champagne glasses' in brass. These will be united with one of the four original *Lobster Telephone* works by Dalí, also commissioned by Edward James for his London residence. Where most Surrealism exhibitions usually show this piece in isolation as an art object, here it will be spotlighted as a piece of functional design, albeit a wildly imaginative and sculptural one.

Surrealism's influence on fashion, which began in the 1930s, will also be a major strand of the exhibition. Several Surrealist artists also worked as fashion photographers, including Lee Miller and Man Ray, and some such as Dalí and de Chirico created covers for fashion magazines such as *Vogue*. Photographs and vintage copies of these magazines will be on show to highlight these connections, and they will be seen together with

Surrealism-inspired photography for modern-day magazines such as Tim Walker's 2013 photo shoot with actress Tilda Swinton for *W Magazine*.

Dalí's collaboration with the French fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli resulted in several ground-breaking designs. Their first collaborative piece, the *Telephone Dial Powder Compact*, will be a highlight of the exhibition - this must-have 1930s accessory was so successful that it was widely faked. The exhibition will also highlight Surrealism's enduring influence on Maison Schiaparelli, the haute couture house created by Schiaparelli in 1927. Two stunning contemporary gowns will be on show: one uses Schiaparelli's signature pink on a shocking minidress with a muscular shape, and the other is a modern reprise of her iconic *Skeleton Dress*. Both demonstrate the maison's creative director Daniel Roseberry's contemporary take on Elsa Schiaparelli's design language. Visitors will also see Maria Grazia Chui's 'Salvador Dalí' ensemble, inspired by Dalí's historical collaboration with Christian Dior on costumes for 'The Ball of the Century' in Venice. Mary Katrantzou, Iris van Herpen and emerging Afro-surrealist inspired fashion designer Yasmina Atta have also loaned garments to the exhibition.

Surrealists worked with the objects around them. Today, those everyday objects include powerful technology systems that govern our lives in ways far beyond what was previously thought possible. The exhibition will examine how contemporary artists and designers are embracing these rapid changes to shake up the creative process, discover new tools, and think differently. For example, sketches will be on show by contemporary designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, who use an intuitive, automatic drawing process to discover new imagery and forms. This represents a 21st-century continuation of the strategies by which the early Surrealists hoped to invite chance into the creative process, allow the subconscious to find expression, and free themselves from conventional art and design practice.

Also on show will be examples of Sketch furniture which is traced by the designer's hand and body in mid-air using motion capture. The spontaneously drawn forms are translated into a digital file, and then 3D printed to create functional furniture. Design studio Front innovated this method in 2005 to introduce instinct and physicality into the design process, and it is one of the most striking examples of how technology is offering exciting new avenues for Surrealist ideas.

Tim Marlow, the Design Museum's CEO and Director, said: *"From its very beginnings, Surrealism looked to design and everyday objects for inspiration, but few are aware of the movement's decisive impact on design."*

This eye-opening exhibition will take visitors on a fascinating journey through 100 years of this radical relationship, and it will bring the story right up to the present day for the very first time. The exhibition is both a landmark in the history of Surrealism and design and part of a rich and ongoing story of London's engagement with one of the great cultural movements of the last century."

Kathryn Johnson, Curator of *Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today* at the Design Museum, said: *"If you think Surrealism fizzled out in the 1960s, think again. This exhibition will show that it is still alive and well and that it never really went away. The early Surrealists were survivors of the First World War and the 1918 influenza pandemic, and their art was in part a reaction to those horrors. Today, in the context of dizzying technological change, war and another global pandemic, Surrealism's spirit feels more alive than ever in contemporary design."*

Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today A Vitra Design Museum exhibition opens at the Design Museum on 14 October 2022. Tickets are on sale from today and can be purchased online at designmuseum.org/surrealism

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About the Design Museum:

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to contemporary architecture and design. Its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989 the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over seven million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams.

On 24 November 2016, The Design Museum relocated to Kensington, west London. John Pawson has converted the interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design Museum giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme. In 2020, the Design Museum was awarded £2,968,634 by Arts Council England from the Culture Recovery Fund announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and nearly £1 million National Lottery funding through the Arts Council's Emergency Response Fund. Since opening in Kensington in 2016, the Design Museum has hosted major exhibitions including *Stanley Kubrick: The Exhibition*, *Moving to Mars*, *Amy: Beyond the Stage*, *Sneakers Unboxed: Studio to Street*, *Electronic: From Kraftwerk to The Chemical Brothers*, *Charlotte Perriand: The Modern Life* and *California: Designing Freedom*.

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About Vitra Design Museum:

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**DESIGN
MUSEUM**

The Vitra Design Museum numbers among the world's leading museums of design. It is dedicated to the research and presentation of design, past and present, and examines design's relationship to architecture, art and everyday culture. In the main museum building by Frank Gehry, the museum annually mounts two major temporary exhibitions, such as »Here We Are! Women in Design 1900 - Today« (2021) or »Plastic: Remaking Our World« (2022). In addition, smaller shows are presented in the Vitra Design Museum Gallery, which often follow a more contemporary and experimental approach.

The Vitra Schaudapot, which was designed by Herzog & de Meuron, presents approximately 400 key objects from the extensive collection and hence resembles one of the largest permanent collections and research sites on modern furniture design worldwide. Annual focus topics at the Vitra Schaudapot reveal the collection of the Vitra Design Museum in a fresh light.

<https://www.design-museum.de/en/information.html>

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<https://artmentor.ch/en/>