

V&A opens new permanent gallery for furniture

The Dr Susan Weber Gallery

Opens 1 December 2012

Frank Lloyd Wright Chair for the Ward Willlets House
USA, 1902. © ARS, NY and DACS, London, 2012



The V&A will open its new Dr Susan Weber Gallery in December, providing a permanent home for the Museum's internationally renowned furniture collection. The Museum has always displayed furniture in other galleries, but this will be the first ever V&A gallery dedicated to furniture. It is also the only gallery worldwide to tell the story of furniture production through the way each piece was made and the people who made it. Designed by NORD Architecture, the gallery will display more than 200 outstanding pieces of British and European furniture, from the Middle Ages to the present day, as well as examples of American and Asian furniture and will examine in detail the range of materials and techniques employed for each piece.

The gallery will enable the V&A to show some objects that have not been on display for more than 30 years, with pieces ranging from chairs, stools, tables, bureaux, chests, cabinets and wardrobes, to clocks, mirrors and screens. Well-known designers such as Thomas Chippendale, David Roentgen, Grinling Gibbons, George Bullock, Robert Adam, Eileen Gray, Michael Thonet, Charles and Ray Eames, Ron Arad and Tom Dixon will be represented alongside lesser-known names selected for their superior techniques.

The gallery will tell the story of how furniture was made and decorated over 600 years, exploring a thematic range of materials and techniques ranging from joinery, moulding, upholstery and digital manufacture, to carving, marquetry, gilding and lacquer. It will focus on techniques of construction and decoration and will include numerous examples of how conservation and analysis have revealed previously unknown information about the way in which the objects were made. On display will be a 15th-century medieval desk cupboard which reveals how English furniture makers of the time used oak sourced from 1500 miles away, and a bureau (1780-1820) from Mexico, veneered with mother-of-pearl which would have required craftsmen to saw shells for 5000 hours.

Highlights will include a dining chair designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1949), a gilded cassone made for the Duke of Urbino (about 1509) and a scagliola decorated table formerly at Warwick Castle (1675). A central chronological display will highlight 25 key pieces from

the collection ranging from a storage unit by Charles and Ray Eames (1949-50), a Gothic revival cradle designed by Richard Norman Shaw (1861) to one of the newest pieces in the collection, the 'Branca' chair, designed by Industrial Facility (2011) and *Wooden Heap*, a drawer unit designed by Boris Dennler, which was acquired as part of this year's Design Fund to Benefit the V&A. There will also be a newly-commissioned seating installation by contemporary designer Gitta Gschwendtner, inspired by historic pieces in the collection.

The gallery will incorporate innovative and interactive technologies such as digital labels with a touch-screen interface to provide additional content and context for each object, a first for the V&A. Films in the gallery will explore key techniques including joinery, boule marquetry and digital manufacturing. 14 specially-commissioned audio recordings will record the responses of contemporary experts, including David Adjaye and Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, to the work of historic designers.

The gallery has been designed as part of the V&A's FuturePlan to transform the Museum through new galleries and redisplays of its collections. FuturePlan aims to create beautiful and contemporary new settings for the V&A's outstanding collections while restoring much of the building's original architecture and improving visitors' experience of the Museum.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- The Furniture Gallery is FREE
- The gallery has been curated by Nick Humphrey and Leela Meinertas
- The V&A is open daily 10.00 – 17.45 and until 22.00 every Friday
- The Furniture Gallery has been designed by NORD Architecture
- For more information about the V&A's furniture collections please visit www.vam.ac.uk/page/f/furniture

For further PRESS information please contact the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2502 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk

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