



News Release

V&A commission Havana-based artist collective Los Carpinteros for Europe 1600-1815 galleries installation, opening December 2015

The V&A has commissioned the artist collective Los Carpinteros to create a contemporary installation for the Museum's new *Europe 1600-1815* galleries, opening to the public in December 2015. Established in 1992, Los Carpinteros have received international acclaim for their sculptural pieces. The duo work between Madrid and Havana, and this will be their first major project for a London museum.

Charged with devising a large-scale, imaginative and thought-provoking piece that would sit within the gallery examining the Enlightenment, Los Carpinteros proposed *The Globe*. It is a curved architectural sculpture made from a lattice of engineered beech that will form a 'room within a room' at the heart of the new Europe displays. Occupying a pivotal space – both architecturally and in terms of the narrative of the galleries – it will offer visitors an opportunity to pause and reflect, as well as encourage engagement with the complex concept of the Enlightenment. Seating up to 30 people, *The Globe* will also be used as a space for programmed salons, events and discussions.

The period represented the triumph of intellectual curiosity and enquiry, a culture of increasing literacy and debate, and a desire to acquire and classify knowledge. This is encapsulated in one of the most important publications of the 18th century, Diderot and Alembert's *Encyclopedia* (1751-1772). A vast collaborative project involving many of the leading thinkers of the day, it aimed to gather all available knowledge, to examine it critically and rationally, and to bring it to a wide public. Bernard and Picart's *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World* (1723-1743) will be on display in the gallery. A number of sculptural busts from the period will be placed in dialogue around *The Globe* and be visible from inside the installation, recalling the intellectual environment and salon culture, and making connections between past and present.

Lesley Miller, lead curator for *Europe 1600-1815*, said: "*Bringing alive the Enlightenment is a challenge for a curator – how might we represent intellectual thought and debate in a gallery? Los Carpinteros' work, set among sculpture and books from the period, creates a fundamentally different experience for visitors – inviting them into a contemplative, calm place to reflect and think. The design of The Globe reflects not only the world but also, in its bookshelf, cell-like construction, the organisation of knowledge – central to Enlightenment thought. It also creates space for intellectual debate in a relatively informal setting – the V&A's own 21st-century take on an 18th-century salon, if you like.*"

Los Carpinteros said: *"Our commission for the V&A is the culmination of a 20-year fascination with the idea of the 'panopticon'. First devised in the 18th century by Jeremy Bentham, these structures promoted surveillance and control and were originally intended for prisons. The Globe reinterprets this format as an observation point midway through the Museum's new galleries. It is a station for rest, contemplation and discussion that will relate closely to the objects that surround it."*

Our work to date has mainly been with museums and galleries dedicated to contemporary art, so it has been very exciting to work in the context of the V&A's historical collection of objects, fine art and design; a world with which our practice has many familiarities and connections. Here our work as artists, craftsmen, designers and carpenters has a rare practical utility and function alongside its symbolism - with pleasingly ambiguous results."

The V&A has an established reputation for working with contemporary artists and designers to respond to the permanent collections. Past collaborations have included site-specific commissions from Elmgreen & Dragset, Cornelia Parker, Edmund De Waal, Felice Varini, rAndom International, and Troika.

The *Europe 1600-1815* galleries will open to the public in December 2015, following the transformation of seven galleries for the redisplay of the Museum's unrivalled collection of 17th- and 18th-century European art and design. A major part of the V&A's ongoing redevelopment programme known as FuturePlan, the £12.5m project will complete the restoration of the entire front wing of the Museum for the display of more than 1,100 objects. In its prominent position next to the V&A's grand entrance, Europe 1600-1815 will continue the story of art and design that begins in the award-winning Medieval & Renaissance Galleries (opened 2009).

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Notes to Editors

- **Los Carpinteros** (The Carpenters) are Marco Antonio Castillo Valdes (b. 1971) and Dagoberto Rodríguez Sanchez (b. 1969). A Havana-based collective, they have created some of the most important work to emerge from Latin America in the past decade. Formed in 1992 (with Alexandre Arrechea until his departure in June 2003), Los Carpinteros took their name in 1994, deciding to renounce the notion of individual authorship and refer back to an older guild tradition of artisans and skilled craftsmen. Merging architecture, design, and sculpture in unexpected and often playful ways, their work negotiates between the functional and the non-functional. Their carefully crafted drawings and installations use wit to set up contradictions between object and function as well as practicality and uselessness. Their work is in the permanent collections of many leading international museums and galleries.
<http://www.loscarpinteros.net>
- The V&A invited proposals for “the creation of an imaginative, exciting and thought provoking work, or concept, that not only challenges and engages the audience but which also introduces them to a different kind of aesthetic experience”. The commission was conceived as a way of drawing visitors to the space and of encouraging visitors to engage with the challenging ideas of the Enlightenment.
- *The Globe* has been made and installed by **Tin Tab**, a specialist creative engineering group and producers of highly innovative furniture and staircases. With the V&A and Los Carpinteros, they designed, engineered and manufactured hundreds of components out of Beech Multiply, worked on by hand and machine and completed like a giant 3D puzzle. Tin Tab has been established for over 17 years. Based in Newhaven, East Sussex, Tin Tab’s workshop has a team of 15 expert designers and makers from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. www.tintab.com