



V&A's 2013 Christmas Tree

by Helen and Colin David

3 December 2013 – 6 January 2014



To celebrate the festive period, the V&A has commissioned artists Helen and Colin David to create a Christmas Tree for the Grand Entrance of the Museum.

The 'Red Velvet Tree of Love' is traditional in shape but is coated in visceral red flocking to give a deep velvet like appearance. Reaching 4.75 meters high, the scarlet Christmas Tree is decorated with 79 sets of hand cast replica antlers and 67 white, heart-shaped baubles. The baubles

have been printed in 3D and reference traditional Christmas motifs.

The design for the tree was inspired by the V&A's collection, specifically a H.F.C Rampendahl chair dating from 1860, which has a frame primarily made from real antlers and is upholstered in velvet. Helen David said; *'I have always found beautiful and inspiring objects at the V&A, since I first came to London and visited as an art student. The combination of the feminine velvet and the masculine antlers of the Victorian era chair provided a very inspiring starting point for the tree, and of course the words 'velvet' and 'antler' begin with the letters V&A.'*

Helen and Colin have observed the natural growing and falling of deer's antlers every year from their print studio on the edge of a deer park in Norfolk. Male deer grow antlers in the spring, which are protected by a velvety growth; a stage described as 'in velvet'. Once the antlers are fully grown the deer scrape off the velvet before the rutting season, after which the antlers are 'cast', or fall off, before the next cycle of growth. This process is referenced in the red antlers of the Christmas Tree, which are also 'in velvet'. Colin David said: *'For me antlers represent the cycle of death and rebirth.'*

A selection of the baubles feature the shape of a deer taken from a 1766 printed linen from the V&A's collection. The other baubles which depict snowflakes or the artists' signatures.

Helen and Colin David are known originally for their fashion and textile label English Eccentrics, which was established in 1983 and rapidly became known for its eclectic and

innovative style and distinctive textile designs. Some of their work is currently on display in the V&A's *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s* exhibition. The artists continue to develop unique and limited edition textile pieces for English Eccentrics as well as working together and individually to create fine art in a variety of media including drawing, photography, silk screen printing, painting, laser cutting, and sculpture.

For further PRESS information or images please contact Lucy Hawes in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2502 or email l.hawes@vam.ac.uk or press.office@vam.ac.uk

Notes to editors

- *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s* is at the V&A until 16 February 2014. Entry to the exhibition is £5. To book visit www.vam.ac.uk or call 020 7907 7073 (booking fee applies)
- *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s* is shown in gallery 40, the V&A's fashion gallery