



## Sky Arts Ignition

# Memory Palace

18 June – 20 October 2013

This summer, the V&A will be staging a multi-dimensional exhibition experience. *Sky Arts Ignition: Memory Palace* will present an original work of fiction by author Hari Kunzru, transformed into a walk-in story by leading graphic designers, typographers and illustrators including Le Gun, Oded Ezer, Erik Kessels and Luke Pearson.

The project is the second to be selected as part of the *Sky Arts Ignition Series*, a funding initiative which will see Sky Arts partner with six leading arts organisations to invest directly in the creation of new, pioneering art works, events and performances.

Kunzru's tale conjures a dystopian vision of the future, set in London several hundred years after the global information infrastructure has been wiped out by a huge magnetic storm. Much of the world's technology and knowledge has been lost, climate change is widespread and nature is reclaiming the ruins of the old city. Books and any form of remembering, recording and mark making are banned by the regime in power, eager to force humans to return to a state of unity with nature. Written in short passages and fragments, the text recounts the disjointed memories of one incarcerated member of a small group of renegade memorialists who have revived the ancient 'art of memory' to try and retain as much of the past as he can. As the prisoner lies trapped in his cell, he clings to the belief that without memory, civilisation is doomed.

Twenty international practitioners have been asked to interpret a different passage of Kunzru's text to create an immersive experience of specially commissioned works that collectively tell the story. The exhibition will explore the way in which words and images interact and how stories are told and re-told from different viewpoints. Visitors will be able to walk through the installation and read the story as well as experience the relationship between the page and exhibition space.

Laurie Britton Newell and Ligaya Salazar, co-curators of the exhibition said: "*Memory Palace is a physically immersive illustrated story that explores a new reading format at a time when concepts of publishing are rapidly changing. The broad selection of contributors demonstrates the exceptionally diverse and expanding worlds of contemporary graphic design and illustration.*"

James Hunt, Director of Sky Arts said: *"The Sky Arts Ignition Series is a hugely important initiative for us. We're very proud of the work that we have done since its launch and we're delighted to build on those successes in its second year by partnering with such a strong partner as the V&A. Memory Palace is a transcendental story – one of beauty, truth and relevance – and we're absolutely delighted to be working with Hari Kunzru, the artists and the V&A to support the exhibition and bring it to as many people as possible across the UK and Ireland."*

Hari Kunzru said: *"Immediately after I was approached by the curators of what has become 'Memory Palace' I realised that this was an extraordinary opportunity and a very unusual project. There are very few venues to explore the connections between literature, art and design. There's a kind of 'silo' effect, where people specialise, and dig into their own field, losing sight of what everyone else is up to, the terms in which they think about making art. This exhibition is a way of breaking out. I can't wait to see it installed."*

The structure of the exhibition will be designed as a palace of memories by the architect C. J. Lim. The central space will contain the narrative spine of the story and a series of individual rooms leading off it will reveal different memories. The graphic designers, typographers and illustrators have all been paired with specific book extracts from the text which visualise the world of the prisoner, the series of interrogations between him and his captor and the memory fragments he is tasked to remember.

The commissions range from infographics to explain words from the story using meticulously-gathered data by graphic designer Stefanie Posavec to a detailed depiction of the prisoner's cell by Frank Laws, a previous winner of the V&A's Illustration Awards who is interested in documenting the minutiae of everyday life. Tel Aviv-based Oded Ezer, an experimental typographer, will interpret a series of the protagonist's misremembered definitions. Drawings by Paris-based illustrator Némó Tral will reflect on growing up in the ruins of the Olympic Park. Large-scale installations by Erik Kessels will explore themes of advertising and recycling alongside a three-dimensional drawn environment by the London-based illustration collective Le Gun.

Jointly commissioned by the V&A and Sky Arts, the final piece in the exhibition will be created by Irish graphic designer Johnny Kelly, who works across various disciplines including animation, graphic design and illustration. His piece will seek to capture visitors' memories which Sky Arts will enable for public participation outside the exhibition space.

An accompanying programme featuring the exhibition will be broadcast on Sky Arts.

- ENDS -

## NOTES TO EDITORS

- The exhibition takes place in the V&A's Porter Gallery
- The V&A is open daily 10:00 until 17:45 and until 22:00 on Fridays
- The exhibition curators are Laurie Britton Newell and Ligaya Salazar
- The full list of practitioners are: Åbäke, Peter Bil'ak, Alexis Deacon, Oded Ezer, Francesco Franchi, Isabel Greenberg, Hansje van Halem, Jim Kay, Johnny Kelly, Erik Kessels, Na Kim, Stuart Kolakovic, Frank Laws, Le Gun, Luke Pearson, Stefanie Posavec, Némó Tral, Henning Wagenbreth, Mario Wagner and Sam Winston
- The 3D design of the exhibition is by architect C.J. Lim, Studio 8 Architects and 2D design by Sara de Bondt studio, who also designed the exhibition publication
- The Illustration Awards take place on 3 June 2013, after which a display of the winning work will be in Gallery 74
- The V&A holds the National Collection of Word and Image

### **Ticket Information**

Tickets £6 (V&A members go free)

From April 2013 advance bookings can be taken. Visit [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk) (booking fee applies) or call 020 7907 707.

### **Title partner: Sky Arts**

Sky Arts offers an eclectic mix of the best music, arts, biographies, chat shows, film, drama and comedy. Sky is the only broadcaster in the UK and Ireland with channels dedicated solely to the arts. Sky Arts now reaches more than 6 million viewers every month.

Sky Arts also seeks to connect with culture on the ground; creating and collaborating with the best of the arts in the UK and Ireland to bring new experiences to life. The *Sky Arts Ignition Series*, launched in 2011, will support six arts organisations in the creation of brand new works offering £200k and amplification through Sky's programming, marketing and technologies. *Sky Arts Ignition Series: Futures Fund* supports five young artists a year with bursary of £30,000 each, enabling Sky Arts to back the creation of their new work as well as offering mentoring to nurture emerging talent.

The first major project in the series, Sky Arts Ignition: *Doug Aitken - The Source* was in partnership with Tate Liverpool who with Sky's support commissioned world renowned artist, Doug Aitken to create a multi-media video installation in a specially designed structure, built in collaboration with British architect David Adjaye OBE. The work was Aitken's first public installation in the UK and ran for four months from September 2012, receiving 50,000 visitors. To promote the opening of the exhibition, Aitken took over Sky Arts for 24 hours, curating a selection of special documentaries, films and exhibitions over one day exploring the creative process.

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**Support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition's title partner Sky Arts.**

### **Exhibition Publication – Memory Palace**

V&A Publishing is producing the full work of fiction by Hari Kunzru, with an essay by V&A curators Laurie Britton Newell and Ligaya Salazar, accompanied by illustrations from the exhibition's collaborators (£12.99). For further PRESS information about the book, contact Julie Chan on 020 7942 2701 / [j.chan@vam.ac.uk](mailto:j.chan@vam.ac.uk) (not for publication).

### **Exhibition Merchandise**

There will be a V&A Shop range to coincide with the exhibition. For PRESS information on merchandise contact Lee Kendall on 020 7942 2681 or email [l.kendall@vam.ac.uk](mailto:l.kendall@vam.ac.uk).

### **About Hari Kunzru**

Hari Kunzru is the author of the novels *The Impressionist* (2002), *Transmission* (2004), *My Revolutions* (2007) and *Gods Without Men* (2011), as well as a short story collection, *Noise* (2006). His work has been translated into 21 languages and won him prizes including the Somerset Maugham award, the Betty Trask prize of the Society of Authors, a Pushcart prize and a British Book Award. In 2003 Granta named him one of its twenty best young British novelists. Lire magazine named him one of its 50 "écrivains pour demain". He is Deputy President of English PEN, a patron of the Refugee Council and a member of the editorial board of Mute magazine. His short stories and journalism have appeared in diverse publications including The New York Times, Guardian, New Yorker, Financial Times, Times of India, Wired and New Statesman.

For further PRESS information about the exhibition, contact Zoë Franklin or Amelia Macgregor on 020 7942 2497 / 020 7942 2502 or [z.franklin@vam.ac.uk](mailto:z.franklin@vam.ac.uk) / [a.macgregor@vam.ac.uk](mailto:a.macgregor@vam.ac.uk)

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A selection of high-resolution images are available to download at <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>