

Small Stories: At home in a dolls' house

13 December 2014 – 6 September 2015

FREE entry

The V&A Museum of Childhood's major 2014-15 exhibition *Small Stories: At home in a dolls' house* will reveal the fascinating stories behind some of the UK's best-loved dolls' houses. Through the stories of 12 dolls' houses from the past 300 years, visitors will be taken on a journey through the history of the home, everyday lives and changing family relationships.

The small stories of each house will be brought to life by the characters that live or work there. Day-to-day life will be illuminated through tales of marriages and parties, politics and crime. Each house will be displayed at a particular time of day and visitors can use buttons alongside the showcases to activate the narration and light up each character as they talk.

The exhibition encompasses country mansions, the Georgian town house, suburban villas, newly-built council estates and high-rise apartments. Displayed chronologically, the houses will also show developments in architecture and design.

Highlights include:

The Tate Baby House dating from 1760 was owned by five or six generations, passed down from mother to eldest daughter. It includes original wallpapers and painted paneling in the style of Robert Adam and a lying-in room for a pregnant doll. The story of this house centres on the rising status of three generations of Georgian women.



The Killer House was a gift from surgeon John Egerton Killer to his wife and daughters in the 1830s. This Chinese-style cabinet is lavishly appointed with gilded wallpapers, four-poster bed and liveried servants. The story centres on the servants' ongoing struggle for cleanliness and hygiene in the industrial city.



Whiteladies House was designed by artist Moray Thomas and was built in the 1930s. It corresponds to the handful of Modernist country villas emerging in Hampstead at the time. The story centres on a house party and the house features chrome furniture, a cocktail bar and artworks by British Futurist Claude Flight as well as a swimming pool and loggia.



The Hopkinson House is based on the houses of London County Council's 1930s suburb, the St Helier Estate. The interiors show a Second World War-era family in intricate detail, poised for an air-raid, with miniature gasmasks, ration books and torches for the blackouts.



Kaleidoscope House's multicoloured translucent walls are filled with miniature replicas of Ron Arad, Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger furniture and artworks. It is home to a design conscious step-family living in the new millennium. The house was designed by Laurie Simmons.



The final exhibit will be a Dream Home installation, with rooms designed by local artists and designers that children can play with and add to.

Exhibition curator, Sarah Wood, said: "Dolls' houses can be autobiographical or create fantastical worlds. These special spaces are deposits for real memories, fanciful ideas and often a lifetime of dedication. They can indulge the owner, child or adult, in a playful world beyond their own experiences. Embracing this playful spirit of the dolls' house, we have borrowed aspects of the real owners, imagined characters, and coupled with contemporary events, we have curated a small story for each of these well-loved houses."

Co-curator, Alice Sage, adds: "Dolls' houses are uncanny things, full of strangely familiar objects and funny little characters. The experience of peeking into the tiny rooms and seeing all the meticulous detail is fascinating for children and adults, and hopefully everyone will discover something new. Our research for the exhibition uncovered new characters and stories

in the histories of these objects, and now we are using them to bring the houses to life in a fun and imaginative way.”

Many of the houses, their furniture and dolls have been specially conserved for the exhibition. Around 1,900 objects in total have been restored over the past two years in the V&A conservation department.

A further 20 dolls’ houses dating from 1673 to 2014 will be on display within the Museum’s permanent galleries. The latest research will enrich the interpretation of old favourites, and introduce new acquisitions. In total, the V&A Museum of Childhood has a collection of around 100 dolls’ houses.

The exhibition will tour around the UK, to Europe and the United States.

Published to accompany the exhibition, 'Dolls' Houses from the V&A Museum of Childhood' (V&A Publishing, £14.99) by Halina Pasierbska is out in October.

For further PRESS information about the exhibition please contact Rebecca Ward on +44 (0)20 7613 3306 or email Rebecca@rebeccaward.co.uk

For further PRESS information about the book please contact Julie Chan at j.chan@vam.ac.uk or call 0207 942 2701. (not for publication)

Press images can be downloaded, after registering, at <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>.

Notes to editors

The V&A Museum of Childhood aims to encourage everyone to explore the themes of childhood past and present and develop an appreciation of creative design through its inspirational collections and programmes. The Museum is part of the V&A, housing the national childhood collection. The galleries are designed to show the collections in a way which is accessible to adults and children of all ages.

V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA.

Nearest tube: Bethnal Green. Open daily: 10.00 – 17.45, last admission 17.30.

Switchboard: 020 8983 5200 www.museumofchildhood.org.uk

Small Stories: At home in a dolls' house is a FREE exhibition

The exhibition opens on 13 December 2014 and runs until 6 September 2015.

The Curators

Sarah Wood is a curator at the V&A Museum of Childhood specialising in toys, the history of toy manufacturing and children's costume. She curated the exhibition *Top to Toe: Fashion for Kids* (2008), was part of the exhibition team for *Magic Worlds* (2011), co-curated *War Games* (2013) and is the author of *The V&A Museum of Childhood Book of Childhood Things*. Sarah joined the Museum in 2007, having previously worked with textile, literature and social history collections.

Alice Sage joined the V&A Museum of Childhood as an Assistant curator in 2012. Alice's specialist interests lie in personal collections, oral history and the history of education, and her academic research has focussed on women's narratives and emotional objects. She has curated permanent gallery displays, *Mascots of the Olympic Games* (2012) and worked as part of the team on *Modern British Childhood* (2012). Alice has previously worked with social history collections, as a teacher and researcher.