



SURREAL THINGS: SURREALISM AND DESIGN

29 March – 22 July 2007

Supported by The Friends of the V&A

The V&A's major spring exhibition, **Surreal Things**, will be the first to explore the influence of Surrealism on the world of design – theatre, interiors, fashion, film, architecture, and advertising. Alongside paintings by Magritte, Ernst and Dalí will be some of the most extraordinary objects of the 20th century, from Dalí's *Mae West Lips* sofa and *Lobster Telephone* to Elsa Schiaparelli's dramatic 'Tear' and 'Skeleton' dresses, and Meret Oppenheim's *Table with Bird's Legs*.

With nearly 300 exhibits, **Surreal Things** will look at how artists like Dalí engaged with design and how designers were inspired by Surrealism. It will emphasise the tensions that arose from the increasing commercialisation of Surrealism's visual aesthetic. Among the highlights of the exhibition will be Giorgio de Chirico's costumes and set designs for Diaghilev's *Le Bal*; Dalí's *Venus de Milo aux tiroirs*; Oscar Dominguez's satin-lined Wheelbarrow armchair and a case study of Monkton, the purple-painted Sussex home of the English Surrealist patron and friend of Dalí, Edward James.

There will be a section devoted to fashion and advertising which, in addition to Schiaparelli's unique dresses and shoe hat, will feature the recently discovered Surrealist 'bird cage' from her Place Vendôme salon. Examples of how Surrealist imagery was popularised by companies such as Shell and Ford as well as magazines like Vogue and Harper's Bazaar will also be on display.

Curator Ghislaine Wood said: "Surrealism was responsible for some of the most visually intriguing objects of the 20th century. We hope in this exhibition to explore how Surrealism entered the world of design, creating a new visual language of modernity. It grabbed the popular imagination and is still tremendously powerful today."

Surreal Things will look at those Surrealist artists and designers who were productive before 1939 and follows their subsequent post-war careers. Among the key figures featured will be Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Elsa Schiaparelli, Marcel Duchamp, Meret Oppenheim, Man Ray, Alberto Giacometti, Jean Arp, Joan Miró, Giorgio De Chirico, Isamu Noguchi, Eileen Agar, Jean Michel Frank, Frederick Kiesler and Max Ernst.

There will be nearly 300 objects in the exhibition from public and private collections worldwide, many of which have never been exhibited before. On show will be furniture, paintings, sculpture, architecture, fashion, jewellery, ceramics, textiles, photography, graphics and film.

Surreal Things will consist of six main thematic sections – Protest: The Ballet; Surrealism and the Object; The Illusory Interior; Nature Made Strange; Displaying the Body and Dream. The exhibition will also provide a historical framework for the movement by highlighting major exhibitions, events and developments.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- Salvador Dalí's famous designs – the *Mae West Lips sofa* (1938), *Lobster Telephone* (1938), *Aphrodisian Jacket* (1936) and *Venus de Milo aux tiroirs* (1936/64) – and less well known works such as his 'Arm' chair.
- Classic Surrealist objects: Oscar Dominguez's satin-lined *Wheelbarrow* armchair (1936), *Le Spectre du Gardénia* (1936) by Marcel Jean and Alberto Giacometti's *Disagreeable object* (1931).
- Surrealist paintings, including René Magritte's *La reproduction interdite* (1937), Max Ernst's vast mural *Pétale et Jardin de la nymphe Ancolie* (1934) and *Couple aux têtes pleines de nuages* (1936) by Salvador Dalí.
- The fashion designs of Elsa Schiaparelli including the 'Tear' and 'Skeleton' dresses, her 'Shocking' perfume bottle designed by Leonor Fini, the Jean Cocteau evening coat and the shoe hat. The window display from her Place Vendôme salon will be recreated, featuring the boutique's original Surrealist 'bird-cage' by Jean Michel Frank.
- A case-study of Monkton, the Sussex home of Surrealist patron Edward James, with its purple exterior, padded walls and wolfhound print carpet.

- A model of Frederick Kiesler's Surrealist room from Peggy Guggenheim's *The Art of This Century* Gallery in New York (1942).
- A section devoted to Surrealist artists' involvement in the Ballet Russes of 1920s and early 1930s, including Giorgio de Chirico's costumes and set designs for Serge Diaghilev's 1929 production of *Le Bal*.
- Examples of Surreal jewellery including Meret Oppenheim's *Fur bracelet* (1935), previously unseen items by Salvador Dalí, such as the *Starfish* brooch (1950), and well-known pieces such as his *Ruby Lips* (1949).
- Alberto Giacometti's plaster sculptures for the fashionable 1930s Paris interiors of Jean Michel Frank.
- Surrealist furniture: Marcel Jean's trompe l'oeil *Armoire Surréaliste* (1941), tables and chairs by Carlo Mollino, Isamu Noguchi's *Cloud sofa* (1948) and Meret Oppenheim's *Table with Bird's Legs* (1939).
- Studio ceramics by Joan Miró and manufactured ceramics by Jean Arp.
- Examples of how Surrealist imagery was adopted and popularised by such companies as Shell and Ford as well as magazines like Vogue and Harper's Bazaar.
- Max Ernst's *Lit-Cage* (1974) and Surrealist film clips, including the Dalí sequence from Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945), will illustrate the movement's concept of the dream as disturbing and erotic.

The exhibition's dramatic design is by Metaphor. The Surrealists themselves created exciting and unexpected exhibition displays that played on all the senses. The **Surreal Things** exhibition will be theatrical and fun.

Surreal Things is curated by Ghislaine Wood, who previously curated the V&A's critically acclaimed exhibition, *Art Deco 1910-1939*. She was the deputy curator of *Art Nouveau 1890-1914*.

Three new books will be published by the V&A to accompany the exhibition.

Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design edited by Ghislaine Wood (£40 Hardback), is the first book to examine in depth Surrealism's impact on the wider field of design.

The Surreal Body by Ghislaine Wood and **Surreal People** by Alexander Klar (both £12.99) respectively explore the widespread appeal of Surrealist fashion and the relationships between the main protagonists of Surrealism.

The exhibition is the result of a close collaboration between the V&A, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam and the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao. It draws principally on the collections of the V&A and Boijmans. After the V&A, it will travel to Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (September – December 2007) and then to the Guggenheim in Bilbao (February – July 2008).

Notes to Editor:

- **Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design** is at the V&A from 29 March to 22 July 2007.
- The V&A is holding a Surreal Things conference on 11 and 12 May 2007.
- For further information on the books accompanying the exhibition, please contact Claire Sawford on 020 7722 4114 or cs@cspr.uk.net (not for publication).
- For information on the Surreal merchandise accompanying the exhibition, please contact Lee Kendall at V&A Enterprises on 020 7942 2681 or l.kendall@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).
- General enquiries: 020 7942 2000 or www.vam.ac.uk

Ticket Information:

- Tickets in person at the V&A – in advance or on day of visit – £9.
(concessions: Senior Citizens £7, students £5)
- For advance telephone and online booking (booking fee applies) call 0870 906 3883 or visit www.vam.ac.uk

For further PRESS information on the exhibition, please contact Michael Murray-Fennell or Frankie Arnold in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2503/02. Email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of images are available on www.image.net