

Century of the Child

Nordic Design for Children 1900 to Today

30 March – 2 September 2018



Nordic designs can be found in homes, playgrounds and schools across the UK. From BRIO to LEGO, Marimekko and the Moomins, Nordic products are everywhere. Opening at Easter 2018, *Century of the Child: Nordic Design for Children 1900 to Today* will gather the best and most progressive Nordic designs, architecture and art for children. The exhibition will feature 'Nordic Icons' including Arne Jacobsen, IKEA, Alvar Aalto, BabyBjörn, Tetra Pak and Helly Hansen.

The exhibition borrows its title from the groundbreaking book, *The Century of the Child* by Swedish social theorist, Ellen Key, first published in 1900. Ellen Key envisioned that during the 20th century, children would become the centre of adult's attention. Her ideas on encouraging children's creativity, education and rights have permeated Nordic designs and have shaped the content of the exhibition.

The widespread success of Nordic childhood products can be attributed to their innovative and intuitive designs, in which the child's needs are central. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, Nordic designers, architects and writers contributed to strengthening the intellectual, emotional and physical development of children. At the V&A Museum of Childhood, this exhibition will explore and celebrate Nordic design and the cultural interchange with the UK and offer fun interactives for children to discover and enjoy.

The exhibition explores the themes:

Nordic Values – exploring the distinct and unifying influences which have helped forge progressive Nordic design.

Design for Living – the advent of new housing meant children were given their own dedicated space, which was crying out to be filled with child-friendly design; designers also responded to the needs for extended indoor play during long winter nights, and turned their attention to schools and kindergartens.

Creative Freedom – will look at how free play was considered an essential part of childhood development; how the 1940s' Junk Playground in Denmark inspired Britain's adventure playgrounds; and this section will also consider escapism through stories such as *The Moomins* and *Pippi Longstocking*.

Eco-innovations – explores the synergic relationship between Nordic designers and the natural world. It showcases how innovative designs for children can utilise environmentally sustainable material to create beautiful, enduring products which generations of children can use.

Highlights will include:

- Finnish Baby Box - Finland was the first to create a 'baby box' for newborns in 1937, a scheme that has been adopted globally and most recently in Scotland in the summer of 2017. The exhibition will also look at paid paternity leave, first given in Sweden in 1974.
- Furniture for children, from Alvar Aalto's classic plywood chair to Opsvik's seminal Tripp Trapp chair.
- A miniature Puckelball Pitch - this interactive sculpture for creative ball games is notable for its rolling surface, its crooked lines and different sized goals. The unpredictability of the pitch levels out the players' skills, ages and advantages.
- Sustainable objects and toys including a toy made from fishbones and a dolls' house made from forest waste.
- Witty and eye-catching designs such as the red felt 'Dance shoes for father and daughter' and the Angry Birds video game.
- The exhibition will close with a recreation of a cozy Norwegian storytelling hut known as a *Fireplace for Children*.

This exhibition was created by Museum Vandalorum, Sweden, in collaboration with Designmuseum Danmark and Design Museum Helsinki. It has grown out of *Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900-2000*, an exhibition organised by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2012 organised by Juliet Kinchin, Curator, and Aidan O'Connor, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, MoMA. Katy Canales, Curator at the V&A Museum of Childhood, has adapted the original exhibition for the Museum's family audience.

Ends

For further press information please contact Rebecca Ward on 07977 071450 or email Rebecca@rebeccaward.co.uk. Press images can be downloaded, after registering, at <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>.

Notes to editors

Ellen Key (1849-1926), a Swedish social reformer and writer, achieved international acclaim for her progressive views on the rights, development, and well-being of children. Her works artfully drew together the diverse

views of contemporary art movements and writers campaigning for social reform. Keys' ideas were revolutionary at the time and today protecting and nurturing children is at the heart of our society.

Nordic countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

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.

Admission FREE.

www.vam.ac.uk/moc

The Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green is part of the V&A family of Museums and the UK's National Museum of Childhood. It is the largest institution of its kind in the world; its mission is to explore art, design and performance through the material culture of childhood and to hold in trust the nation's childhood collections.



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