

Serpentine Gallery

Teachers' Resources

Design Real

Curated by Konstantin Grcic

26 November 2009 – 7 February 2010



Photograph Frank Hülsbömer
Courtesy Konstantin Grcic Industrial Design

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Introduction

The Serpentine Gallery develops its programmes this winter with its first exhibition devoted to design, *Design Real* (26 November 2009 – 7 February 2010). The Serpentine has been committed to the presentation of contemporary architecture since 2000 with the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion. The Gallery is now expanding on this commitment by focusing on the associated discipline of contemporary design.

Design Real is curated by the influential Munich-based designer Konstantin Grcic. His commitment to the importance of good design in everyday life is at the heart of the exhibition. He has selected mass-produced, 'real' objects that push boundaries in both form and function.

'I want this exhibition to be optimistic, to create an understanding of what industry can do today. The resources of industry are amazing and can be turned to anything.'
Konstantin Grcic

Objects included in *Design Real*

As the title of the exhibition suggests, all of the selected products are 'real', mass produced items that have a practical function in everyday life. There are no prototypes, concepts or models featured in the exhibition. With one exception, all of the products are currently in production and were conceived in the last ten years.

Design Real features an interactive space specially designed by Grcic, where projections expand on themes developed in the exhibition and visitors can investigate the origins and applications of the products on view. A dedicated internet site www.design-real.com, which can be accessed in the space, is the exhibition's central resource and integral to its concept. The exhibition has been designed in collaboration with Alex Rich and Jürg Lehni.

Themes, ideas and questions to explore

1. What is design?



BMW 7 series production, bodyshop,
BMW Plant Dingolfing, Germany, 2008
© 2009 BMW

Keywords

Architecture – create – commission – concept – cutting edge – Design Process – graphics – industrial – innovation – mass production – batch - manufacture – product – technique – unique – solution – rework – refine – electronics – mechanisms – resistant materials – structures – technology

Cross-curricular links

Art & Design – Design Technology – Science

Design is everywhere, forming the world around us and impacting on nearly every part of our lives. Like contemporary art, design both shapes and reflects our constantly changing society. Good design understands human behaviour, offers pragmatic solutions to problems and enhances our everyday experience. Design could be viewed as an activity that translates an idea into a blueprint for something useful, whether it's a car, a building, a graphic, a service or a process. In *Design Real*, Grcic has brought together a wide range of products with different styles and functions, from furniture and household products to technical and industrial innovations.

Discussions

Which of these statements do you agree with and can you explain your reason's why you agree or disagree:

1. Design finds a solution to something we haven't known before.
2. Function determines the object.
3. Sometimes design is beauty and that is its reason for being.
4. Design is an evolution, addressing new needs with particular functions.

What would the world look like if we designed things solely to be practical?

What points of view, lifestyle and values are represented in *Design Real* and how do they relate to the world today?

Choose five objects in the exhibition and answer the following questions:

1. What do you see?
2. What is it made of and why?
3. What does it do?
4. What is its impact on our everyday lives?

Are there any objects in the exhibition that have a significant impact on the environment?

Go to the interactive space to find out more about your chosen objects. Review and revise your initial answer to the questions above. Select one of your chosen objects and research its manufacturing, engineering or production processes.

Activities

Working in small groups, research a specific area of design, identify inspiring designers in this field and create a presentation to share what each group has found out. Use the following list of design topics and ask each group to choose one.

- Furniture Design
- Product Design
- Transport Design
- Lighting Design
- Fashion Design
- Architecture Design
- Industrial Design
- Graphic Design
- Communication Design

Groups can use internet resources, library references, and magazines to conduct their research about the varied design fields.



Bina

Santa & Cole

Designed by Gonzalo Milà & Martina Zink

© 2009 Santa & Cole

2. Form and Function



Shoes by Zaha Hadid for Melissa
www.melissaplasticdreams.com

Keywords

Aerodynamics – aesthetics – construction – consumer – distinctive – durable – ergonomic – form – function – modification – modernism – natural – organic – tactile – user – visual – customize – beauty – perfection – prototype – material – sculptural – need – requirement – fashion

Cross-curricular links

Art & Design – Design Technology – Science

Design Real explores design through considering both form and function. 'What interests me about industrial design is how these things are made, in what material, and how this has affected their language and their quality,' explains Grcic. 'Some objects are very technically-driven; the function really determines the object. Other objects have much more of a signature or an authorship; you see the handwriting of the designer who made it and that's what makes it so special.'

The selection of objects can be explored in their appearance and style asking the viewer to think about why designers might have made certain choices about the formal qualities of their designs. They also encourage the viewer to consider the intended uses, or functions, of the objects on display, and ask you to think about the problem/s that each has set out to address and how effectively this is achieved.

Discussions

Choose five objects in the exhibition and answer the following questions:

1. Can you tell what the object is from appearance alone?
2. What does the shape of the object remind you of?
3. Where would you use it?
4. How does appearance and style relate to the materials and function of the object?

5. What qualities do we associate with materials such as plastic, fabric, wood and metal?

What does the term ergonomics mean?

Can you identify what objects and materials in the exhibition can be recycled?

Activities

When a product is developed over a long period of time, new technology becomes available. This leads to changes in the way the product looks, its efficiency and desirability to the potential customers. Designers apply new technology to the things they design. Everyday design has a long history of change and improvement because of technological advances including the telephone, bicycle, camera, and housing. Work in small research groups and create a presentation to show how design changes over time.

3. Everyday design



Banc-U 140 ©

Escofet

Designed by A. Viaplana / H. Piñon

© 2009 Escofet

Keywords

Lifestyle – icon – home – family – leisure – culture – environment – domestic – brand – comfort – practical – science – technology – progress – improve – travel – universal – communication – language – protection – everyday – transport – customer – sustainability – recycle -

Cross-curricular links

Art & Design – Design Technology – Science

By highlighting objects that have made a significant impact on our lives, the exhibition provides new perspectives from which to look at the material world around us and encourages new insights into design. There are objects that relate to home, family, and leisure as well as objects designed in response to basic needs, communication, medicine and protection.

Discussions:

Exhibiting design in the context of an art gallery, Grcic uses the opportunity to

explore language and interpretation. He uses simple words like 'lamp' and 'toy' to name each object prompting the viewer to consider the cultural associations we may make with the words. For example, one viewer may think a 'helmet' would be designed to protect them from falling on the floor and a second viewer may believe it would be designed to protect them in the event of an earthquake.

What meanings and cultural associations do you associate with the following?

1. Saddle
2. Toy
3. Battery
4. Amour

What role does design play in your day-to-day life?

Activities

We all sit in chairs every day. A good chair is designed so that form follows function, and is comfortable and functional with a simple, user-friendly design. To come up with the designs for the chairs you see in *Design Real*, the designers spent time trying out different shapes, materials, and forms. In small groups, design and build a chair from newspaper, using the following guidelines:

1. The chair needs to be at least 50 cm from the ground.
2. It needs to be strong and supportive enough for one person from your group to sit upright in the chair.



Aeron Chair
Herman Miller
Designed by Dan Chadwick & Bill Stumpf
© 2009 Herman Miller

What is the impact of science and technology on design in everyday life, our society and the environment? Describe two significant designs, what they do, how they work, and how they have improved the world.

Describe two threats or dangers that scientific advances and new technologies have on society and the environment e.g. nuclear power, travel or medicine.

Further information and related links

www.konstantin-grcic.com
www.designmuseum.org/design/konstantin-grcic
www.zaha-hadid.com
www.melissaplasticdreams.com
www.likeabike.co.uk
www.abiomed.com
www.kuka-robotics.com
www.teslamotors.com
www.tatamet.com
www.ikea.com
www.bskids.org/designsquad/parentseducators/activities
www.technologystudent.com
www.dezeen.com
www.futurebydesignthemovie.com
www.serpentinegallery.org
www.royalsociety.org

Serpentine Gallery exhibition catalogue *Design Real* includes texts by designer Jonathan Olivares and critic Emily King as well as an interview with the exhibition's curator Konstantin Grcic by Serpentine Gallery Director Julia Peyton-Jones and Co-Director Hans Ulrich Obrist.

What's On

This winter sees the first two in a series of *Skills Exchange* presentations open to the public in The Process Room at the Serpentine Gallery. For related group activities and events please contact:

Eleanor Farrington

Education Programmer

Email: eleonorf@serpentinegallery.org

Direct Line: 020 7298 1516

Trading Spaces: an investigation into the Future of Street Markets

Barby Asante and Inspire, Southwark

Thursday 3 December – Saturday 17 January

Collaborative work with members of Inspire, a South London community space, featuring performances, interviews and archives. The work explores East Street Market as a trading place in the past, present and future.

The Sarsaparilla Summit

Wednesday 13 January 12 – 6pm

Trading recipes and strategies for saving street markets

Free, booking is essential as places are limited

Barter with the future self

Åbäke design collective, Markus Miessen & Westmead Care Home

Thursday 21 January – Sunday 7 February

A presentation of ideas about architectural and social improvements for Westmead Care Home, both realised and proposed, developed in collaboration with residents of the home.

Family Day

Saturday 6 February

12–5pm

Free

Work with design collective Åbäke to explore design and invention in The Sackler Centre for Arts Education.

No booking is required for this informal drop-in event.

All ages are welcome and children must be accompanied by an adult.

Education Private View and Book Launch

***Support Structures* by Celine Condorelli**

Tuesday 26 January 6.30 – 8.30 pm

Free, no booking required

An evening viewing of *Design Real*, with staff from the Gallery on hand to discuss the Serpentine's Education Programme. This is accompanied by the launch of the book *Support Structures* by Celine Condorelli, which investigates frameworks and systems in art, architecture and other practices.

Planning a Visit to the Serpentine Gallery

Contact Details

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Transport

The nearest tube stations are South Kensington (1.25 km walk), Knightsbridge (1.25 km walk) or Lancaster Gate (1 km walk)

Bus routes 9, 10, 52, 452, 94 and 148 stop near the Gallery

Group Visit Guidelines

To make your visit as enjoyable as possible, please read the following:

Before your Visit:

- Adult supervision of students under 16 is required at all times, including in the shop. An adult student ratio of 1:5 for under 5's, 1:10 for 5 - 11 year olds, 1:15 for 11 - 16 year olds and 1:20 for 16 - 18 year olds is required.
- We recommend a preliminary planning visit, as for some exhibitions there may be works that you consider unsuitable for your group.

During your Visit:

- The artworks in the *Design Real* exhibition are extremely fragile. Please take extra care to follow the Gallery Guidelines at all times:

No running

No touching

No leaning against walls or plinths

No shouting

No photography

- Teachers/group leaders and accompanying adults are responsible for their group's behaviour whilst at the Serpentine Gallery.
- Many contemporary artworks are fragile and damage easily. Please make sure that your group understands that this is why they are not allowed to touch the art.
- Lecturing: If your group is larger than 30 please split them into smaller groups in the exhibition space and do not lecture in rooms where talks are already in progress.
- Drawing: If you would like to draw please check with the gallery what materials you will be able to use in the exhibition.

The *Design Real* Teachers' Notes are also available to download free at www.serpentinegallery.org along with Teachers' Notes for the previous exhibitions:

Gustav Metzger: Decades 1959 – 2009, 29 September – 8 November 2009

Jeff Koons: Popeye Series, 2 July – 13 September 2009

Luke Fowler, 7 May – 14 June 2009

Rebecca Warren, 10 March – 19 April 2009

Indian Highway, 10 December 2008 – 22 February 2009

Gerhard Richter, 23 September – 23 November 2008

Richard Prince, 26 June – 7 September 2008

Maria Lassnig, 25 April – 8 June 2008

Derek Jarman, 23 February – 13 April 2008

Anthony McCall, 30 November 2007 – 3 February 2008

Matthew Barney, 20 September – 11 November 2007

Hreinn Fridfinnsson, 17 July – 2 September 2007

Paul Chan, 15 May – 1 July 2007

Allora & Calzadilla, 17 – 29 April 2007

Karen Kilimnik, 20 February 9 April 2007

In the darkest hour there may be light, works from Damien Hirst's murderme collection, 25 November 2006 – 28 January 2007

Runa Islam, 25 October – 5 November 2006

China Power Station: Part 1, 8 October – 5 November 2006

Uncertain States of America, 9 September – 15 October 2006

Thomas Demand, 6 June – 20 August 2006

Ellsworth Kelly, 18 March – 21 May 2006

Elmgreen & Dragset, 26 January – 26 February 2006

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, 19 October 2005 – 8 January 2006

Oliver Payne & Nick Relph, 6 September – 2 October 2005

Rirkrit Tiravanija, 5 July – 21 August 2005

Andreas Slominski, 26 April – 12 June 2005

Tomoko Takahashi, 22 February – 10 April 2005

Monika Sosnowska, 5 December 2004 – 16 January 2005

Glenn Brown, 14 September – 7 November 2004

Gabriel Orozco, 1 July - 30 August 2004

Cy Twombly, 17 April – 13 June 2004

State of Play, 3 February – 28 March 2004

Hiroshi Sugimoto, 18 November 2003 – 18 January 2004

John Currin, 9 September – 2 November 2003

Cindy Sherman, 3 June – 25 August 2003

Takahashi Murakami, 12 November 2002 – 26 January 2003

Kutlug Ataman, 11 February – 9 March 2003