



METHODS OF CONTEXTUALISING

Rapid Response Collecting

Design 1900–Now

How people live, work, travel, consume and communicate have changed in extraordinary ways since 1900. Designed objects help us understand these changes.

Through six major themes, each taking a period of time as a starting point, this gallery explores how design has responded to the big issues people face. It looks at design as a tool for understanding the way we live together, prompting us to ask questions about the past, present and future.

Design 1900–Now aims to tell a story of design and society that is broad, international and inclusive. This is an ongoing task as museum collections are shaped by the priorities of those who create them. In the 20th century, collecting at the V&A mostly focused on the work of designers in highly industrialised countries. Today, we are working to reflect our globalised world in how and what we collect. We look forward to adding new acquisitions to the displays and welcome your views and ideas.

#design1900now

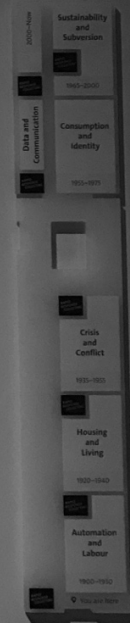
RAPID RESPONSE COLLECTING

Rapid Response Collecting enables the museum to collect objects in direct response to important moments in the recent history of design. All are immediately put on display.

Design is a mirror to society and these objects are evidence of social, political, technological and economic change happening now. Rapid Response Collecting shows that objects hold significance beyond their sometimes modest material value.

You can see Rapid Response Collecting throughout Design 1900–Now. Check the plan for locations. Objects on display will change as we collect new things and the dates featured alongside them mark when they entered the V&A.

#rapidresponsecollecting



[Fig.1]



Would you have expected to encounter these objects in a museum setting?

Yes. These are objects that make our history. In this time/era of civilization everything is going very fast, we have technology to design and create objects that shape, change history and it's understandable we must try to keep track of them and their contexts.

Furthermore, I think collections as such are foremost important to close generational gaps. As it seems the gap seems to widen as fast as technology gets.

How do you understand them differently in this context?

Design is intrinsic and capable to improve, convince, persuade, record, and even damage our lives.

We can give it for granted but if we stop to think, everything has been designed and has a direct or indirect impact to our lives.

How have the curators specifically contextualized them (through their modes of display, accompanying texts, or other gestures)?

The curators have organised, catalogued, and displayed items by themes and times. From 1900 to now and by categories, not of what they are or are made of but by context.

Why were these objects included in the collection?

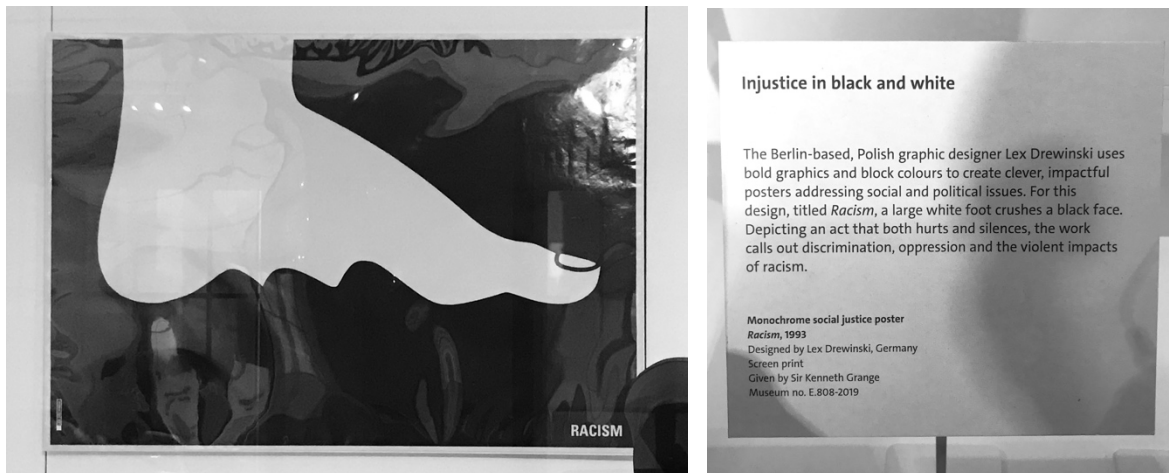
All objects in the collection are illustrating specific issues, movements, and events of our history.

What are their formal and material qualities, and how do these reflect broader contexts?

In the earlier sections materials are wood, metal, paper, and fabric, by the later sections the materials of the collected objects change as the time and more plastic is incorporated.

In the earlier sections, items reflect the times of war, revolution, towards the later sections the shift focus is directed toward identity and consumerism but the constant throughout is social change.

Object 1 Racism Artwork



[Fig.2 + 3]

Would you have expected to encounter these objects in a museum setting?

Yes, but also at an art shop in the form of postcards, on social media such is Pinterest, and on the streets as Guerrilla posters.

How do you understand them differently in this context?

In this context it becomes not only a screen print but a piece of art and important history artefact.

How have the curators specifically contextualized them (through their modes of display, accompanying texts, or other gestures)?

It has been placed next to a sport hijab for Muslim women.

Why were these objects included in the collection?

These objects mark a moment in time of active anti-racist and inclusive design.

What are the stories of their acquisition?

It was a donation to the museum. Perhaps the V&A would have displayed something else equally relevant if the owner of this work decided to keep it for themselves.

What are their formal and material qualities, and how do these reflect broader contexts?

A poster which is meant to be easily printed and distributed around the city to point out Racism in society.



GROUP DISCUSSION

Object 2 Architectural Spikes

[Fig.4]

Would you have expected to encounter these objects in a museum setting?

Kumi: Completely no. I have never imagined using these items for humans.

Charles: The architectural spikes are objects that I did not expect to encounter in a museum.

Elva: Maybe, this is an iconic piece of work that clearly illustrates the horrible parts of human interaction with one another. We should be creating environments for all members of communities to thrive, feel comfortable and supported rather than the opposite.

How do you understand them differently in this context?

Kumi: I could not understand what it was until reading the states. I feel this work has a problem in that it ignores the ethical rights of homeless people.

Charles: In this context, I understood them as examples of street furniture used in public space design and they illustrate the concept of "hostile architecture."

Elva: At first instance, this object did not get my attention. In the context of the exhibition, this object seems to be the result of humanity trying to solve an issue wrong. Wrong design to address the issue, it uncovered more issues and problems. It inspires us to philosophically enquire about its aesthetics, ethics, and politics.



How have the curators specifically contextualized them (through their modes of display, accompanying texts, or other gestures)?

Kumi: It was next to the tube map, an example of urbanisation and being picked up as the first well-developed map in the section of 'The New City'. The tube map was the consequence of the positive side of urbanisation. On the other hand, these spikes symbolised the negative side of urbanisation.

Charles: The curators have contextualised the spikes by highlighting their use in controlling public spaces and their impact on marginalised populations such as the homeless people. There are different exhibits in this section, some symbolise the sense of community in the urban area, some of them suggest that design can also be destructive of the community.

Elva: All objects in the collection are illustrating specific issues, movements, and events of our history. This specific object represents unhelpful, hostile urban design.

Why were these objects included in the collection?

Kumi: To convey that homelessness is a social issue that people must consider.

Charles: These spikes were included due to their connection to the ideas about the differentiation between public and quasi-public spaces and the increased regulation of social boundaries through architectural design.

Elva: For one to visualise a complete realistic picture, the collection contains positive design objects as well as negative ones. If they would only display positive designs, they would be documenting and portraying a utopian city environment.

What are the stories of their acquisition?

Kumi: If it is placed in front of grocery stores where homeless people prefer to sit down, stores could drive people away.

Charles: The story of its acquisition is not mentioned, but they are described as having gained notoriety in 2014 when they were photographed outside an apartment building in Southwark, London and a protest was started to remove them.

Elva: N/A

What are their formal and material qualities, and how do these reflect broader contexts?

Kumi: This work tells us about the possibility of banishing the shadowy parts of society out of our sight. I noticed that many similar cases happen in places we usually do not care about. One of the solutions to help homeless people might be to cooperate with everyone to find a way to be able to solve issues logically. For example, there are many ruins which rich people have bought for tax measures worldwide. These places should be provided to people who cannot pay rent.

Charles: In terms of formal and material qualities, the spikes are made from cast, polished steel, with a cone shape designed to be uncomfortable to rest on and a cylinder that sits below the surface for installation. These qualities reflect the broader context of hostile architecture and the trend of using small street decor and furniture to control public spaces.

Elva: Design cannot solve some kinds of systematic problems.



LIST OF FIGURES

[Fig.1]

Rodriguez, E. (2023). 1900-Now Rapid Response Collecting

[Fig.2+3]

Rodriguez, E. (2023). Dewinski L. (1993) RACISM Poster + Injustice in Black and White, V&A Gallery tag

[Fig.4]

Michael, S. (2014). On the Frontline: The Architectural Policing of Social Boundaries Discover Society:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20230201144152/https://archive.discoversociety.org/2014/08/05/on-the-frontline-the-architectural-policing-of-social-boundaries/>

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1296001/architectural-spikes-kent-stainless-ltd/>

LINKS TO SHARE WITH KUMI + CHARLES

<https://www.are.na/block/11200900>

<https://modesofcriticism.org>

<http://formsofinquiry.com>

<https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/53>

The six major branches of philosophical inquiry:

- *Aesthetics*: What's beautiful and what's ugly. Why something is one thing and not the other. The philosophy of form making.
- *Epistemology*: How we know what we know. How we learn what we don't know. How much we know and where our knowledge ends. Includes criticism and education.
- *Ethics*: How we decide between right and wrong, good, and evil. Includes morality and professional ethics.
- *Logic*: The structure of arguments. Includes classification and syntax.
- *Metaphysics*: The structure of the universe and our perception of it. Being, time, reality, consciousness, etc. The relationship of worldly objects to one another.
- *Politics*: How scarce resources are allocated to the community. The structure of liberty, justice, property, rights, and freedom. The dynamics of power. Includes ideology and authority.