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Design Museum and Beefeater 24 present

Super Contemporary

Celebrating visionary design from London's creative mavericks





Super Contemporary

Presented by Design Museum and Beefeater 24

Super Contemporary is the spirit of London design, past, present and future. The exhibition celebrates and examines the creative magnetism of London and its enduring reputation as a beacon of design. The Design Museum has joined forces with Beefeater 24 to showcase 15 new commissions from London's most dynamic creatives to explore what it is that attracts the world's leading designers to study, work and live in the city.

The 15 commissions from London's future stars and its current elite, including fashion designer Paul Smith, designer Thomas Heatherwick and product designer Ron Arad, form the centre of the exhibition. Their brief was to give something back to the metropolis in which they have made their name, and their designs, revealed in the exhibition, reflect acute and varied observations on London life.

A unique collection of personal maps give a rare peek into London's creative networks to reveal what excites and drives them. A media-rich timeline, beginning in the 1960s and charting London's defining creative moments in architecture, fashion, product design and communication tells of pivotal events and key figures such as the Lloyds of London building by Richard Rogers, the first ZX80 Sinclair personal computer and Katherine Hamnett's '58% Don't Want Pershing!' t-shirt, alongside the schools, exhibitions and cultural events that have shaped London into one of the most creative centres of the world.

Deyan Sudjic, Director of the Design Museum comments, "There is no London style, it's the city in which designers can be themselves. It's where art and fashion, architecture and design mix with combustible results. And this is a moment to look at what makes London special".



Time Line

For the past five decades, London has continuously attracted talented students from around the world, drawn by its reputation as a focus for design of every kind, from architecture to fashion. The Super Contemporary exhibition explores the connections between the various aspects of the city's creative and cultural energy, not in a triumphalist sense because like any other city, London has its problems. Super Contemporary attempts to identify the crossovers, and the points of reference shared by every aspect of that culture.

Ambitious students come to London attracted by the achievements of their predecessors and the chance to work with successful practitioners who are prepared to teach. Once they graduate, there is an abundance of opportunities and potential work to keep them in London long enough to establish themselves.

In architecture, fashion, advertising, graphic design and product, London remains a world leader, despite the city's faltering manufacturing base. It's a city without any one style, or a means of expression, rather it's a place that allows for plurality of approaches.



1960s A bold new world

It was only in the 1960s that London finally emerged, from wartime austerity and rationing. In an explosion of modernity, it was a moment that saw the city acquire new landmarks that continue to dominate London, such as the Post Office communications tower. Kenneth Grange and Mary Quant gave London a gentle shove toward modernity, giving London a glimpse of the age of plenty that was coming, of sensual tactile plastic materials, and consumer products previously unheard of in Britain.

British Design & Art Direction (D&AD) Logo designed by Colin Forbes



9 212

Fashion designer and entrepreneur John Stephen on Carnaby Street Kenwood Chef A701 Kenneth Grange Mary Quant with a bob haircut by Vidal Sassoon 1960's

Christopher Robin Raincoat and Sou'wester Hat Mary Quant 1963



Advertisement for Pirelli Fletcher/Forbes/Gill 1962



1960s The energy explosion

Traffic lights David Mellor 1966

Fashion and music made London an international focus for youth culture, expressed through the psychedelic movement, flower power and the Carnaby Street phenomenon. Once grey streets were transformed by a sudden injection of colour, as the city finally emerged from post war reconstruction and an era of austerity.

It was the period when the basis for today's architectural culture was established. Team 4 was set up in 1963 by Norman Foster and Richard Rogers and dissolved in 1967. After studying in America, it was in London that these two dominant British architects built their first projects.

Nova Magazine Founding editor Harry Fieldhouse 1965–1975





Would you be more careful if it was you that got pregnant? Campaign by Saatchi & Saatchi for Health Education Council/Family Planning Association British Road Signs Jock Kinneir and Margaret Calvert 1967



Biba Store Founded by Barbara Hulanicki 1968









Artwork for Rolling Stones Logo John Pasche 1970

1970s The end of an era

While London's art and design schools flourished, producing a generation of gifted graduates including James Dyson, Daniel Weil, Zaha Hadid and Ron Arad. The economic crisis, triggered by the Arab oil embargo of the West, a miners strike and escalating inflation, lead to the collapse of the British manufacturing industry.

The scene was set for London to develop as an international centre for the so-called creative economy, rooted in the provision of services, rather than in its manufacturing. In the design world, London based consultancies such as Pentagram began to build an international business.



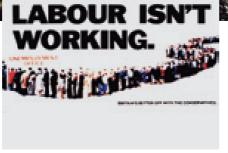
Retreat Pod Martyn Dean 1970

Zip-Up House Richard Rogers & Su Rogers Completed 1971





Intercity 125 High-Speed Train Kenneth Grange, Pentagram 1977



Labour Isn't Working Saatchi & Saatchi for Conservative Party Election Campaign 1978

1970s Punk and inflation

The dissaffection of a new generation, growing up in the wreckage of a post-industrial landscape, was expressed in the punk explosion creating a worldwide impact. Art school nihilism and radical politics appeared to reject the excesses of the hippie past, against a backdrop of Labour election defeat.

With a moribund economy, overshadowed by runaway inflation, there were few jobs for architects and most new thinking remained on paper. The collapse of traditional employment generators in London's docklands left huge areas empty and derelict, which were gradually colonised as artist's spaces, from which new creative opportunities were born.



Malcolm McLaren & Vivienne Westwood shop on Kings Road 1976



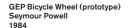
Anarchy in t Sex Pistols 1977







Camden Market





1984

John Galliano





New Order, Power, Corruption and Lies Peter Saville for Factory Records 1983

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Timeline Presented by Design I





Katharine Hamnett meets Margaret Thatcher

1980s The Thatcher revolution

The Conservative government of the 1980s lead by Margaret Thatcher Britain's first female Prime Minister was determined to break the grip of trade unions and reshape the economy on a neoliberal model.

The country was polarised for and against her. In the capital, she was able to abolish the Greater London Council which, under Ken Livingstone's leadership, had become a focus of resistance not just to her political and economic policies, but her cultural stance. While the skyline of the city was changed by the completion of the first high-rise, the Natwest bank's headquarters, fashion, as exemplified by Katharine Hamnett's famous t-shirt, took on a political tone.

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Presented by Design Museum and Beefeater 24



Imagination Offices Herron Associates

Completed 1989

Railfreight Roundel Design Group

Lloyd's of London



Norman Foster



Tom Dixon, Mark Brazier Jones and Nick Jones 1985







Post big bang

Deregulation of the financial services provided by the City of London began the sequence of events that twenty years later were to see the credit crunch of 2008. But while the going was good, it created a generation of wealthy city workers, and attracted an international concentration of bankers, brokers and lawyers, who helped to make London the only true global city in Europe.

In stylistic terms, architecture and design were polarised by the style-war initiated by the Prince of Wales' onslaught on Modernism and his attack on the plan for a new extension to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square.

Timeline

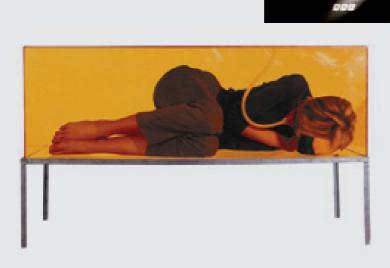
Presented by Design Museum and Beefeater 24



Broadside 5, The Typography Workshop Alan Kitching 1993

> Faraday Chair, Hertzian Tales Dunne & Raby 1994-1998

BBC2 idents Robinson Lambie-Nairn 1990

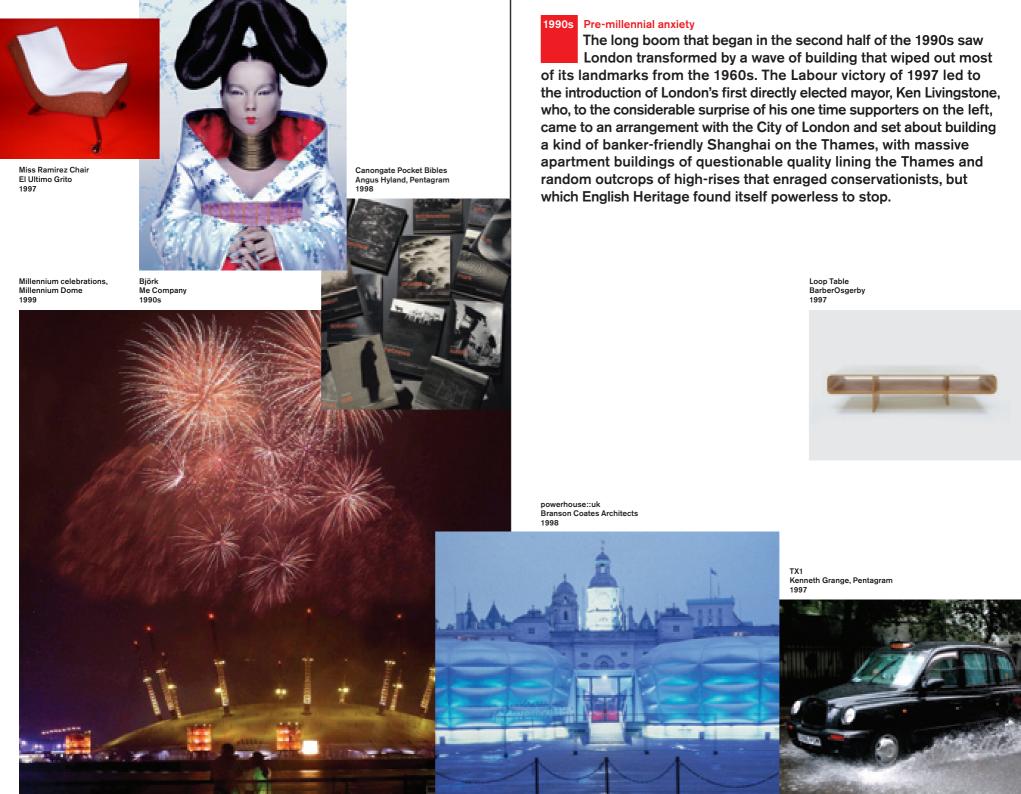


1990s Deconstructing the capital
After the booming late 1980s of power dressing, padded shoulders

and mobile phones the size of bricks, London experienced a recession in the early 1990s. Some of the design consultancies that had gone public, went bust. But the transformation of once forlorn Clerkenwell and Hoxton marked permanent shifts in the city's social geography and the 'statement restaurant' had become a fixture of London life. There were signs of a generational shift: Zaha Hadid was beginning to make the move from theory to practice and the Victoria & Albert Museum took the bold decision to commission Daniel Libeskind to build what would have been his first major project, although they could not raise the money to build it.

Milliner Philip Treacy 1990s



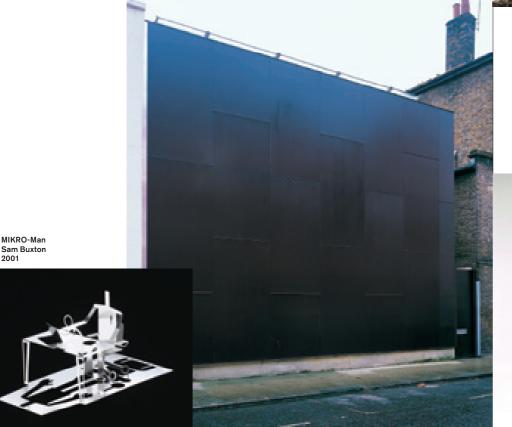


2000s Embracing a new century

After the smoke cleared over the disappointment of the Millennium Dome, London was amazed to discover that it was still booming. The population had started to grow again, reversing almost a century of steady decline. It was attracting rich and poor from around the world and showing the signs of a bubble economy which was overshadowed by the conspicuous consumption of the bonus culture.

For a while London believed that it had overtaken not just Paris as a cultural and tourist centre and Frankfurt as a financial centre, but that it was on equal terms with, or even pulling ahead of, New York. It had become the city of choice for designers and artists as well as bankers, and it was importing talented architects, such as Herzog and de Meuron, and exporting their services around the world.

Elektra House David Adjaye Completed 2001

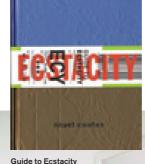




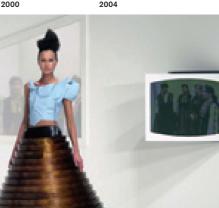
30 St Mary Axe Foster & Partners Completed 2004

why not associates

2003



Afterwords Hussein Chalayan 2000



Rolling Bridge Thomas Heatherwick 2004

2000s Breaking boundaries

The London skyline no longer has quite so many tower cranes. There are several landmark buildings now on permanent hold. The big architectural practices have been hit by a wave of lay-offs. The bubble has burst and the design-as-art boom has turned to bust.

Yet the mood in creative London is surprisingly positive. The groundwork of design thought, made during the hard times of the 1960's and 70's, now shapes and informs the work of London's designers. An end to the irrational exuberance of the last decade may yet provide the setting for some fresh thinking.

Westminster Academy Allford, Hall, Monaghan, Morris Completed 2007





London Sinfonietta Bibliothèque

2008

The Replenishing Body Kiosk Ross Phillips, SHOWStudio 2007

Sackler Crossing, Kew Gardens John Pawson 2006









Commissions

The 15 commissions from London's future stars and its current elite, including fashion designer Paul Smith, designer Thomas Heatherwick and product designer Ron Arad, form the centre of the exhibition. Their brief was to give something back to the metropolis in which they have made their name and their designs, revealed in the exhibition, reflect acute and varied observations on London life.



Lamp-post Chandelier

Thomas Heatherwick

Thomas Heatherwick has taken the most anonymous of all street furniture, the lamp-post, and made it dance. In the type of playful gesture for which he is renowned, Heatherwick chose a familiar but otherwise dull object that is always vertical and repositioned it into an energetic and sweeping arrangement. This new form is both recognisable and surprising, whilst still fully functional. The lamp-posts together form a street sculpture giving coherence, focus and punctuation to London's streetscape.

Heatherwick's design intervention is deceptive. There is a minimal investment in production – using 'off the shelf' products and regular installation teams. But it maximises drama, creating spatial experiences that work for passers-by on an intimate scale and producing an overall effect which is grand and impressive. The use of multiple repeated elements, intelligently arranged, work together in a system to reveal a new and superior form, is a typical trademark of Heatherwick's work. Rooted strongly in engineering solutions, his designs also owe a great deal to observing biological and natural structures.





Listening Station
BarberOsgerby

Imagine that within the bustle of the urban environment you are able to momentarily escape by listening to hidden city soundscapes. BarberOsgerby propose a public sculpture which harnesses acoustic phenomena to tune into the lost sounds of the city. Within the structure a user may hear the sound of Big Ben from afar, or perhaps the splash of water in a fountain, or the last of the dawn chorus. It delivers a concentrated experience of the London soundscape in an unlikely visual setting.

The form of the dish is dictated by the mathematics of acoustic performance. Inspired by the language of geometry, this form is a development from the designer's circular Iris tables which were made of precisely machined segments. BarberOsgerby have created a public sculpture with a unique interactive experience. The listener is invited to find the sonic focal point, where the sound amplified by the shape alone is at its most audible. This point floats between the centre of the dish and the distant source of the sound.



Gone with the wind? First it was switched off, now it's gone. Let's have the Neon Tower back on top of the Hayward Gallery Ron Arad

When Ron Arad first came to London in the 1970s, the Neon Tower that once topped the Hayward Gallery was of particular personal significance. It summed up the city for him, a place that was willing to experiment. Arad chose to dedicate his commission to the influence of Philip Vaughan's 1972 wind reactive sculpture, its significance to London's cultural skyline and to reflect on the fleeting nature of the contemporary.

The commission of this film was triggered by the dismantling of the Tower. The film explores its impact in the context of other familiar London locations that have undergone significant change in recent years and which capture a sense of the temporary nature of the contemporary. To what extent can we as citizens understand London or influence its trajectory – a city in a continuous process of being destroyed, rebuilt, regenerated and redefined?

New London Rubbish Bin

When asked what he would like to give back to London, celebrated fashion designer Paul Smith wanted only to remove something – litter. Renowned for taking the familiar and making it desirable with a contemporary and very personal twist, Smith thought of a way to make an anti-litter campaign engaging. By acknowledging the power of humour to bring about change, rather then instructing or warning people, he proposes designs for light-hearted, reactive rubbish bins, which show their appreciation each time a piece of rubbish is thrown in. The racing green rabbit, designed to populate the streets of London, is a playful and optimistic gesture.

Paul Smith's design is about beautifying a mundane, neglected object and reaffirming changes in people's behaviour through a non patronising, charming and memorable experience. When a person approaches the bin, a sensor in the hoop reacts and the rabbit's ears display flashing lights. As well as the bin displayed here, there are two additional rabbits installed in public spaces in Covent Garden and Holland Park which also features a bin-bag custom designed for the occasion.



Freedom Space

Neville Brody

In London, we are constantly under surveillance by the densest concentration of security cameras on the planet. 'Is this freedom?' asks Brody as he questions whether this surveillance limits our freedom of expression. When asked what he would like to bring to London, Brody reflected on the creative explosion that he experienced during the 1980s, and his proposal is for a 'Freedom Space' as a place within the city that would be a refuge from the all-seeing cameras and provide a platform for creativity and free expression.

Brody believes that people are too constrained by the way London has evolved to protect itself. He is inviting you to enter The Freedom Space, and through video, sound, drawing and writing, you have the opportunity to express your feelings and thoughts about how free London really is. The installation, which works both as stimulus and platform for expression, is an experiment that will last the duration of this exhibition. From the Freedom Space to open air, the unique content created at the Design Museum will be broadcast on Brody's new freedom website. He sees it as reigniting free creative expression and would like to see them placed in schools and high streets across the UK.

www.thefreedomspace.com





Head to Toe

London is renowned for its cosmopolitan mix of people and Ross Phillips's interactive installation taps into this characteristic. With camera pods situated at different locations in London, moving images of heads, bodies and legs are captured and sent to the Head to Toe master pod. They are then aligned into a full body made up of an assortment of moving body parts that create unexpected and whimsical combinations. Representing and sampling the eclectic styles that exist within the city, the installation playfully reminds us that London is a city made up of very different individuals.

There are four video pods in different London locations sampling short videos of heads, bodies or legs of the people that stand in front of them. These are combined in this Design Museum installation. Part of the challenge was ensuring the user aligns themselves correctly so the bodies could match up. The end result is a head to toe image that represents the eclectic style of London. A great amount of effort has gone into the technology, which makes the installation seem so simple. Software is at its most powerful when it becomes invisible.



KiosKiosk Wavne Hemingway

Vintage clothes have long provided an important inspiration for fashion in London, Many designers, among them Wayne and Geraldine Hemingway, got their first break in one of London's low-rent market stalls. Now the markets that previously served creative start-ups have changed. Increasing costs and competition have resulted in diminishing opportunities for young designers who are finding it harder to reach consumers. If this opportunity for low-rent retailing was reintroduced, could it change the high street once again?

Creating affordable or no-rent retail spaces in the form of kiosks, in prominent high street locations, is how the Hemingways would give something back to the city in which they thrived. During the exhibition a prototype for the kiosk, complete with creative businesses, will be set up on the bustling Southwark Southbank walkway near Tower Bridge with talented new designers exhibiting and selling their designs.

London Transport Tom Dixon

Tom Dixon imagines a future in which people take responsibility for their personal transport, insisting that the cars they want to drive become environmentally friendly. This represents both an optimistic approach and is a critical comment on the types of electric cars that are currently available. Above all, it is a reminder that people do not have to passively accept what they are given, but should more actively participate in shaping their city.

The 1949 Mk VI Bentley's body can be easily separated from its chassis. This makes it an excellent candidate for an elegant conversion. Its electrical components are largely taken from a donor vehicle, a milk float. The weight of the Bentley and the milk float's load specifications are approximately the same, which make them a good match. By replacing the combustion engine, exhaust system, fuel-guzzling and polluting components with a simpler kit of clean parts, there is space for additional batteries and baggage. Dixon predicts that when electrical cars become a significant part of our future city, charging stations and battery exchange points will become an essential part of London's infrastructure.

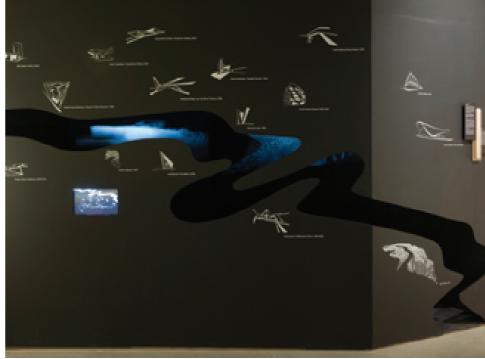


Rain It In Paul Cocksedge

Rain is a year-round predicament in London. Paul Cocksedge, a designer with a particular interest in scientific phenomena, proposes to use static electricity to control the way the rain behaves and limit our discomfort. Following a series of experiments, he has developed scenarios and possible applications that could take place should technology evolve at its predicted pace.

It is an established scientific fact that an electrical charge will pull a stream of water towards it. With that in mind, Paul Cocksedge ordered a static generator to allow him to experiment with control over streaming water. Given the right circumstances it could be applied at a greater scale – imagine permanently dry pavements with an invisible shelter of static electricity, dry cycle paths or even a personal pedal powered bicycle rain guard above your head. And how about rainfree bridges with rainwater redirected into the river? Imagine an open sky at Wembley Stadium in which the arch, charged by static electricity, keeps the pitch and the crowds dry, even in the worst weather conditions. This film uses footage shot in Cocksdedge's studio demonstrating the reality behind the theory.





Visions for The City of London Zaha Hadid

Could London be designed to evolve differently from the way it has to date? Zaha Hadid invites you to take a step back and reconsider the DNA of London. In the Visions for the City of London, Hadid poses several questions, asking the visitor to reflect on their surroundings, taking into consideration the existing infrastructure, whilst challenging current systems. Themes covered in these questions include: what type of buildings should be next to one another and how do we live and work in different types of neighbourhoods? This project is not a solution but an approach for understanding the city's structure and considering London's character for the future.

Setting a design principle of change, this proposal is both a vision and a template for a process. The interactive urban land-scaping tool is based on a principle of reshaping London's building blocks according to opposing forces. Step up to the screen and see the city change according to different decisions. The computer-generated simulation devised by Zaha Hadid Architects is a working model, a move forward from previous sketches offering a new theory for urban master-planning.



Horatio's Garden

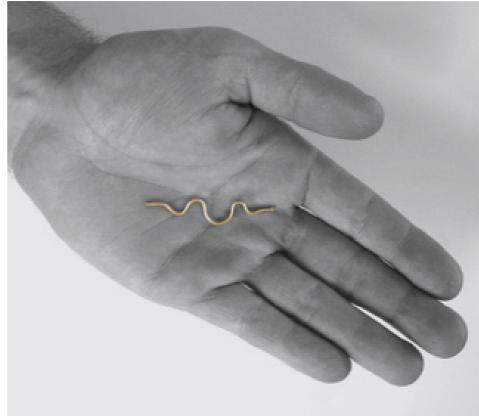
Tired of looking up at Nelson on his column in Trafalgar Square, El Ultimo Grito and Urban Salon wanted to meet him face to face. They imagined a sky garden in which you could walk up to the once triumphal Nelson. This new setting would make him a more human ideal of an approachable leader. The proposal for a floating platform over Trafalgar Square would transform the cityscape whilst offering a sculptural canopy that would not interfere with the current use of the square. Horatio's Garden is an imaginative vision for a new public space in one of London's most celebrated sites.

The floating garden, forty-six meters above Trafalgar Square, is a vision rather than a solution. Presented at a 1:50 scale, the model is a three-dimensional illustration set at eye-level viewing height and was produced using new precision pattern-cutting software which is capable of making complex three-dimensional shapes. Supported by enormous tapering columns that are also structural 'funnels' through which the public can ascend to the top, the view from the garden will offer new perspectives of the city.

Thames Pin Kit Grover

Londoners could do with a symbol of hope. Kit Grover, a designer with a keen interest in communicating cultural content, proposes a new symbol. Looking to local historical references he found potential in the pagan folklore practice of throwing bent pins into water sources that have existed for centuries. Thousands of bent pins have been found on the foreshore of the Thames and in London's holy wells. According to traditional practice, intentionally removing a functional object from its useful cycle charged it with symbolic value.

The pin, bent like the River Thames, carries the folkloric idea one step further by creating a sacrificial or throwaway symbol that is also a desirable object. The design is suggestive, it has a narrative embedded not only in its form but also and more importantly in the ideas of reintroducing the Thames as a receptacle for hope. As such, the Thames Pin is more of an emotional gift than a decorative object.



K9 Post Office Kiosk

Industrial Facility

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's cast iron telephone boxes are not limited to London, but their red silhouettes form an essential part of London's identity. Scott's design represented a small 1920s building that housed the latest communications technology of its day. Industrial Facility want to adopt this idea of a small shop rooted in the city and apply it to the services of a Post Office. The K9 Post Office Kiosk reflects our changing social and commercial needs, with a range of functions that are useful to the public.

Creating new sites or replacing redundant phone boxes with street level K9 Post Office Kiosks would relieve some of the pressure on conventional Post Offices, that are themselves under threat. The demand for Post Office services can be met with the viable and available technologies of telepresence video - which would allow the user to see and talk with a real staff member. The Kiosk could be powered by innovative rotating solar panel roofing. This proposal is an outstanding example of a timely and local civic intervention, that makes the Post Office network decentralised and local once more.





Battersea Gods Home

Nigel Coates

Decades of decay may have made Battersea Power Station increasingly picturesque, but have also made it less attractive for developers. With the economy on its knees, it makes more sense to turn the entire site into a park. The power station could be the focus of a landscape garden in a spectacular riverside location. It could include a series of follies that reference some of the greatest sacred sites around the world.

In-line with the many streams of culture and belief that make up modern London, this twin to the existing Battersea Park would pit nature against a multi-denominational narrative thread. A series of sacred structures, gods or goddesses might fuse with the power station or stand alone amongst the trees. Their setting would make the most of this evocative industrial landscape. From Aver's Rock to the Blue Mosque, people will be able to wander amongst familiar touchstones from around the globe. Such a harmonising layered setting would encourage visitors to explore their own ideas. The power station could itself become a symbol of faith.



Bus Shelter

David Adjaye

David Adjaye acknowledges the technical requirements that enable a bus shelter to function, yet proposes a more generous and desirable solution. No longer following the industrial appearance that has become the norm of these service structures, he introduces a fresh design language. Adjaye, as he repeatedly does through his architectural practice, questions both aesthetic issues and utility at the same time.

Adjaye's Bus Shelter is conceived as a combination of elements that can be adapted to different sites and requirements. Made up from a kit of parts, the structure will retain its elegant and engaging identity in different set-ups. Updated to meet the current needs of Londoners, Adjaye provides surfaces for work alongside a variety of seating, perching or leaning solutions to accommodate different lengths of waiting and resting. The dappled shade of the canopy and the scattered pillars supporting the roof suggest an urban gazebo, rather than a functional structure.

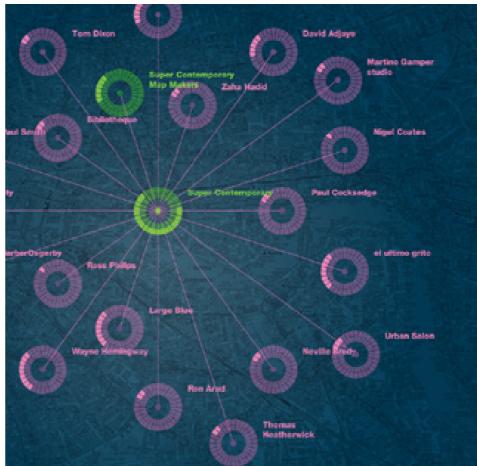
Collabregator

Large Blue

The Collabregator is an online tool designed to gather and visually map information about design collaborations started in London. It highlights London's creative networks by plotting those often hidden connections that are so important to the ecology of London's design community. This particular version of the map shows the generated pathways of design collaborations around the Super Contemporary project itself.

The Collabregator is an organic project that will grow and will continue to exist online. The Collabregator, commissioned specially for Super Contemporary, is designed by Large Blue, a London based new media agency working across digital media, video and design.

Please go online and add your collaborations at www.collabregator.net



Guest Curator: Daniel Charny

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Project Manager: Melanie Spencer

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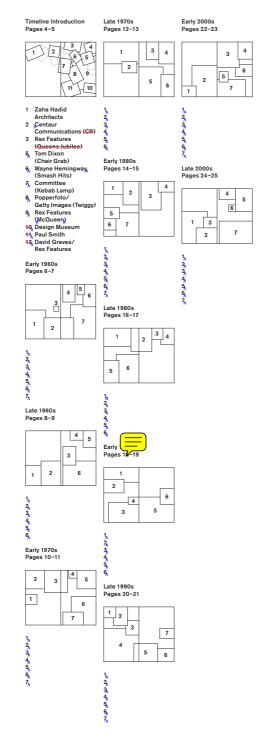
The Design Museum would like to thank all lenders to this exhibition for their kind support and the mappers and interviewees for contributing their valuable knowledge and experience.

With special thanks to Geographers' A-Z Map Co Ltd.

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County Day

County