

**CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM HOUSTON PRESENTS  
MAJOR EXHIBITION OF INNOVATIVE DESIGNS**

***Design Life Now: National Design Triennial, from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, On View Jan. 26 to April 20***



Background: **Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA)**, Rotterdam, New York, and Beijing. Seattle Central Library, 2004. Seattle, WA. Photo: Philippe Ruault. Clockwise from left: **Maria Cornejo/Zero**, New York, NY. Plissé band dress and parka, 2004. Wool and silk. Photo: Mark Borthwick. **Kidrobot**, New York, NY. Big Mouth Dunny, 2005. Designers: Paul Bunditz and Tristan Easton. Paint design: DEPH. Vinyl. Photo: Kidrobot. **Nike, Inc.**, Portland, OR. Nike FREE 5.0, 2004. Designer: Tobie Hatfield. Manufacturer: Nike, Inc. Nylon, synthetic microfiber, rubber. Photo: Nike, Inc. **Herman Miller, Inc.**, Zeeland, MI. *Basket* office furnishing system, 2004. Designers: David Ritch and Mark Saffel, 5D Studio. Design and development: Herman Miller, Inc. Wood, aluminum. Photo: Jim Powell Photography. Photo collage by Andriano Balajadia/CAMH.

**HOUSTON, Texas (Monday, December 3, 2007)** – This winter, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston will present the *Design Life Now: National Design Triennial*, the latest installment in an ongoing exhibition series from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum. Inaugurated in 2000, the Triennial seeks out and presents the most innovative American designs from the prior three years in a variety of fields, including product design, architecture, furniture, film, graphics, new technologies, animation, science, medicine, and fashion.

The work of more than 80 designers and firms, ranging from established design leaders such as Apple, architect Santiago Calatrava, and Nike, Inc., to emerging designers like Joshua Davis, Jason Miller, and Jessica Smith, will be featured throughout the Museum's upstairs Brown Foundation Gallery. *Design Life Now: National Design Triennial*, made possible by Target, will be on view from January 26 to April 20, 2008.

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## *Design Life Now: National Design Triennial*

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“The National Design Triennial illustrates the inextricable ties that bind art and everyday life in the 21st century,” said CAMH Interim Director Linda Shearer. “As a museum dedicated to presenting the premier art of our time it is important for us to exhibit a wide range of innovations in visual culture, whether they come from a painter’s easel or a designer’s drafting board.”

The Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt curators Ellen Lupton and Matilda McQuaid and former curatorial director Barbara Bloemink, along with guest curator Brooke Hodge of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, sought out the experimental projects, emerging ideas, major buildings, new products, and media that were at the center of contemporary culture from 2003 to 2006. The curatorial team chose the designers and firms by group consensus, and, for the first time, solicited nominations from the public through a blog-style Web site, which brought in nominations for designers and firms such as Nicholas Blechman and Marsha Ginsberg.

“By displaying side-by-side the latest products and creative concepts from companies as diverse as Pixar, Google, Herman Miller, and NASA, the Triennial emphasizes the nearly infinite ways in which design plays a role in how we see, think about, and experience the world around us,” said Cooper-Hewitt director Paul Warwick Thompson.

*Design Life Now: National Design Triennial* focuses on four principal ideas that characterized elements of the design world from 2003 to 2006: Emulating Life; Community; Hand-Crafted and Do-It-Yourself Design; and Transformation.

### **Emulating Life**

The first of four structural themes in *Design Life Now* is design that emulates the natural world—either through form or movement—from games to robotics to products like kayaks and sneakers. Many new designs are based on biomimicry, studying the appearance and form of natural organisms in order to replicate various processes and functions. Examples include the Nike Free running shoe, designed to emulate the range of motion that occurs when running barefoot; Joseph Ayers’ Robolobster, a robotic crustacean intended to recognize changes in seawater and locate underwater mines whose structure and form replicates its living counterpart; and Graham Hawkes’ Deep Flight submersible, which can fly through the water like a great-bodied sea creature owing to a design process that began with motion studies and engineering.

### **Community**

The Triennial also demonstrates how design has responded to the growth and dissemination of the Internet, which has led to the evolution of vast communities that interact across enormous distances via blogs, film and animation, graphic design, limited-edition toys, and music. Design has always been a collaborative effort, involving clients, fabricators, retailers and end users, but increasingly, designers are working to collaborate in more fundamental ways. Examples include Armin Vit’s *Speak Up* blog; Michael Van

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Valkenburgh's Teardrop Park in New York, a temporary community of artists, civic officials, and studio associates; and Herman Miller's New Office Landscape series, which aims to stimulate employee creativity by creating semi-enclosed areas, such as the *Basket* group seating area, that are inviting places to meet, network, and brainstorm.

### **Hand-Crafted and Do-it-Yourself Design**

A major segment of the Triennial features designers whose work reflects a renewed appreciation for craft and personalization, whether through the use of specialized techniques such as embroidery and beading, or hand-crafted and do-it-yourself approaches. The popularity of prefabricated housing in recent years illustrates the widespread desire among consumers for streamlined, yet customizable, solutions to housing. Prefab housing, such as Charlie Lazor's FlatPak house and Craig Konyk's *up!house*, appeal to both young, first-time homeowners and empty nesters because of their affordability and adaptability. Other components of this area include Ralph Rucci's haute couture gowns featuring hand-stitched hems, seams, and luxurious handcrafted details; periodicals such as *Readymade* and the hybrid book/magazine *Make*; and the elegant handcrafted objects of David Wiseman, whose intricate network of cast plaster branches and fired porcelain blossoms will hang from the Museum exterior.

### **Transformation**

*Design Life Now* also will explore the transformation of form and materials through design, whether by bringing the outside into architectural interiors, using light to dissolve and transform surfaces, or creating interactive floors and artificial gardens. Examples include Christopher Douglas' Knock-down/Drag-out (KDDO) series of collapsible furniture and blik's removable vinyl wallpapers, both of which offer new and efficient means for transforming a living space.

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

Please visit [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org) for up-to-the-minute information on public programs, including preview receptions prior to the scheduled opening date, a special lecture in collaboration with the Rice Design Alliance, a series of Artists/Scholars Talks with designers and design-world authorities, and more. Confirmed public programs to date:

Saturday, January 26, 2 p.m.

**Scholar Talk** with **Brooke Hodge**, exhibition co-curator and Curator of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, on the exhibition

Thursday, February 7, 6:30 p.m.

**Loft Concert** with **Musiq**a, playing selections inspired by the exhibition, sponsored by KUH 88.7 FM Houston Public Radio

Sunday, February 10, 1-4 p.m.

**Family Day** with specially designed tours for children and hands-on art activities

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**EXHIBITION CREDITS**

Design Life Now is organized by the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum.

At Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, the exhibition was made possible by Target.

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**CAMH EXHIBITION FUNDING AND SUPPORT**

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Exhibitions presented in The Brown Foundation Gallery are supported by the patrons, benefactors, and donors to the Museum's Major Exhibition Fund: Major Patron—Fayez Sarofim. Patrons—Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen; Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Ballard; George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III/Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund; Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim; Leigh and Reggie Smith; and Michael Zilkha. Benefactors—Jackson Hicks/Jackson and Company; Elizabeth Howard; King & Spalding L.L.P.; Elisa J. Stude; Susan Vaughan Foundation; and Vitol Inc. Donors—Baker Botts, L.L.P.; Jana and Richard Fant; Mr. and Mrs. William Goldberg/Bernstein Global Wealth Management; Karol Kreymer and Robert J. Card, M.D.; Judy and Scott Nyquist; Karen and Eric Pulaski; David I. Saperstein; Karen and Harry Susman; and Joan Hohlt and J. Roger Wich Foundation.

Additional support for *Design Life Now* provided by Brochsteins Inc., Marley Lott, and Stern and Bucek Architects.

**GENERAL SUPPORT**

The Museum's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members, and donors. The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston receives partial operating support from the Houston Endowment, Inc., the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Continental is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

The audio guide features commentary by exhibiting designers and is supported in part by Will Golden.

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### **ABOUT THE CAMH**

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a non-collecting institution dedicated to presenting the best and most exciting international, national, and regional art of today, and to providing a forum for the discussion and understanding of the art of our time. Through dynamic exhibitions accompanied by scholarly publications and accessible educational programs, the Museum reaches out to local, regional, national, and international audiences of all ages. Recent exhibitions include *Andrea Zittel: Critical Space*, the first comprehensive solo exhibition of Zittel's work in North America, named "Best Architecture or Design Show of 2006" by the International Association of Art Critics; *Sam Gilliam: a retrospective*, the first full-career survey for the important abstract artist; and *Black Light/White Noise: Sound and Light in Contemporary Art*, the first comprehensive review of black artists working with sound and light.

Upcoming major exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston include *The Old, Weird America* (May 3-July 20, 2008), the first museum exhibition to explore the widespread resurgence of folk imagery and history in American contemporary art, and *Sam Taylor-Wood* (August 2-October 5, 2008), comprised of some 40 works by the British artist known for her elaborately staged photos and room-size video installations of psychologically charged narrative.

### **ABOUT TARGET**

Minneapolis-based Target serves guests at 1,591 stores in 47 states nationwide by delivering today's best retail trends at affordable prices. Target is committed to providing guests with great design through innovative products, in-store experiences and community partnerships. Whether visiting a Target store or shopping online at Target.com, guests enjoy a fun and convenient shopping experience with access to thousands of unique and highly differentiated items. Target (NYSE:TGT) gives more than \$3 million a week to its local communities through grants and special programs. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.

### **GENERAL INFO**

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Thursdays to 9 p.m.), and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission is always free. For more information visit [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org) or call (713) 284-8250.

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