

breathing colour by hella jongerius

Tour Proposal

Credits

Public Programme

The Design Museum Touring Programme

The programme was set up in 2002 with the aim of bringing design exhibitions to audiences around the UK and internationally. Since then, the museum has toured more than 120 exhibitions to 102 venues in 30 countries worldwide.

The Design Museum's touring exhibitions range in size from 150 to 1,000 square metres and cover all areas of design – architecture, fashion, furniture, graphics, product and more.

About the Design Museum

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to architecture and design. Its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989, the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over five million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Miuccia Prada, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams. On 24 November 2016, the Design Museum relocated to Kensington, West London. Architect John Pawson converted the interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design Museum, giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme.

In May 2018, the Design Museum was awarded the title of European Museum of the Year.

Contents

6	Exhibition overview
18	Exhibition adaptation
22	About Hella Jongerius
24	Exhibitions details
27	Terms and conditions
28	Contact

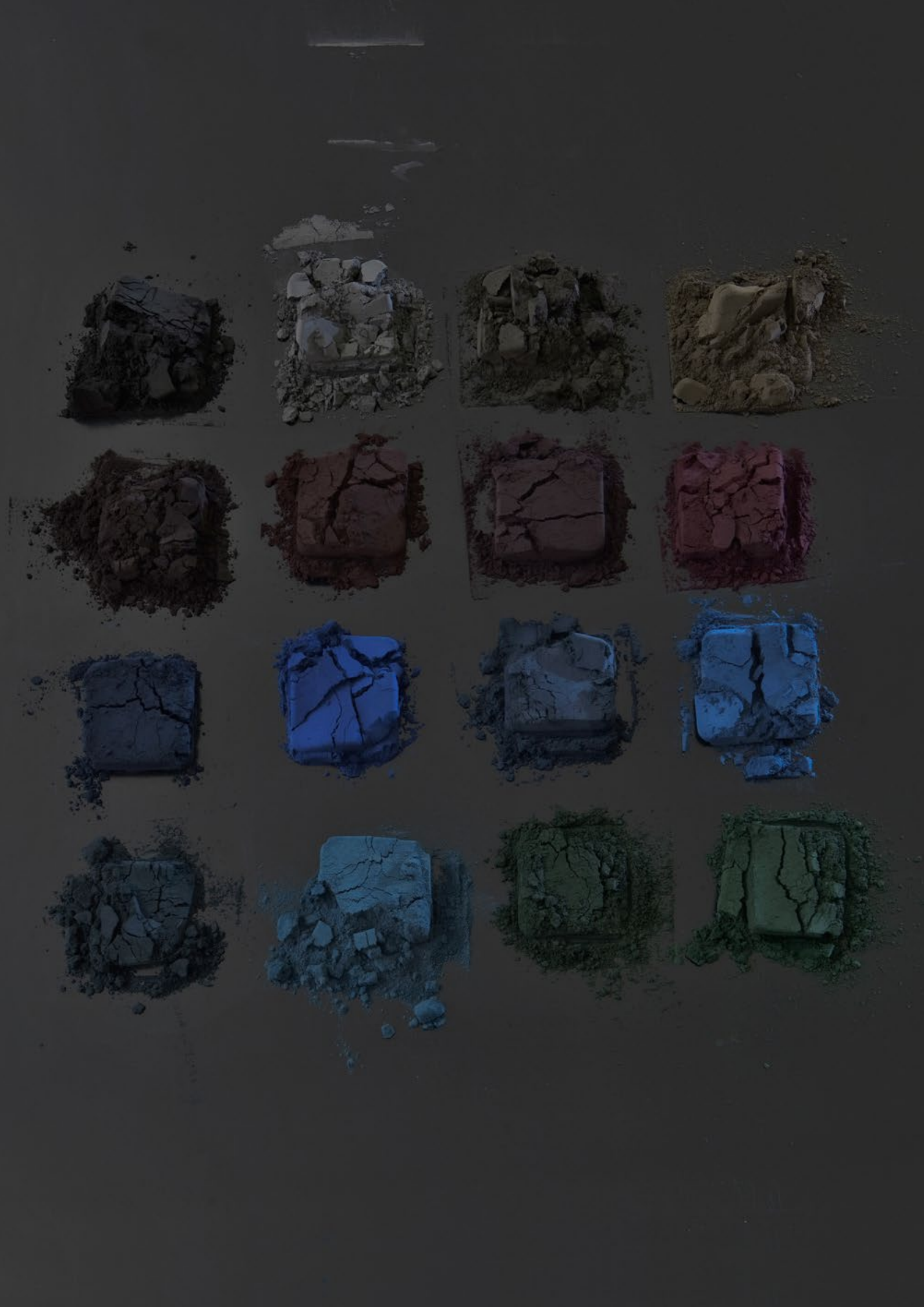


The Design Museum, London

‘A remarkable new show aims to change the way we look at the world’
★★★★★ The Times

‘A must-see exhibition on colour’
The Sunday Times





Exhibition overview

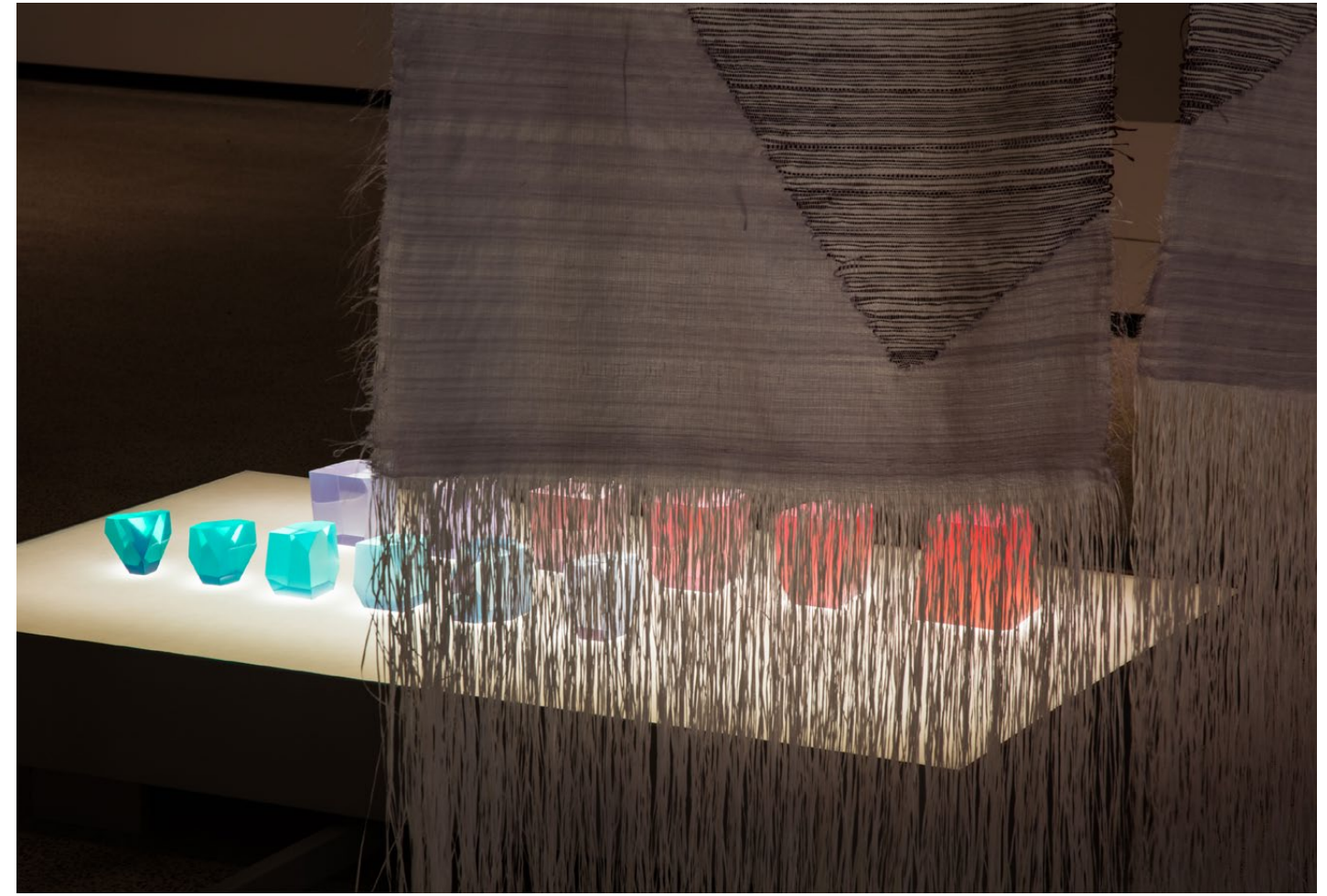
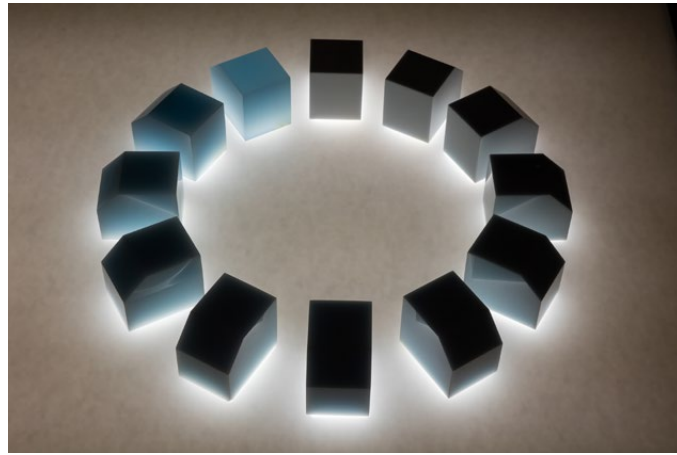
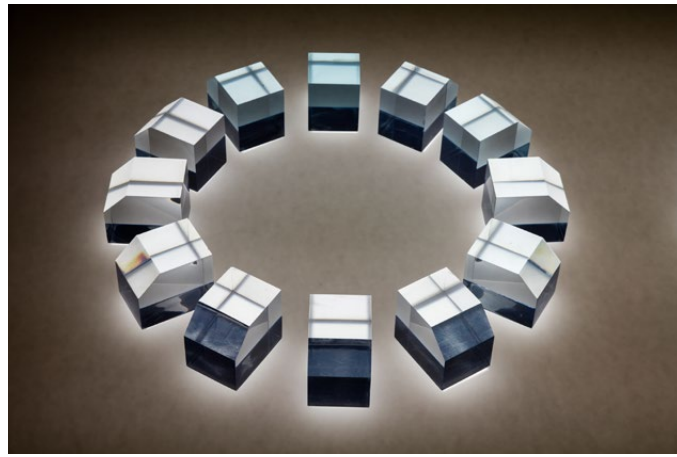
Drawing on 15 years of research, acclaimed designer Hella Jongerius presents *Breathing Colour*, an installation-based exhibition that takes a deeper look at how colour behaves. The show features a diverse collection of specially commissioned objects, exploring the effects that light conditions have upon our perception of colour and form. Ultimately, Jongerius' aim is to pit the power of colour against the power of form.

Jongerius' research has been inspired by a wide range of sources, including celebrated painters, who recognised and recorded how light affects objects and landscapes. For example, Monet painted the same haystack over and over to document the different colours and atmospheres at different times of the day.

Breathing Colour is an exhibition that blurs the boundaries between art and design. It combines intriguing shapes and extensive research; and it questions our preconceptions of colour, showcasing its imperfection and versatility.

The exhibition is divided into separate spaces that simulate daylight conditions at specific times of the day – morning, noon and evening. These three phases explore and expose how our perception of colour is dependent on changing daylight. Each installation includes a collection of three-dimensional objects including textiles, both hand-woven and worked on industrial looms.

Hella Jongerius explains:
'There is a phenomenon in colorimetry called Metamerism. This was the starting point in my colour research. It occurs when colours are viewed in different conditions, and describes the effect when two colours appear to match even though they might not actually do so. I think everyone once bought a piece of furniture or clothing in a certain colour, and experienced a shock when unpacking it back home. Most companies see the effect as problematic and try to avoid it, and produce colours that attempt to eliminate it. But I want to make a plea for embracing metamerism. As a designer, I want to make a plea for plastics, varnishes and paints to use layered pigments that provide intense colours that are allowed to breathe with changing light.'



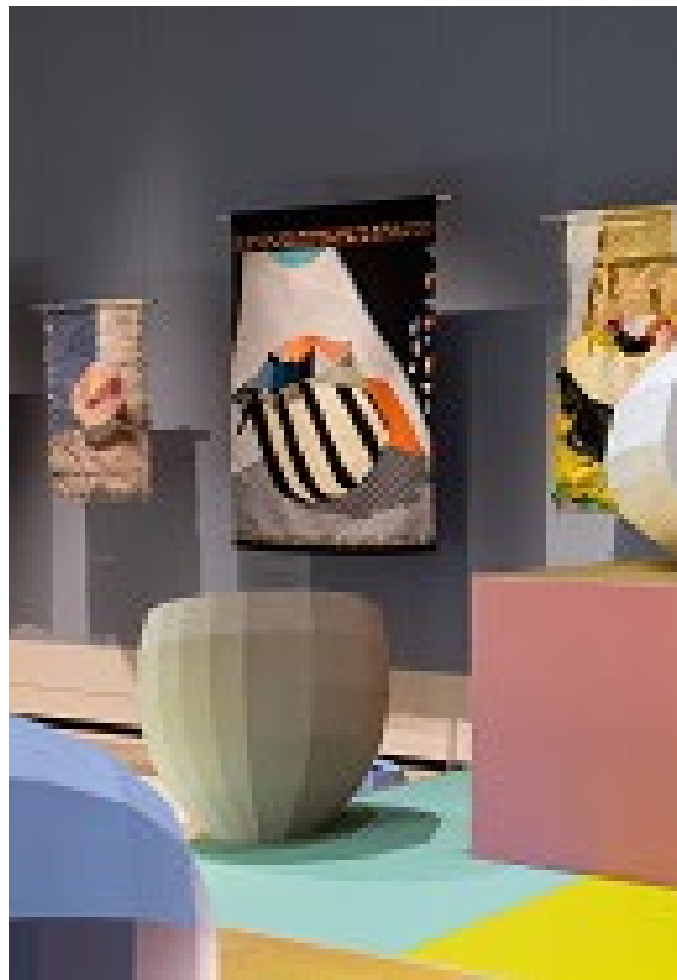
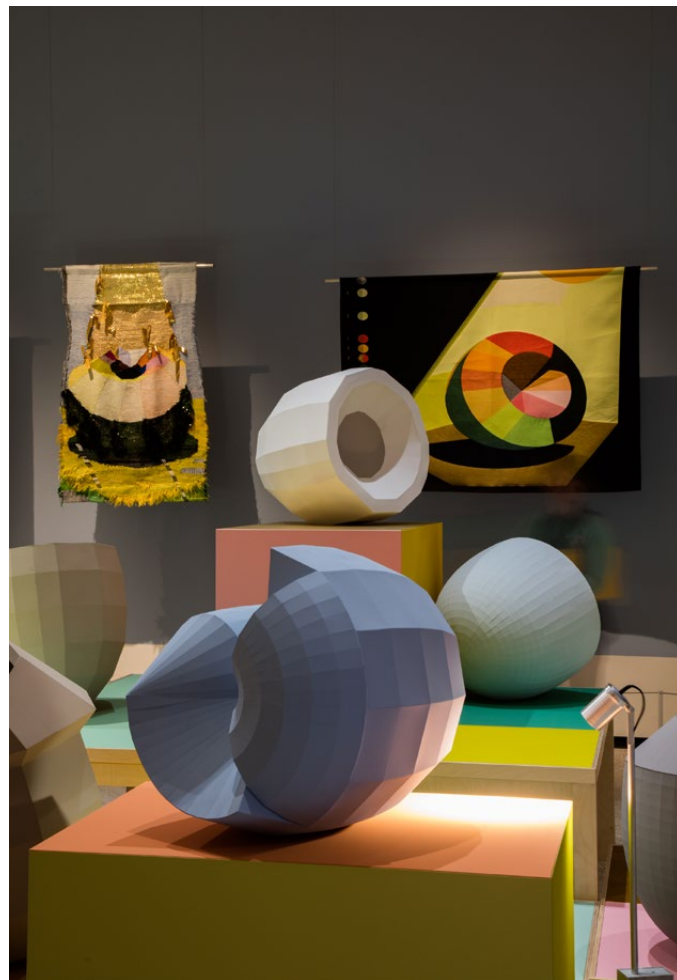
Morning

The 'Morning' section of the exhibition explores the differences between lightness and brightness and the hazy feeling of waking up. Early morning light first shines from the sun in its lowest position, just above the edge of the horizon. As the sun gradually rises the warm shades of dawn recede, and the colder morning air creates a crystal-clear glow with a blue-ish hue.

The circular Crystal Stones explore how colour changes as light passes through them. When light travels from one material to another it changes speed, allowing it to be separated into its seven constituent colours.

A series of aptly named multi-faceted objects – the Colour Catchers – have been specially designed as an aide to study colour, and are used throughout the exhibition. Created by folding and gluing complex cardboard patterns, the convex faceted surfaces absorb and reflect nearby colours. Irradiated with light, they become a three-dimensional colour chart, illustrating the principle of metamerism as they reveal gradations of their own base colour mixed with reflections of other nearby colours.

1. Exhibition view, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2018
- 2-3. Detail, Crystal Stones, the Design Museum, London, 2017
4. Morning study
5. Sketch for Morning section of Woven Movie
6. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017



Noon

As the sun reaches its zenith, the intensity of daylight is at its strongest. The sharp light from above casts strong shadows and stark contrasts. In the 'Noon' section, the shape and colour tones of the exhibits become sharp and bright.

Grey Colour Catchers are displayed on bright surfaces. This enables multiple colours to be seen across their faceted surfaces despite, in actuality, remaining grey. Lighting projections create sharp shadows and transition the visitor from the haze of early morning to the intensity of midday.

Hella Jongerius comments:
 'The Colour Catchers are an abstraction of all the daily objects that surround us. They are designed as the ultimate shape to research colour, shadows and reflections. They are my canvases. The folding acts as a shift between two different colours, it turns the form of an object into a generator of new colour tones.'

- 1-2. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017
3. Detail, Colour Catcher, the Design Museum, London, 2017
4. Sketch for Woven Movie 2:45pm, 2016
5. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017

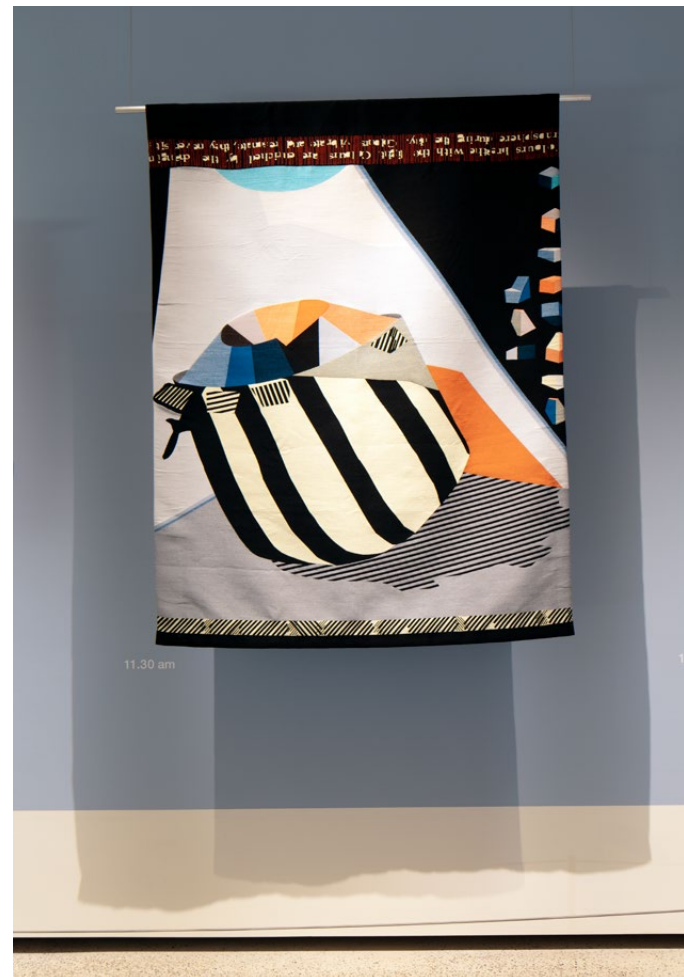


Evening

The 'Evening' element of the exhibition provides a very different experience. As the day draws to a close and sunlight moves downwards, shadows play a more crucial role in our perception of colour.

Large-scale textiles are used to experiment the creation of black tones without the use of black material. Woven from threads of wool, linen and cotton, these textiles are an extension of Jongerius' previous research into the colour black, and her rejection of the standard industrial approach of adding carbon to colours in order to darken them. The textiles demonstrate how it is possible to create a larger range of colours and hues by optically mixing from a limited palette of coloured yarns. By weaving in several materials, with different textures and finishes, these textiles produce a range of vibrant colours as well as a spectrum of rich and varied blacks.

1. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017
2. Exhibition view, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2018
3. Detail, Colour Wheels, the Design Museum, London, 2017
4. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017
5. Exhibition view, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2018



Woven Movie

Running the length of the gallery is the Woven Movie, a series of hanging textiles that use varying colours, materials and designs to reinterpret the repetitive image of the Colour Catchers. Using a range of fabrics and techniques, the image shows the changing nature of the object through the different phases of the day. Each of these ten woven textiles depicts a Colour Catcher at different times of the day. The textiles can be viewed individually but also as a sequence of still frames in an animated movie.

The Woven Movie is a continuation of the work pioneered by the German textile designer and printmaker Anni Albers. Developed during her time at the Bauhaus, Albers' work endeavoured to find new weaving solutions that could be produced and applied at a large industrial scale.

1. Woven Movie 2:45 at Jongerius' studio in Berlin, 2017
2. Detail, 12 noon, the Design Museum, London, 2017
3. Detail, 11:30am, the Design Museum, London, 2017
4. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London, 2017



Coloured Vases

Coloured Vases (series 3), a series of 100 unique vases orientated in a circular display, is one of the existing works from the Jongeriuslab archives included in the exhibition. Manufactured in 2010, the installation was part of the studio's research into minerals and oxides; a technique no longer used because of its inability to produce stable colouring. The lacquering of the vases with copper oxides results in a green colouring, the combination of cadmium and zirconium creates orange, tin oxides with iron produce beige and the manganese dioxide enriched lacquers develop purple tones.

We see the world in a rich mix of colours, but rarely do we appreciate how complex they can be. Colours are often presented to us as chemically optimised and consistent commodities, categorised according to paint charts and standardised colour systems. Where colours were once produced by mixing pigments into infinite permutations, we now select them according to a name or code on a chart.

Jongerius argues that these processes of industrialisation have narrowed our experiences of colour and its cultural meanings. Breathing Colour proves how we relate to colour in a more intimate and personal way.



Exhibition adaptation

By its nature and content, the exhibition can be staged either as a series of stand-alone installations or in conversation with other works of visual arts.

For its original arrangement at the Design Museum Jongerius' collection of specially designed objects was presented unaccompanied, with the focus of the exhibition placed solely on her research into how our experience of colour and form is affected by changing daylight throughout the course of a day.

In contrast to this, at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Jongerius collaborated with artist Mathieu Meijers to select artworks from the museum's permanent collection and create a dialogue between her research and the works of old master and contemporary artists such as Francis Picabia and Cornelis van Haarlem. In this context, the chosen works accompany and emphasise the three phases; morning, noon and evening; and the viewer is invited to consider how Jongerius' exploration of metamerism is contextualised within a wider body of art and design works.



About Hella Jongerius

Hella Jongerius' (1963, the Netherlands) work combines the traditional with the contemporary, the newest technologies with age-old craft techniques. She aims to create products with individual character by including craft elements in the industrial production process.

Graduating from Eindhoven's Design Academy in the early 1990s, Jongerius is from a generation of designers who explored the emergence of conceptual design, and how industrial design might better respond to our emotional as well as physical needs. In 1993, she founded her own studio, Jongeriuslab, which has a diverse client base including the conceptual Dutch design company Droog, US textile manufacturer Maharam, furniture brands Vitra and Artek, and the Dutch airline KLM. In 2013, Jongerius was part of the team that worked on the interior design of the Delegates' Lounge at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Throughout her career, Jongerius has strived to combine craft-led practice with contemporary industrial processes, from textiles to furniture. She is renowned for her thoughtful and experimental use of colour, often rejecting conventional approaches in favour of more nuanced and bespoke colour solutions.

Since 2007, she has been Art Director of Colour and Surfaces for Vitra, where she works to build a colour library for reissues of classic designs as well as new products.



Detail of Crystal Stones, 2017

Exhibition details

Curators

Alex Newson was Senior Curator at the Design Museum from 2009 to 2019 and is now Senior Curator at the V&A Museum of Childhood, London

Hella Jongerius is a Dutch designer based in Berlin and founded the Jongeriuslab studio in 1993

Exhibition and graphic design

Jongeriuslab

Venues

Design Museum, London
28 June – 24 September 2017

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
9 June – 12 August 2018

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm
17 October 2019 – 9 February 2020

Gewerbemuseum Winterthur
29 November 2020 - 23 May 2021

Tour availability

from Summer 2021

Space

approx. 300 – 500 square metres



Terms and conditions

Hire fee, on request, includes:

- Curation and exhibition concept
- Tour management by Design Museum staff
- Exhibits
- Images and films
- Exhibition text in English
- 2D and 3D design concept
- Selected display kit

Costs payable by the venue:

- Hire fee, in instalments
- Exhibition and graphic design adaptation
- Share of transport and crating costs
- Storage of empty crates
- Nail-to-nail insurance
- All costs relating to exhibition production
- Installation and de-installation costs
- Marketing



Contact

To find out more about this exhibition and other tours available from 2020 onwards, please contact:

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designmuseum.org/exhibitions/touring-exhibitions

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Cover image: Detail, Colour Catchers, the Design Museum, London, 2017

