

# COOPER HEWITT

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SI-300-2014

## COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM TO OFFER FOUR FLOORS OF INAUGURAL SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

**RENOVATION OF COOPER HEWITT'S LANDMARK HOME IN THE  
CARNEGIE MANSION ENABLES EXPANDED PRESENTATIONS OF THE  
PERMANENT COLLECTION AND TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS, FEATURING  
UNPRECEDENTED INTERACTIVE AND IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY**

**JUNE 17, 2014**

NEW YORK—Transformed from the Gilded Age mansion of Andrew Carnegie to a distinguished 21st-century museum, the renovated landmark home of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum will open on New York's Museum Mile on Friday, Dec. 12, offering 60 percent more gallery space, an entirely new visitor experience and four full floors of exhibitions—including the first long-term survey of Cooper Hewitt's own rich collection.

Together, the inaugural exhibitions will explore virtually every aspect of design, invite visitors to participate in the design process and present more than 700 objects, from the humble and ubiquitous (eight different patented models of the wooden clothespin) to the complex forms and vivid colors rendered in Michael Eden's 3-D-printed urn. All visitors will be equipped with an interactive Pen to digitally collect objects on view, as well as additional collection objects via interactive tables, and create their own designs. They will be able to record their visit, which can be viewed and shared online and supplemented during future visits.

"Design is everywhere and this is our moment to communicate this message like never before," said Caroline Baumann, director of the museum. "The December opening of the reimagined Cooper Hewitt will mark the moment when this museum becomes an unprecedented international center and public advocate for the best in design. As the nation's only museum devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design, we have always played a unique role in America's cultural life. These inaugural exhibitions demonstrate the many ways we will be able to educate, inspire and empower people through design at the new Cooper Hewitt. Cooper Hewitt will be a place of experimentation, positive change and a place to explain design and bring the design process to life."

"Through the groundbreaking new visitor experience, expanded presentations of our rich collection and dynamic temporary exhibitions, design stories will truly come alive at the new Cooper Hewitt," said Barbara Mandel, Cooper Hewitt board chair. "From top to bottom, inside and out, the entire museum has been transformed to encourage visitors to engage in the design process and imagine, create and learn by doing. I cannot wait to welcome visitors to the new museum later this year."



## ON VIEW IN THE NEW COOPER HEWITT

Floor by floor, the 10 inaugural exhibitions at Cooper Hewitt will prompt and answer key questions at the heart of design.

- On the ground floor, *Designing the New Cooper Hewitt* will reveal the process behind nearly three years of renovation and transformation at the museum.
- On the first floor, a hands-on *Process Lab* will emphasize how design is a way of thinking, planning and problem solving, and provide a foundation for the rest of the design concepts on view in the museum.
- *Beautiful Users* will premiere in the new Design Process Galleries, which will introduce visitors to the shift toward user-centric design based on observations of human anatomy and behavior.
- The guest-curated *Maira Kalman Selects* will assemble objects from Cooper Hewitt and other Smithsonian collections, as well as the artist's own home to suggest a life story, from birth through death.
- On the second floor, *Making Design* will bring together more than 350 objects for the museum's first long-term survey of works from its collection; *Hewitt Sisters Collect* will be the first exhibition to share the story of Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt, who in 1897 established a museum within Cooper Union modeled on the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the V&A in London; *Passion for the Exotic: Lockwood de Forest, Frederic Church* will evoke the fascination of late 19th-century America with the arts of India; *Models & Prototypes* will provide insights into the important role of architectural models and design prototypes.
- The new *Immersion Room* will feature Cooper Hewitt's extraordinary collection of wall coverings, allowing visitors to select their favorites—or create their own designs with the Pen—and then project them onto the walls surrounding them at full scale.
- On the third floor, in the versatile new 6,000-square-foot Barbara and Morton Mandel Design Gallery, *Tools: Extending Our Reach* will explore how tools extend the human body, senses, capacity and action—with results that change the world, and also change ourselves.

The museum itself is a grand design object, as shown in the ground-floor exhibition *Designing the New Cooper Hewitt*. Design briefs, sketches, photographs, blueprints and other illustrations from the team of designers will reveal the process behind nearly three years of renovation and transformation at Cooper Hewitt.

In the dynamic and interactive *Process Lab*, visitors will brainstorm design solutions through hands-on and digital activities. It will emphasize how design is a way of thinking, planning and problem solving, and provide a foundation for the rest of the design concepts on view in the museum.

*Beautiful Users*—installed in Cooper Hewitt’s gracious first-floor Design Process Galleries, will introduce visitors to one of the fundamental changes in design thinking over the past half-century: the shift toward designs based on observations of human anatomy and behavior. Beginning with insights of the mid-20th century industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss at Bell Labs, the exhibition will show how definitions of the “normal” person have become more inclusive over the past decades; how designers have come to think of their subjects as users rather than consumers; and how the users are now acting as designers themselves through phenomena such as 3-D printing and “Ikea hacking.” Among the 120 objects in the exhibition will be a screen that features the visitor’s own body in comparison to objects in the collection; examples of the Humanscale measurement system developed by Alvin R. Tilley and Niels Diffrient, which aids in design for children, the elderly, the differently abled and people of diverse height; ergonomically designed objects ranging from Dreyfuss’ Princess telephone and Honeywell Round thermostat to Amos Winter’s Leveraged Freedom wheelchair; a bin of touch samples of various types of handles (labeled “Please Handle”); and multiple prototypes of design objects, showing how designers refine their work through learning how people will use it. *Beautiful Users* is dedicated to the memory of Bill Moggridge, a pioneer of human-centered design who designed the first laptop computer (the Grid Compass, included in the exhibition) and who was the director of Cooper Hewitt from 2010 to 2012.

*Maira Kalman Selects* will fill the former first-floor Music Room of the Carnegie Mansion with an exhibition curated by author, artist and designer Maira Kalman. Among the works on view will be teapots, illustrated books (*Alice in Wonderland* and *Winnie the Pooh*), porcelain figures of ballet dancers, paintings made by Kalman of lamps in the Cooper Hewitt collection, a selection of 19th-century mourning samplers and the funeral pall of President Abraham Lincoln and his gold pocket watch, which was returned to working order for this exhibition.

Cooper Hewitt has increased the amount of space showcasing its permanent collection five fold, and *Making Design*, installed in a suite of renovated galleries on the second floor, is the first in a number of collection exhibitions. Bringing together more than 350 objects, including furniture, lighting fixtures, tableware, clothing, jewelry, books and posters, the exhibition will provide an overview of five key elements of design: color (red, for this initial installation), form, line, pattern and texture. The red of Jonathan Ive’s design for the iPod Nano compared with the red of the Campana Brothers’s Vermelha chair upholstered in cotton rope, the undulating form of an Alvar Aalto glass vase compared with Tinker Hatfield’s contoured sole for the Nike Air Jordan sneaker, the water pattern of a late 19th-century Japanese fabric compared with the wavy pattern of Bob Dylan’s hair in a 1966 poster by Milton Glaser are a few of the juxtapositions that will introduce visitors to the fundamentals of design through a provocative, visual feast of extraordinary objects.

*Hewitt Sisters Collect*, the first exhibition to share the remarkable story of Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt, will recognize their central role in the museum's founding and genesis of

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the core collection. The museum, originally part of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, was conceived as “a practical working laboratory,” where students and designers could be inspired by actual objects. Even by today’s standards, the Hewitt sisters’ 1897 vision for a museum and collection “for anyone who wanted to use it as a place to work and learn” seems radical. In the galleries that were formerly the Carnegie’s bedrooms, the Hewitts’ contributions and collecting philosophy will be celebrated with objects they gave to the museum or that were acquired under their auspices. Among the 108 objects on view will be antique Greek vessels from the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., French and Italian master drawings and prints of architectural elements and scenes, objects of Meissen porcelain and Wedgwood stoneware, a selection of 18th- and 19th-century architectural birdcages, tapestry and embroidery fragments, and a selection of block-printed wallpapers spanning some 150 years.

One of the great treasures of the Mansion is the former Carnegie Family Library, on the second floor, created by the leading American exponent of the Aesthetic Movement, Lockwood de Forest. Painstakingly cleaned and preserved as part of the Cooper Hewitt renovation, it is the only extant interior by de Forest still situated in the building for which it was created. Paying homage both to de Forest and to his mentor, the Hudson River School painter Frederic Church, *Passion for the Exotic: Lockwood de Forest, Frederic Church* will evoke the fascination of late 19th-century America with the arts of India, where the library’s intricate ornamental teak woodwork was carved. Among some two dozen objects on view will be drawings, books, stencils, furniture and carved panels by de Forest, works on paper by Church (including a view of his home, Olana), and objects from the 16th through 19th centuries—such as tilework, a wall hanging, and a silver-inlaid ewer—that originated from the vast region that Church, de Forest and Carnegie would have called the East.

The second floor of Cooper Hewitt will also feature a *Models & Prototypes* gallery, where rotating installations will provide insights into their important role in the design process. For the inaugural installation, the gallery will showcase the exceptional models of staircases donated to Cooper Hewitt by Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw. Ranging in height from 6 inches to 4 feet, and dating from the late 18th to the early 20th century, the 16 models (and four accompanying drawings) display the structure and design for staircases in pulpits, bell towers, church domes, department stores and private homes. They also serve to document the European tradition of design instruction, with examples of models made by aspiring and established master craftsmen.

Cooper Hewitt’s extraordinary collection of wall coverings will be featured in a new high-tech space, the *Immersion Room*, offering visitors the unprecedented experience of using the Pen to select digital images of wallpapers or sketch their own design and then project them onto the walls at full scale to see their impact. More than an entertaining interactive experience, the *Immersion Room* will give museum visitors their first opportunity to discover Cooper Hewitt’s wall coverings as they were intended to be installed.

The inaugural exhibitions culminate in a new public space on the third floor, offering Cooper Hewitt its first open-plan galleries. The entire 6,000-square-foot space, the Barbara and Morton Mandel Design Gallery, will be filled with the exhibition *Tools: Extending Our Reach*, presenting approximately 175 objects from Cooper Hewitt and nine other Smithsonian collections: Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of African Art, National Museum of American History, National Museum of Natural History, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and Smithsonian Libraries. Exploring the congruence of good use and good design, the exhibition will survey how tools extend the human body—augmenting our ordinary grasp and power, extending the limits of our senses, sometimes even serving as substitutes (in the case of prostheses)—while considering how some tools break into lives as radical innovations, whereas many others have remained almost unchanged in form and function for centuries. The exhibition will span 1.85 million years of tool use and design—from a Paleolithic chopper made from volcanic rock, to a live feed of the sun transmitted by an orbiting satellite (with an 8-foot-square image projected onto the gallery wall). Other highlights of the exhibition will be the prototype drawings for the telescoping shopping cart and the ice-cream scoop; computer chips designed for advanced military use; microscopes and telescopes; and a remote-controlled “robobee” smaller than a 25-cent piece.

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

*Tools*, *Beautiful Users* and *Maira Kalman Selects* will be accompanied by fully illustrated catalogs. Other reopening publications include *Making Design: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection*; *Life of a Mansion: The Story of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum*; *Ah-Ha to Zig-Zag: 31 Objects from Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum* and *My Favorite Things*. All titles published by Cooper Hewitt will be available in hard copy and e-book versions for all e-book readers.

*Tools: Extending Our Reach* (published by Cooper Hewitt) features more than 200 images and authoritative essays celebrating human ingenuity across cultures and over time.

*Beautiful Users* (co-published by Cooper Hewitt and Princeton Architectural Press) by Ellen Lupton explores the changing relationship between designers and users and considers a range of design methodologies and practices, from user research to hacking, open source and the maker culture.

*Making Design* (published by Cooper Hewitt), the first Cooper Hewitt collection handbook to be produced since 1997, is designed by Irma Boom as a roadmap to explore the museum’s collection. Intended as a design object itself, the publication will be a lasting resource for museum visitors and the public as well as for design students, researchers, scholars and professional designers. It will provide an in-depth understanding of design processes and the museum’s extraordinary holdings relative to design ideas today.

*Life of a Mansion: The Story of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum* (published by Cooper Hewitt) by Heather Ewing is the history of the Carnegie Mansion and of Cooper Hewitt. Illustrated with 200 photographs, maps, floor plans and letters, the book chronicles the 110-year history of the National Landmark building and the evolution of the museum from its establishment by the Hewitt Sisters in 1897 to its status post-renovation in 2014 as the nation's design authority.

*Ah-Ha to Zig-Zag: 31 Objects from Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum* (published by Cooper Hewitt; Distributed by Skira/Rizzoli) by Kalman is an unconventional alphabet book for children of all ages that uses a variety of collection objects to look at design concepts. Objects ranging from a 13th-century silk thinking cap to Gerrit Rietveld's Zig-Zag chair are brought to colorful life, accompanied by Kalman's whimsical hand-lettered text.

*My Favorite Things* (published by HarperCollins) features more than 50 original paintings of objects from both the Cooper Hewitt and Kalman's personal collections. A pictorial index provides photographs of the actual objects and a short description.

## **SPONSORS**

*Beautiful Users* is made possible by major support from the Adobe Foundation. Additional funding is provided by Amita and Purnendu Chatterjee, the August Heckscher Exhibition Fund, the Ehrenkranz Fund, the Bill Moggridge Memorial Fund, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, Deborah Buck, May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation Inc. and IDEO.

*Maira Kalman Selects* is made possible by the Marks Family Foundation Endowment Fund. In-kind support is provided by Maharam.

Exhibitions of the permanent collection are made possible by major support from Nancy Marks. Additional support is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

*Hewitt Sisters Collect* is made possible by generous support from Nancy Marks. Additional funding is provided by Margery and Edgar Masinter and Smithsonian Women's Committee.

*Passion for the Exotic: Lockwood de Forest, Frederic Church* is made possible in part by the American Express Foundation. Restoration of the Teak Room is supported in part by the American Express Historic Preservation Fund.

*Tools: Extending Our Reach* is made possible by major support from GE. Generous support is also provided by Newell Rubbermaid and Esme Usdan. Additional funding is provided by the August Heckscher Exhibition Fund, the Ehrenkranz Fund, and Smithsonian Institution funds from the Grand Challenges Consortia.

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## **ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM**

Founded in 1897, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the nation devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. The museum educates, inspires and empowers people through design, presenting compelling educational programs, exhibitions and publications. International in scope and possessing one of the most diverse and comprehensive collections of design works in existence, the museum's rich holdings range from Egypt's Late Period/New Kingdom (1100 B.C.) to the present day and total more than 200,000 objects.

Cooper Hewitt is located at 2 East 91st Street at Fifth Avenue in New York City. Hours are Sunday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The cafe and garden open two hours prior to the museum. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Public transit routes include the Lexington Avenue 4, 5 and 6 subways (86th or 96th Street stations) and the Fifth and Madison Avenue buses. General admission, \$18; senior citizens and college students, \$12. Cooper Hewitt members and children younger than age 18 are admitted free. Pay What You Wish, every Saturday, 6 to 9 p.m. The museum is fully accessible.

For further information, please call (212) 849-8400, visit Cooper Hewitt's new website at [www.cooperhewitt.org](http://www.cooperhewitt.org) and follow the museum on [www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt](https://www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt) and [www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt](https://www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt).

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