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COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM TO PRESENT “JORIS LAARMAN LAB: DESIGN IN THE DIGITAL AGE”

FIRST U.S. MUSEUM EXHIBITION OF EXPERIMENTAL DUTCH DESIGNER



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Furniture generated by smart algorithms, the world’s first fully functional 3-D printed steel bridge and a 3-D printable Makerchair that can be downloaded from the internet. These are but a few examples of the ingenious oeuvre of designer/inventor Joris Laarman, who works at the intersection of design, art and engineering. From Sept. 27 through Jan. 14, 2018, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum will present “Joris Laarman Lab: Design in the Digital Age.” Organized by the Groninger Museum, the Netherlands, the exhibition will make its U.S. debut at Cooper Hewitt and travel to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

“Since Cooper Hewitt first acquired Joris’s design school thesis project, the Heat Wave Radiator, we have keenly watched him build a body of work that abolishes traditional distinctions between the natural and machine-made, decorative and functional, and points toward an exciting new future for design,” said Cooper Hewitt Director Caroline Baumann. “This exhibition will be a stimulating journey of discovery that will delve deeply into Joris’s conceptual thinking and collaborative approach to design, as well as his embrace of experimentation to fuel his creative process.”

Joris Laarman Lab, founded in 2004 with filmmaker and partner Anita Star, employs a team of engineers, programmers and craftspeople to conduct cutting-edge experiments, using manufacturing processes that are often as innovative as the end results.



Organized by the Groninger Museum's Chief Curator Mark Wilson and Curator of Contemporary Art, Design and Fashion Sue-an van der Zijpp, the exhibition features early, recent and new work by Laarman, alongside videos, sketches, renderings and experimental objects. The exhibition at Cooper Hewitt is overseen by Assistant Curator of Contemporary Design Andrea Lipps.

Highlights of the works on view include:

- The MX3D Bridge, a fully functional footbridge that is being 3-D printed in stainless steel for a canal in Amsterdam using advanced robotic technology, which will debut in 2018. This revolutionary digital manufacturing process allows for aesthetic freedom, as the metal is 3-D printed in mid-air, without the need for a support structure.
- Laarman's thesis project, the Heat Wave Radiator—featured in Cooper Hewitt's 2008 exhibition "Rococo: The Continuing Curve" and subsequently acquired for the collection—makes a stand against functionalist minimalism. The radiator's exuberant curls create a large surface area that enables it to better disperse heat.
- The Makerchair series of furniture, which explores the relationship between digital design, digital manufacturing and craftsmanship. The series consists of 12 chairs, each digitally fabricated and assembled from small parts, like a 3-D puzzle. Laarman experimented with varied pattern pieces for each chair—hexagons, pixels, diamonds and diagonals—some of which are available as an open-source design.
- Laarman's break-through work, Bone Chair, whose attenuated form is derived from a computer algorithm that mimics bone growth. More material is generated where strength is needed. Areas exposed to less stress require less material. The Bone Chair demonstrates the digital era's relationship with nature: no longer just a stylistic reference, nature provides the underlying principles for generating form.
- The Dragon Bench, 3-D-printed using the MX3D process developed by Laarman that employs industrial robots and an advanced welding machine to print metal structures in mid-air. The algorithmically generated forms are unique, resulting in latticed, self-supporting pieces.
- The Digital Matter table series, commissioned by the High Museum of Art, which harnessed new developments in the field of digital manufacturing and reprogrammable molecular building blocks, called voxels. Using industrial robots and smart software, three ornamental side tables were produced in different resolutions, starting with an eight-bit Rococo form language. Like the evolution of the Super Mario Bros. game, the two complementing tables on display became more realistic as the resolution of the material increased.

Born in 1979, Laarman studied at the Eindhoven Design Academy in the Netherlands, and has taken part in numerous exhibitions worldwide since 2003. His work can be found in the permanent collections of several leading museums, including Cooper Hewitt; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Groninger Museum, Groningen, the Netherlands.

“Joris Laarman Lab: Design in the Digital Age” is made possible in part by support from Ehrenkranz Fund, the Dutch Culture USA program of the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, Kim and Al Eiber, and Creative Industries Fund NL.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

In fall 2017, a series of public programs will explore the intersection of hand and machine-made fabrication and the impact of digital technology and processes on everyday lives. Planned events include a Design Talk with Laarman, a hands-on workshop and a daytime Tea & Talk.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive monograph, “Joris Laarman Lab,” which will be published by August Editions (September 2017).

ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

Founded in 1897, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. Housed in the renovated and restored Carnegie Mansion, Cooper Hewitt showcases one of the most diverse and comprehensive collections of design works in existence. The museum’s restoration, modernization and expansion has won numerous awards and honors, including a Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, a Gold Pencil Award for Best in Responsive Environments and LEED Silver certification. Cooper Hewitt offers a full range of interactive capabilities and immersive creative experiences, including the Cooper Hewitt Pen that allows visitors to “collect” and “save” objects from around the galleries, the opportunity to explore the collection digitally on ultra-high-definition touch-screen tables, and draw and project their own wallpaper designs in the Immersion Room.

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., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden and Tarallucci e Vino cafe open at 8 a.m., Monday through Friday, and are accessible without an admissions ticket through the East 90th Street entrance. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Public transit routes include the Lexington Avenue 4, 5 and 6 subways (86th or 96th Street stations), the Second Avenue Q subway (96th Street station), and the Fifth and Madison Avenue buses. Adult admission, \$16 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$18 at door; seniors, \$10 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$12 at door; students, \$7 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$9 at door. 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, call (212) 849-8400, visit Cooper Hewitt’s website at www.cooperhewitt.org and follow the museum on www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt, www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt and www.instagram.com/cooperhewitt.

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