

IRIS VAN HERPEN

SCULPTING
THE SENSES

EXHIBITION
NOV. 29TH
2023 -
APRIL 28TH
2024

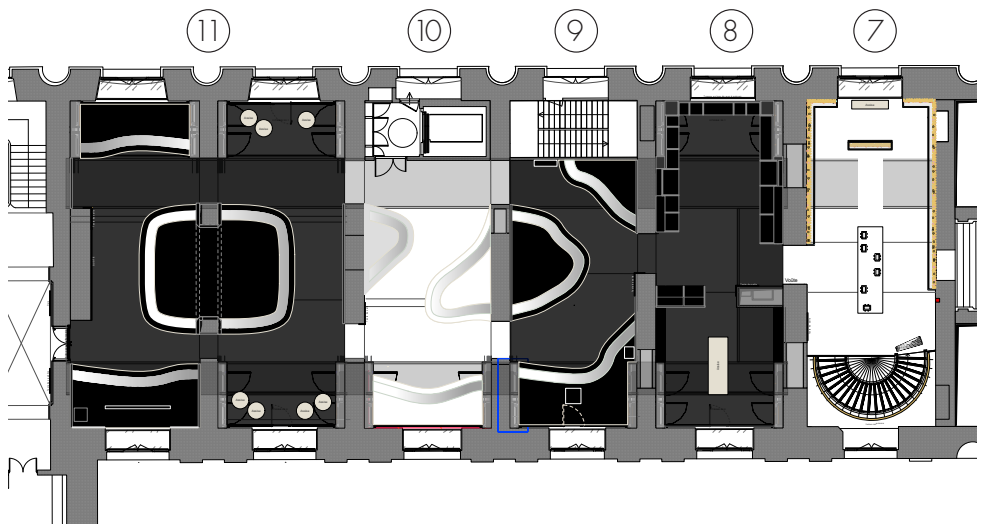
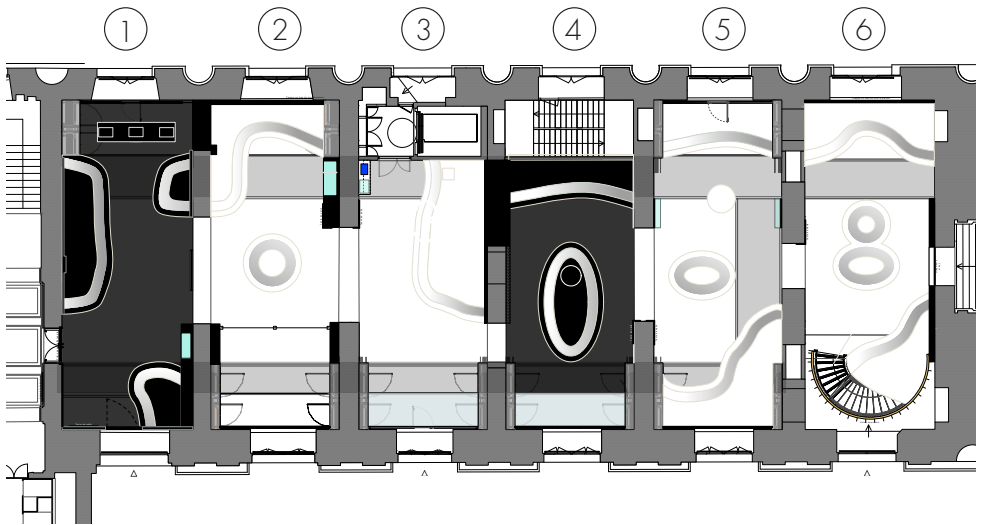
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MAU

MUSÉE DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS



- ① WATER AND DREAMS
- ② SENSORY SEA LIFE
- ③ FORCES BEHIND THE FORMS
- ④ SKELETAL EMBODIMENT
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Welcome to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the exhibition **Iris van Herpen. Sculpting the Senses.** Enjoy your visit!

This exhibition showcases the work of one of the most visionary fashion designers of her generation. Iris van Herpen teeming creativity was influenced by two passions developed early in life: the living world and classical dance, both of which would later become central elements of her work. She transgresses conventional norms of fashion, blending both traditional and innovative techniques.

This retrospective celebrates her future-facing and multi-disciplinary approach and is constructed as an immersive experience, around 9 themes that combines fashion, contemporary art, design, and science. From micro to macro, this exhibition interrogates the body in space, our identities and our future in a rapidly transforming world. A selection of over one hundred haute-couture pieces made by Iris van Herpen dialogue with works of contemporary art, in addition to items from the spheres of the natural sciences.

A specific sound composition has been created by Salvador Breed to further immerse the visitor in this exhibition.

1984

**Birth of
Iris Van Herpen
in Wamel
(Netherlands).**

2006

**Graduation
from the ArtEZ
University
of the Arts
in Arnhem, work
for Alexander
McQueen.**

2007

**Creation of
the House of
Iris van Herpen
in Amsterdam.**

2011

**Member
of the Parisian
«Chambre
Syndicale de la
Haute Couture».**



1 WATER AND DREAMS

Liquid, frozen, or as gas, water is regularly present in Iris van Herpen's work, even becoming the principal focus of her 2010 "Crystallization" collection. Major component of the human body, water splashes out of her dresses to transcend the invisible flux that constitutes our very essence. On every level—from drop of rain to tsunami, as a poetical allegory or gate to the shadow world, representing both harmony and chaos, in the form of foam, crystallized liquid or waves, water inspires the designer's fertile creativity. Bubbles suspended in space, transparent fields of mist, turquoise or deep blue waves, Iris van Herpen's aquatic pieces reveal the mystery and metaphorical power of water, manifested across a multitude of fabrics, materials, and techniques from blown glass to thermoformed Plexiglas, from laser cutting to Suminagashi, a Japanese technique of marbled ink drawings.

2 SENSORY SEA LIFE

Under the surface of the oceans, there is a world invisible to the naked eye, nonetheless fundamental to life on Earth. Iris van Herpen's 2020 collection, "Sensory Seas", draws inspiration from this ecosystem and its planktonic bestiary, and on a broader scale, from sea animals, that shape the designs and textures of her dresses. Single-cell organisms and the hydrozoa family like jellyfish, are the designer's most constant form of inspiration. They are her fundamental reference point as she seeks to put them into light in her works. Just as 19th century master glassmakers Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka revealed this elusive world with their astonishing pedagogical models, Iris van Herpen takes up the same subjects and transposes them, between craftsmanship and new technologies, into the field of Haute Couture.

→ David Spriggs (born in 1978), Canada
Origins, 2018

PET film, Acrylic Plexiglas, LED, white acrylic paint, metal

Dr. Pierre Miron collection

© David Spriggs

← Iris van Herpen (born in 1984), Netherlands

In collaboration with Shelee Carruthers (born in 1977), Australia
Hydrozoa dress, "Sensory Seas"

collection, 2020
PET plastic, glass organza
Iris van Herpen's personal collection

David Uzochukwu (born in 1998, photographer) for Iris van Herpen

© DR





3 FORCES BEHIND THE FORMS

Iris van Herpen's fascination for shapes found in nature has led her to reflect on morphogenesis and the creative forces at the origin of life. The microscopically small has asserted itself as revelatory of the beauty of invisible bestiaries and pointed her towards a new aesthetic grammar and materials that transcend the field of fashion. In that perspective, she manifests a particular interest in biologist Ernst Haeckel, whose illustrated plates shed light on microscopic beings, in the 19th century. Mixing art and science, the designer explores terrestrial and marine worlds to unearth new structures and textures. Her preoccupation with the preservation of the environment has led her to re-examine how we see the world, notably in her "Earthrise" collection, created with artist Rogan Brown, in which she chooses to magnify recycled plastic.

4 SKELETAL EMBODIMENT

Cabinets of curiosities and anatomical museums are fertile ground for Iris van Herpen. Like Michelangelo and Jean-Antoine Houdon, who also studied anatomical representations of the human being, the designer analyses the skeleton, muscles, fascias, and the systems of the body to create figures that wear like a second skin. Her dresses are hybrid structures, becoming a projection of our intrinsic constitution, creating the fiction of a new body. Exploring the frontier between living and inert, Iris van Herpen gives new life to the silhouette. Her clothing, like a mutation of complex anatomical forms, is an extension of the body. She brings light and perspective to that which is barely perceptible through the skin's transparency, only able to be revealed through technology. Her designs are an artistic MRI, a creative x-ray of the structure of living things.

← Rogan Brown (born in 1966), United Kingdom
Ceres, 2023
Paper cut by hand and laser, cardboard,
foam board
On loan from the artist
© Rogan Brown art
→ Iris van Herpen (born in 1984), Netherlands
In collaboration with Isaïe Bloch (born in 1986),
Belgium and Materialise, Belgium
Skeleton dress, "Capriole" collection, 2011
3D printed polymide (Selective Laser Sintering)
Iris van Herpen's personal collection
Luigi et Iango (born in 1964 and 1979,
photographers) for Iris van Herpen
© DR



5 GROWTH SYSTEMS

Thanks to her holistic approach, Iris van Herpen is interested in the existence of all structures, whether natural or artificial, organic or architectural. The human body is both unique and part of a whole, connected to, and by, its physicality, but also its spirit, soul, memory, and roots. From the singularities of the living world, Iris van Herpen extracts ecosystems, processes of growth, interconnections. Mushrooms, one of the reigning species of our planet, are part of the underworld, weaving connections with filaments of mycelium that seduce the designer both with their beauty and the intelligence of their generative system. An ode to nature, the “Roots of Rebirth” collection is an homage to this infinitesimally thin underground organic web. A celebration of flamboyant Gothic, her *Cathedral Dress* reinvents the codes of fashion.

6 SYNAESTHESIA

The body’s materiality, anatomy, and sensory systems clearly resonate throughout Iris van Herpen’s creations, but other dimensions of the human experience also fascinate and inspire her. The interest she takes in the brain, and more particularly in synesthesia and complex phenomena of modified states of consciousness, such as lucid dreaming and hypnosis, permit her to stretch the boundaries of fashion to something more than just a visual or tangible experience of a piece of clothing. Fascinated by neurological research, she seeks to trouble perception, to magnify the senses, to sculpt them along with the materials she chooses. How to dilute the frontiers of perception? How to stimulate the brain with all five senses working together to provoke a new emotional experience?

← Wim Delvoye (born 1965), Belgium

Nautilus Penta, 2023

Laser-cut stainless steel.

On loan from the artist

© Adagp, Paris

→ Ferruccio Laviani (born 1960), Italy

Good Vibrations Cabinet, 2013

Designed for Fratelli Boffi

Walnut with oak finishes, sculpted, chiseled and engraved using digital processes.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

Purchased from Fratelli Boffi thanks

to the patronage of Cercle Design 20/21,

2020, Inv. 2020.11.1-6

© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière







7 ALCHEMIC ATELIER

The Alchemic Atelier pays tribute to Iris van Herpen's career with a presentation of hundreds of spectacular samples, created in collaboration with numerous artists, architects, designers and scientists. Revealing the multiple processes that she used, these pieces result from a combination of new technologies and traditional craftsmanship.

8 CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Organized like a 21st Century cabinet of curiosities, this space reflects Iris van Herpen's multiple sources of inspiration. This eclectic selection reveals her love of discovery, her interest in disciplines both adjacent to and distant from fashion, and her fascination with our world's richness and diversity. An encyclopaedic representation of Iris van Herpen's career, this cabinet is a synthesis of her endless creativity, her holistic approach and her talent for generating connections between worlds.

← Iris van Herpen (born in 1984), Netherlands
Labyrinthine dress,

"Sensory Seas" collection, 2020
Glass organza, crepe, mylar, tulle
Iris van Herpen's personal collection
Carla van de Puttelaar (born in 1967,
photographer) for Iris van Herpen
© DR

→ *Persée montrant la tête de Méduse*
Florence, late 19th Century

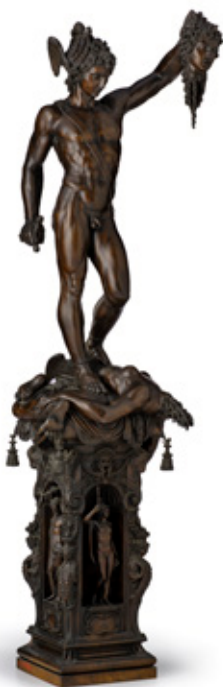
After the original by Benvenuto Cellini
(1500-1571), 1545, Italy

Bronze with brown patina

Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris

Donated by Marchioness Arconati-Visconti,
1925, Inv. 23986

© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière



9 THE MYTHOLOGY OF FEAR

Iris van Herpen was born in the village of Wamel, near Den Bosch, town of Flemish painter Hieronymus Bosch. She grew up examining with intensity the artist's fantastical figures that mix alchemy, mysticism, and allegory. From her study of Bosch, she retains a certain taste for hybridization, an incessant questioning of human and animal nature, and an interest in fusing both into chimerical beings. In parallel, she explores the emotion of fear inside these imaginary worlds, through her discoveries made in the collections of the Embassy of the Free Mind, in Amsterdam, and in cabinets of curiosities encountered in her studies of Art History. Symbolist and Surrealist literature, have also led her to venture metaphor as a prism for expression, elevating her work above conventional dressing classifications. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Japanese mythology, she loves reinterpreting the mutations of our world.

10 NEW NATURE

In many of her collections, Iris van Herpen's life-line silhouettes celebrate a new and futuristic concept of nature. In her perception of an imaginary future, she is above all interested in the distinction between nature and artifice in a society caught up in its fascination with the growing presence of virtual reality. By questioning the presence of the body in a post-human world, the designer invites us to contemplate a society that is increasingly living "inside-out." In her "Syntopia," "Escapism," and "Voltage" collections, she interrogates the link between technology and science. Fascinated by the world of tomorrow, Iris van Herpen melds disciplines, weaving them together, giving birth to a new definition of fashion in which the garment creates a metamorphosis, transforming the body into a hybrid creature—the incarnation of a futuristic world view.

11 COSMIC BLOOM

In her exploration of the cosmos, Iris van Herpen shows her talent for synthesis, combining the latest scientific discoveries with the history of art and science, blending the ancient maps of Andreas Cellarius with images from the James Webb telescope. The cosmos and its mysteries pique her imagination and her creativity. Like a metaphor of her holistic approach, the cosmos incarnates a space in which one can deploy oneself without limit, a symbol of absolute liberty. Colours float and come alive, offering new horizons for a body in levitation. For the designer, to understand the cosmos is to overturn the order of time and space and achieve elevation. The world becomes an all-encompassing entity, greater than the confines of planet Earth. It no longer develops from bottom up or top down, but in all of its dimensions simultaneously, as a multiverse, with no borders except those of the mind and the imagination, the soul and its cosmic journey.



← Casey Curran (born in 1981), USA
Daphne, 2020
Brass, Dura-Lar®, gold leaf, Flex Seal®,
acrylic, motor
On loan from the artist
© Mathias Wendzinski

→ Iris van Herpen (born in 1984), Netherlands
In collaboration with Kim Keever
(born in 1955), USA
Cosmica dress, "Shift Souls" collection, 2019
Organza, tulle
Iris van Herpen's personal collection
Warren du Preez and Nick Thornton Jones
(photographers) for Iris van Herpen
© DR
→ Kim Keever (born 1955), USA, Abstract
46682, 2019, Digital Photograph,
© Kim Keever



ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOU DISCOVER THE EXHIBITION IN A DIFFERENT WAY

INDIVIDUALS

(in French only)

GUIDED TOUR

ADULT

Thursday, 6.30 pm to 8 pm.

Friday, 11.30 am to 1 pm.

Saturday, 11.30 am to 1 pm.
and 3 pm to 4.30 pm.

GUIDED FAMILY TOUR

AGES 4-14

Sunday from 10.30 am to 12 pm.

WORKSHOPS

AGES 4-14

“Mini Wonders”

Ages 4-6, 7-10 and families.

“Natural explorations”

Ages 11-14

Wednesdays from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm.

Tuesdays to Fridays during school
holidays from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm
and/or from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm.

FASHION WORKSHOP

AGES 11-14

In the footsteps of Iris van Herpen, the workshop is an immersion in the working process of a fashion designer. From the exploration phases to the creation of a 3D dressed mannequin of paper, this workshop gives participants the opportunity to express their creativity by exploring paper techniques.

Four sessions of 2h30, Tuesday to Friday during school holidays.

LECTURE

“Dans les coulisses de l'exposition

Iris van Herpen”, in French only.

By Cloé Pitiot and Louise Curtis.

Thursday 11 January 2024

from 6:30 pm to 8 pm

**Scan this code to find all the
information about the exhibition
and the activities:**



GROUPS

Guided tours are available (in French or in English) to schools, activity centres, écoles supérieures, universities, associations and companies at the date and time of their choice.

**To book a guided tour:
reservation@madparis.fr
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66**

**Scan this code to find all the
information about activities for groups:**



Are you looking for a time slot for your group tour (with no guided tour)?
Book a self-guided group Ticket at
<https://billetterie.madparis.fr>

CONTINUE YOUR VISIT TO THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS COLLECTIONS

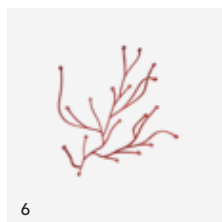
by heading up to the 3rd floor

Your ticket gives you access to the entire museum, so make the most of it and discover how organic shapes are an infinite source of inspiration for decorative arts creators.

Furniture, silverware, ceramics, glass, jewelry, wallpaper, design, as well as drawings, photographs, toys, fashion and textiles, graphic design, and advertising... With over a million works, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs collections are among the most important in the world in this field. Let yourself be transported through eight centuries of the history of taste, materials and techniques, styles and customs.

Spread over eight floors and punctuated by period rooms or reconstructions of living rooms, the tour invites you to immerse yourself in the French art of living, from the Middle Ages to the present day, and from the everyday to the exceptional.

Our reception staff will be happy to help.



1. Spoon, Germany, 16th century. © Paris, MAD, Jean Tholance / 2. Sauce boat, Jean-Claude Duplessis, Vincennes around 1756. © Paris, MAD, Cyrille Bernard / 3. Mistletoe comb, Paul and Henri Vever, 1900. © Paris, MAD, Jean-Marie del Moral / 4. Twelve-light chandelier, Émile Gallé, ca. 1904. / 5. Tilting lounge chair, Charlotte Perriand, Japan, 1940. © Adagp, Paris, MAD, Jean Tholance / 6. Algues partition modules, France, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Édition Vitra, Switzerland, 2004. © Les Arts Décoratifs, Christophe Dellière / 7. Écllosion d'épingles, Simone Pheulpin, 2019. © MAD, Paris / Christophe Dellière / 8. Tomáš Libertíny, The Honeycomb Vase RED, Netherlands, 2022, beeswax. © Paris, MAD, Christophe Dellière.

Les Arts Décoratifs is a non-profit association that brings together the musée des Arts décoratifs, the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Camondo school, the Ateliers du Carrousel and the library.

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For further information please contact us at + 33 (0)1 44 55 59 78 or at mecenat@madparis.fr.

SOLO / DUO CARD

The SOLO or DUO pass is valid for one year and gives you unlimited priority access to the temporary exhibitions and permanent collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Musée Nissim de Camondo for one or two people.

You can also take advantage of unrestricted access via the Carrousel garden entrance and a 5% discount on all objects and books in the bookshop boutique.

For more information, visit madparis.fr.

CATALOGUE DE L'EXPOSITION



Available in the bookstore - gift shop

Édition Lanoo
256 pages,
25 x 33 cm, 65 €

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Late night Thursday 6 – 9 pm

Closed on Monday

Tickets on madparis.fr

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Open Tuesday to Sunday
from 11 am to 6.30 pm

Late night Thursday 6 – 9 pm

Closed on Monday

LE LOULOU RESTAURANT

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+ 33 (0)1 42 60 41 96

Open daily from noon to 2 pm

and from 7 pm to 11 pm

For the comfort and accessibility of all, audio guides, folding seats, wheelchairs, magnetic induction loops, baby carriers, and changing tables are available on level -1 near the cloakrooms.

#Expo_IrisvanHerpen

Curator: Cloé Pitiot

Associate curator: Louise Curtiss

Assisted by Mathurin Jochères and Joffrey Picq

Scénography: Agence NC

Graphic design: Agnès Dahan Studio



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