



THE POWER OF MAKING THINGS

The latest technology allows designers to make almost anything – from 3D lampshades to a gorilla created from thousands of wire coat hangers.

Barbara Chandler visits a new show at the V&A

Top spin: (above) a Spun chair, by the Heatherwick studio, made using a spinning process with sheet metal and a cast-iron form

Silver and gold: Chairman's Cup (right) by Smith & Harris, made using both anvil and laser



WHAT DO you do with all those metal coat hangers? Scottish sculptor David Mach, a former Turner Prize nominee, has turned his into a giant gorilla. The 10ft-high creature will dominate the main hall at the Victoria & Albert Museum from early next week.

Along the passage is a life-size brown bear, albeit softened with a crocheted skin. Its maker, Shauna Richardson, calls her work "crochetdermy". The bear took seven months to make from wool and mohair.

Power of Making, a new Crafts Council/V&A show, opens on Tuesday. It shows that by using old and new technologies there is very little that humans cannot make, embellish or simply mend, if we set our minds to it.

On display are handmade furniture, lamps, ceramics, china, textiles, fashion, and even three coffins. But this is not craft as you know it.

Making things today embodies digital technologies, new materials, imagery from around the globe, concern for the environment, and more. In the show, a 3D-printed nylon light globe is impressed with its maker's fingerprint. Also 3D-printed is a beautiful green urn, with a traditional shape, fragmented into tiny pieces.

The everyday is elevated into art – a workaday picnic table, familiar from pub gardens nationwide, is covered in hundreds of strips of tiny veneer, of the kind used by traditional furniture and frame-makers. You can also see objects from different countries, such as bicycles, shoes and dresses, made with whatever came to hand.

Show curator, designer Daniel Charny is a senior tutor at the Royal College of Art who has been on a makers' mission all over the world, tracking down well more than 100 contemporary objects.

"We are celebrating not just the works but more than 150 different

Curvy: (above left) Blow Away vase by Front Design, made in Delft

Twiggy: Branca chair (left), inspired by tree branches – by Sam Hecht, in ash cut both by hand and by robot

making methods," he tells me. These embrace old crafts such as millinery, tailoring, gun-making and silver-smithing. A dry-stone wall at the entrance was built on site by a master craftsman, using volcanic stone from Cumbria.

Elsewhere, traditional methods are given a twist – an Aran blanket knitted on huge needles, or cake decorations blown from sugar like glass. Factory-produced items are included if making skills are paramount – such as London designer Sam Hecht's Branca chair, Thomas Heatherwick's Spun chair, and Tailored Wood

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seating by Shay Alkalay and Yael Mer of Raw Edges.

"Fundamentally, all making falls into one of three processes," Charny explains. "Adding, taking away or transforming."

Charny himself has been making things all his life. As a teenager he built a drinks cabinet that could be opened only by hitting the bullseye of a home-made darts board.

"Making is inventive, expressive, empowering, and inspiring," he enthuses. For some people, he adds, it is a question of survival, for others a vocation, or simply the delight of creation. People with high levels of craft and ingenuity can create amazing things.

"Go away and maybe make something yourself. Almost all of us can make. It is one of the strongest impulses we have," he says.

HAVE A GO

At the show, join the makers in the tinkerspace. Watch films online at vimeo.com/groups/pomopensub. Demonstrations from makers are on Friday evenings from 7pm to 8.30pm and Saturday afternoons from 1pm to 4pm. They include 3D printing, gun engraving, shoemaking, calligraphy, painting and beading – and repairing holes in jumpers.

A free Power of Making workshop is



Go ape: Silver King, 2011, by David Mach, created using thousands of redundant wire coat hangers



Unusual: large green 3D urn (above), by Michael Eden, available from Adrian Sassoon (adriansassoon.com)

on September 17. Make your own animals in knits and cross stitch. A cardboard furniture workshop for ages 16-19 is on October 1, also free.



Stable table: urban picnic table by Gareth Neal, covered with tiny strips of veneer (garethneal.co.uk)

The Digital Design Weekend is free, too (September 24-25), led by digital artists and designers.

On September 30 (6.30pm to 10pm), MAKE Friday Late at the V&A celebrates individual makers and new technologies.

Kits in the museum's shop include bunting, book-binding and a bird house, plus exclusive V&A fabrics for quilting.

■ *Power of Making, a V&A and Crafts Council exhibition, opens next Tuesday until January 2 at the V&A Museum, SW7. (Admission free; vam.ac.uk/powerofmaking).*

BOOK OFFER

Readers can get a copy of *Power of Making: The Importance of Being Skilled*, edited by Daniel Charny for £7.99 (normally £9.99) including free UK p&p. Call 01256 302699 and quote offer code 6EP before September 30.