

## **At Home with Plastics?**

**Tuesday 10 April to Monday 27 August 2001**

**Plastics: “*The first magical substance that consents to be prosaic.*”**  
**Roland Barthes**

Life today would be inconceivable without plastics. Almost everything we do involves plastics in one form or another, and they are now essential in areas such as medicine, telecommunications and transport. In our homes, plastics have given us exciting, colourful forms and new solutions to old problems, along with added safety and hygiene.

This special exhibition will show, through a chronological sequence of three ‘schematic’ or ‘virtual’ living rooms, the many ways in which plastics have gradually improved the quality of everyday life in the home, responding to technological developments with new products and adapting easily to the needs of changing lifestyles.

Examples of the most popular and interesting, best-made and best-designed plastics will be featured. These objects will not illustrate design for design’s sake, and there will be no emphasis on famous names or designers. Instead, we will allow the plastic objects to speak for themselves and the times in which they were produced.

Plastics have long been regarded as the poor relative of natural, so-called ‘noble’ materials because they are essentially synthetic, mass-produced and not shaped by hand. However, the belief that synthetics are inferior to natural materials is today rapidly evaporating. In 1977 the Geffrye Museum was the first UK museum to show the public that plastics have a fascinating and important history. Twenty-four years on, the *At Home with plastics?* exhibition will illustrate the immense strides that have been made jointly by plastics technology and good design in changing our perception of this versatile and useful material.

This exhibition will be guest co-curated by Sylvia Katz, a well-known writer and specialist on plastics and design. She is the author of *Classic Plastics, from Bakelite to High-Tech* and other titles.

Sylvia’s personal choice of beautiful and extraordinary plastic objects will be also be on display in the lower concourse of the museum.

### **Complementary Exhibition in the Design Centre: Radical Plastics**

A dazzling selection of the most experimental new plastics by East London designer-makers, highlighting the versatility of this exciting material, will be on display. This will include furniture, lighting, tableware and accessories. All items will be available for sale or commission.

***Wednesday 4 April – Monday 27 August 2001***

[Related Events/...](#)

## At Home With Plastics? - Related Events

### Adult Events

#### **Evening lecture: Classic Plastics - 200 Years of Plastic in the Home**

Colin Williamson, broadcaster, collector and founder-member of the Plastics Historical Society.

*Tuesday 24 April. Lecture 7.00 - 8.00pm. Museum and restaurant open from 6.15pm*

*Tickets £4.00 in advance or £5.00 at the door (please check availability on the day)*

#### **Workshop: Bags of Fun!**

A two-day workshop led by Sarah Crawford in which participants will design and construct a beautiful, brightly-coloured bag using an exciting range of materials, including pvc tubing, cable ties and nylon.

*Saturday 2 and 9 June, 11.30 am – 4.30pm*

*Tickets £36 (includes materials but not lunch)*

### Family Events

#### **Workshop: Merry-Go-Round**

An unusual workshop in which parents/carers and children will join creative forces to make a special revolving lamp using coloured plastic. Owing to the nature of this workshop adults will be required to work with their children, who must be between 3 and 10 years old.

*Saturday 21 April, 2.00 – 4.30pm*

#### **Plastics Road Show**

Plastics fans and collectors will have the opportunity to show their treasures to a panel of experts, who will provide answers to questions regarding material, age, function and value. Panel will include Sylvia Katz, Colin Williamson and Patrick Cook.

*Sunday 8 July, 1.30 – 4.30pm. £1 for one object, £2 for three objects.*

### Teenagers Workshop

#### **Bag It!**

A fantastic opportunity to work with designer Sarah Crawford to make a trendy bag using a wide range of materials including nylon fabric and pvc tubing.

*Saturday 12 May, 11.00am – 4.00pm*

*Tickets £5.00 (includes materials but not lunch)*

### Children's Activities

#### **Easter Holiday Activities for Children: Fantastic Plastic**

A fun-filled week of activities and workshops exploring the colourful world of plastic. During the week children will have the chance to construct a lampshade, make plastic key rings and design jewellery. Many recycled materials will be used.

*Tuesday 17 – Friday 20 April, 10.30am – 12.30pm and 2.00 – 4.00pm*

### Summer Half-Term Activities: More Fantastic Plastics

Another opportunity to experiment with this versatile material during workshops focusing on form, function, shapes and colour.

*Tuesday 29 May – Friday 1 June, 10.30am – 12.30pm and 2.00 – 4.00pm*

*Holiday activities are free for individuals and families. All children under eight must be accompanied by an adult. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis 30 minutes in advance of the workshop. Quizzes are available all day in the museum.*

### Notes To Editors

- 1) For further details or transparencies, please contact Nancy Loader, PR Officer, or Christine Lalumia, Deputy Director, on 020 7739 9893.
- 2) Sylvia Katz is a qualified furniture designer and a consultant, writer, curator and researcher on plastics and design. She owns a large collection of plastics. She lives in Hackney.
- 3) The Geffrye Museum presents the quintessential style of English urban middle-class interiors from 1600 to the present day through a chronological sequence of period rooms. The museum is set in the former almshouses of the Ironmongers' Company, elegant 18th century buildings surrounded by tranquil gardens, just north of the City.
- 4) The Geffrye Museum is an independent charitable trust, grant-aided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Trust actively seeks to attract donations and corporate sponsorship to support the museum's services and development plans.

- 5) **Admission:** **FREE**
- Opening Hours:** **Open** Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm  
Sundays & Bank Holidays 12 - 5pm
- Closed** Mondays (unless Bank Holiday), Good Friday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day
- Travel:** **Buses** 149, 242, 243 or 67
- Tube** Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242  
Old St (exit 2), then bus 243