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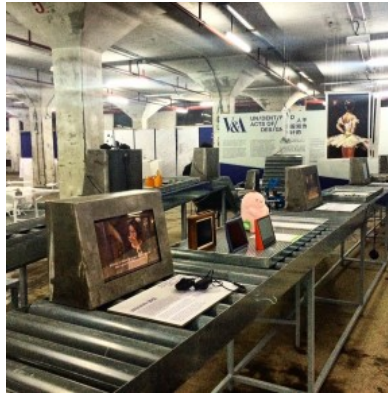
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V&A at the Shenzhen Biennale

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This weekend (December 5th-6th) marks the opening of the [2015 Shenzhen Urbanism Architecture B-City Biennale](#), where the V&A's Shekou team is presenting a small exhibition. After an intense period of work, we've just put the final touches on our display, [Unidentified Acts of Design](#), eight short stories about design and production in Shenzhen. The display was initiated as a pilot project to help us explore more thoroughly Shenzhen's design and production landscape in the lead-up to the opening of the V&A Gallery at the [Shekou Design Museum](#) in 2017. More about the show below, including a selection of short films that we produced for the exhibition.



Unidentified Acts of Design

Unidentified Acts of Design is an exhibition and research project that seeks out instances of design intelligence in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta outside of the design studio.

In a region of unprecedented growth, which has long served as the factory of the world, design acts can take on unconventional forms and occur in unpredictable places. By seeking out new definitions of what constitutes design, new actors and new objects are able to enter into the region's design history.

This display includes stories highlighting innovative or creative practices within an expanded notion of design. Each story exemplifies key moments in Shenzhen's urban and manufacturing history. The accompanying films feature interviews and footage introducing the personal experiences and perspectives of key players in this expanded field, such as inventors, manufacturers, web developers, engineers, and hobbyists, who are not typically considered in discourses about design.

The Painters / Dafen Village

In the early 1990s a group of painters moved to Dafen Village, a small enclave on the outskirts of Shenzhen, to set up business making reproduction paintings. The village and its environs has now attracted 10,000 painters from all around China looking to try their hand at commercial painting. For many, Dafen has been an opportunity to earn a living while perfecting a craft. To facilitate the production of hundreds of thousands of paintings each year, the area has evolved into a complex production unit, with various people undertaking different functions, from frame assembly to internet sales.



Unidentified Acts of Design: The Painters / Dafen Village

On now and coming

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from [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) PRO

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08:44

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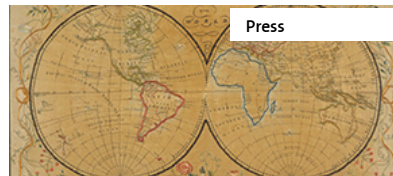
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In this section, we invite you behind the scenes to discover some of our work in and with countries around the world. We hope the international stories shared in this blog will initiate new discussions with our museum colleagues from overseas as well as the public in the UK and abroad. Through our international initiatives, we look forward to engaging with colleagues, audiences, scholars and creative practitioners across borders, opening our minds and broadening our horizon. Welcome on board!

[View all posts in International Initiatives](#)

The Samplers / Rose Knitting Sample Factory

Rose Knitting was established in 1960 in Hong Kong. It moved much of its production to mainland China in the early 1990s, working with major clients from around the world to produce off-the-rack knitwear. Their sample factory in Dapeng plays a crucial role in the manufacturing process. It's here where designs are translated by skilled technicians into a digital language that can be easily processed by their knitting machines and transformed into products. The yarn type, the stitch, and the gauge need to be carefully considered, and there is often an extended dialogue between technician and designer in order to produce the desired effect.



Unidentified Acts of Design: The Samplers / Rose Knitting Sample Factory

from [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) PRO



05:33

The Villagers / Urban Villages

After the establishment of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Shenzhen in 1980, urban development took shape at both informal and formal levels. Urban villages or 'new villages' are pockets of informal urbanisation that developed out of former rural villages, and eventually became surrounded by the city.

There are now more than 200 villages in Shenzhen. First built by local residents in the 1980s they have turned into high-density, low-income rental areas accommodating many working-class immigrants. In more recent years high-rises have replaced several villages.

The small-scale commercial activities taking place in urban villages play a critical role in the wider manufacturing, distribution and service networks that sustains the whole city.