

Bethan Laura Wood *Kaleidoscope-o-rama*: 2023 MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission

NGV International | 3 December 2023 – 7 April 2024 | Free entry



5 December 2023: London-based designer **Bethan Laura Wood** has unveiled *Kaleidoscope-o-rama*, 2023, the **MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission**, on display until 7 April 2024 at NGV International, Melbourne.

Presented as part of NGV Triennial 2023, the Commission includes two new major works *Kaleidoscope-o-rama, carpet* and *Kaleidoscope-o-rama, bookcase*, each conceived in dialogue with Regency era (c. 1811–20) works from the NGV Collection and presented among an immersive audio-visual display.

For the commission, Wood reinterprets the colours, textures, materials and forms found in British Regency salons, to foreground the social phenomena of the period and draw out the continuing social values of equality and open access to education that were spearheaded by women at the time. As part of her research into the commission, Wood references the Bluestocking literary society, Regency era design, and books including Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, London, 1792.

The works are a masterclass in Wood's signature design principles reflecting her expert application of colour and pattern paired with her close collaboration with artisan makers. Wood's five-tiered, hexagon-shaped bookcase takes on the geometry of a kaleidoscope in three-dimensions. The bookcase features custom designed tessellated timber veneer tiles in vibrant colours inspired by the Regency period developed in collaboration with the Italian manufacturer Alpi. Books by authors that Wood

researched for the project will be displayed on the bookshelf, in a nod to the importance of broad access to education.

Drawing on the kaleidoscope pattern of the bookcase veneer, Wood designed a hand-tufted hexagonal wool carpet made by long-time collaborator CC Tapis, Italy.

The scenography is complemented by animated kaleidoscope wall projections and audio readings of passages from literature Wood read during her research of the period for the Commission offering visitors a glimpse into the experience of a Regency-era salon.

Of the new Commission **Bethan Laura Wood** said: "I am so excited to see all the different elements come together in one space, creating a vibrating conversation of colour, pattern and movement, taking on my vision of a contemporary Bluestocking parlour for shared conversation and contemplation."

The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is a major series inviting internationally renowned female designers and architects to create a significant new work for the NGV Collection. Wood is the second recipient of the annual, five-year commission series, which has been made possible by a significant contribution from MECCA's social change program, M-POWER, which champions equality and opportunity for women and girls, including elevating women in art and design.

Since establishing her eponymous design studio in 2009, Wood's radical approach to materiality, colour, and pattern has garnered a cult following. Fascinated with the cultural and historical significance of surface design and colour in domestic space and the interior, she explores unlikely combinations of colour and shape, developing unique timber veneers, material composites and textiles for furniture, lighting, objects, installations, and accessories.

Wood has presented work at Design Miami, Victoria and Albert Museum and Sketch, London; and has works held in permanent collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, SFMOMA and Victoria and Albert Museum.

While her style is often described as "maximalist," Wood's creative work is layered with meaning, designed to engage on an emotional and intellectual level. Wood's installation at the NGV draws inspiration from diverse British eighteenth and nineteenth century references, including the kaleidoscope, Regency furniture, and the women's intellectual network known as 'Bluestockings'. Her work invites audiences to contemplate how knowledge has been learned and shared throughout time and the role played by gender.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'Through this work Bethan Laura Woods has embraced the mission of the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission by producing a work representative of the highest quality artisan craftsmanship and platforming women's issues, with a focus on historical access to education.'

'The NGV is grateful to MECCA for their ongoing and visionary support profiling the practices of globally leading female designers and to enrich the NGV Collection for current and future generations to admire.'

Jo Horgan, founder and co-CEO, MECCA, and NGV Foundation board member said: 'The enormous talent and contribution of designers like Bethan remind us how important it is to ensure that women are represented not just in design schools, but in studios, galleries and leadership positions in the design industry. Bethan's multidisciplinary approach also reminds us that creativity, diverse thinking and curiosity can achieve remarkable things, and help us to see the world in new ways. MECCA M-POWER is all about championing equality and opportunities for women and girls, and we're so delighted to be able to help bring Bethan's work to new audiences and inspire women and girls in Australia to dream big.'

The 2023 MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission will be on display in the NGV Triennial 2023 from 3 December 2023 – 7 April 2024 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Free entry. Further information is available via the NGV website: [ngv.melbourne](https://www.ngv.melbourne)

IMAGES: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/l291mafta5065ugv2ui3o/h?dl=0&rlkey=v70e3i1x2yahxxlvhd4ivalzl>

VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/891299955?share=copy>

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Image caption: Bethan Laura Wood with *Kaleidoscope-o-rama*, 2023, the **MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission**, on display from 3 December 2023 – 7 April 2024 in NGV Triennial at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Amelia Dowd

MECCA x NGV

WOMEN IN DESIGN COMMISSION

ABOUT THE MECCA X NGV WOMEN IN DESIGN COMMISSION

The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is MECCA's single largest commitment to an Australian cultural institution, through this significant contribution MECCA's support will strengthen the NGV's Collection of Contemporary Design and Architecture works by women and advances the NGV's ongoing efforts towards redressing historical gender imbalance in the Collection.

The first and only commission series of its kind in Australia, the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission creates a platform to present topical, world-premiere works of international significance to highlight the contributions and practices of female designers to Australian and global audiences.

Over five years, commissioned designers will be revealed annually at an event coinciding with International Women's Day in March, with the final work being revealed by year's end. The partnership will culminate in a major exhibition to showcase the five bodies of work and the remarkable Collection outcome.

Mexican architect Tatiana Bilbao presented the inaugural MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission in 2022, an installation titled *La ropa sucia se lava en casa (Dirty clothes are washed at home)*, drawing on the notion of clothing as a symbol of protection for the body.

The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is made possible by a significant contribution from MECCA through their philanthropic program, M-Power. Driven by a vision to advance equality and address the global gender gap, M-Power delivers programs that provide opportunities for women and girls.

ABOUT THE MECCA X NGV PARTNERSHIP

Since 2016, the NGV has partnered with MECCA on a number of ongoing initiatives designed to empower and engage female artists and designers, including Tatiana Bilbao, Nadia Hernández, Naomi Hobson, Louise Zhang, Tammy Kanat, Claudia Moodoonuthi, Atong Atem, Rebecca Baumann and Tanya Schultz.

Each year, MECCA and the NGV collaborate with a female artist or designer to create the brand's annual limited-edition holiday packaging and campaign. As part of the collaboration, MECCA supports the NGV to acquire work by the selected artist for the NGV Collection, helping to enrich its holdings of contemporary art and design. The acquired work is also displayed at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia each year.

The NGV has also worked with MECCA on their M-Power grant program which offers emerging female artists and designers a 12-month tailored mentoring program, professional development and networking opportunities, as well as ongoing learning opportunities with industry experts.

ABOUT THE NGV DEPARTMENT OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

Established in 2015, the NGV's Department of Contemporary Design and Architecture was the first of its kind for an Australian art gallery. The collection features an ever-growing selection of important examples of 21st century international and Australian object design, product design, architecture, contemporary jewellery, craft, speculative and critical design.

The Collection holds internationally significant works by Patricia Urquiola, nendo, Faye Toogood, Formafantasma, Neri Oxman, Teamlab, and Estudio Campana. The NGV presents a range of contemporary design and architecture programs and projects annually, including Melbourne Design Week, Melbourne Design Fair and the NGV Architecture Commission.

The NGV Department of Contemporary Design and Architecture is generously supported by The Hugh D. T. Williamson Foundation.

ABOUT MECCA

Since opening the doors to its very first store in Melbourne in 1997, MECCA has completely redefined the Australian beauty landscape, championing retail innovation and delivering the ultimate beauty experience to customers.

Founded by Jo Horgan, over the past 25 years MECCA has grown to become Australasia's largest prestige beauty retailer, serving more than four million customers each year. With more than 100 stores across Australia and New Zealand, as well as online stores in both countries and T-Mall global, MECCA offers an exclusive edit of the best in beauty from more than 200 brands. Today, MECCA has a growing team of 5,000 spread across its Support Centre, Distribution Centre and store network, all working towards a shared purpose of helping people to look, feel and be their best.

From the very beginnings, the MECCA team has shared a passion for education and equality. MECCA's social change program, M-POWER was established in 2017, and aims to educate, elevate and empower women and girls to help create a world where everyone has the same rights and opportunities.