

How can the Powerhouse Museum help you with your major design project?



For students of Design & Technology (Stage 6): Years 11–12

+ Interpreting and evaluating material culture¹

The Powerhouse Museum is much more than a collection of inspiring objects. For design students in particular, it is a place where you can access information about how designers work, their motivations and inspirations and the materials and processes they use. As you know, a large proportion of marks for your Major Design Project (MDP) will come from your research and specifically, how successful you are in identifying and justifying the selection and use of ideas and resources. The Powerhouse Museum is a great place to find out how designers solve problems similar to the ones you might be investigating with your MDP.

Here are some of the ways you can access this information:

1. Visit and research real objects or exhibitions

Every object in the Museum's collection tells a story. Often the objects on display can provide you with the historical research or context for your design project. As many professional designers already know, objects can be the springboard for ideas and innovations. If you find an object you are

interested in, you can note down its details and research it at powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database or contact the relevant curator² for further information. To do this, send your inquiry via the Museum's website and your query will be passed on to the appropriate person.

Powerhouse staff also post regular blogs discussing objects from the collection, new acquisitions and photographs. Or you can join in a discussion on the Museum's Facebook page. Go to www.powerhousemuseum.com/online/ for links to Object of the Week, Photo of the Day, the Museum on Facebook and many more online resources.

-
1. **Material culture:** buildings, tools and other artefacts including any material item that has had cultural meaning ascribed to it, past and present. Museum objects are material culture and can help us determine a sequence of events and dates, formulate a reconstruction of many ways of life, or help to provide some understanding of why human culture has changed through time.
 2. **Curator:** an expert employed by a museum or gallery to research, acquire, develop and maintain a collection. Curators tend to have specialist knowledge of a particular subject area. Curators also interpret objects and develop exhibition themes and story lines. Exhibitions may include objects from many collections.

Design research

2. Use online research material or download exhibition notes and other material

The Powerhouse Museum's website contains a wealth of material on design. As well as researching objects through our online catalogue (powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database), you can also find interviews with designers, find out about new and emerging innovation in Australian industries, learn about Australia's most innovative and exciting fashion designers, browse through hundreds of fabric samples from the 1890s to the 1930s or check out the HSC case studies in design, technology and cultural diversity. You can find these resources at powerhousemuseum.com/online.

Of particular interest when researching Australian and international design is D*Hub at dhub.org. This online magazine is the Museum's gateway to the world's best design collections and a forum for news, opinions and interviews. You can browse the articles, search for specific topics and sign up for regular updates.

If you need information about a particular exhibition, you can also download the teachers notes. These notes are useful for both teachers and students as they provide background information and a summary of the themes raised in exhibitions. Visit powerhousemuseum.com/education/teachernotes.asp for a complete list of notes.



Printed silk from J Claude Freres & Co swatch book, France, 1923. View a selection of fabric swatches at powerhousemuseum.com/electronicswatchbook/



'me Issey Miyake' doll designed by Japanese artist Tamiya Naro, on display on level 2 of the Museum. Lent by Kimiyo Jane Tango, 2009

If you need information about an object in another Australian museum or gallery, you can access Collections Australia Network at powerhousemuseum.com/online. Collections Australia Network is a guide to the collections of Australian museums and galleries.

3. Check out the Museum's great design titles

Powerhouse Publishing produces a wide range of books and booklets based on the Museum's collections and exhibitions. The catalogue of titles covers fashion, textiles, ceramics, architecture, product design and Indigenous communication and includes exhibitions no longer on display. Visit powerhousemuseum.com/publications/ for a full range of titles.

Design research

4. Attend a design talk or design event or sign up for a course in one of the Museum's state-of-the-art digital media labs

Public programs

The Museum runs a range of regular design programs including talks, workshops and special events. A highlight is Young Blood: Designers Market held at the Museum during the Sydney Design festival in August. This showcase of Australia's best and brightest young designers is a chance to meet the designers and shop at over 40 stalls for original fashion, furniture, jewellery, lighting and product design. Visit powerhousemuseum.com/youngblood/ to find out more.

The annual Sydney Design festival in August is one of the world's longest running design festivals with more than 50 exhibitions, events and talks all over Sydney. Visit sydneydesign.com.au to find out what's coming up this year, including special study days for secondary students of design.



Young Blood: Designers Market at the Powerhouse Museum



Thinkspace at the Powerhouse Museum offers a range of creative digital media workshops for students and teachers.

The Museum also hosts occasional talks by international and local designers. To find out more visit the Museum's website or pick up a copy of the Museum's what's on, which includes updates on design-related events and exhibitions at the Powerhouse.

Thinkspace: creative digital media workshops

Thinkspace is the Powerhouse Museum's digital learning precinct, offering workshops and short courses to develop your creative and media production skills, including digital video editing, digital music production, digital storytelling, web 2.0 and online research, songwriting and movie making. Visit powerhousemuseum.com/thinkspace/index.php for details and bookings.

5. Talk to an expert

Every museum is defined by its collecting fields. The Powerhouse Museum's collecting areas are engineering and design, information and communication technology, sciences, transport, Australian history and society, Koori history and culture, and decorative arts and design. Objects in collections can be interpreted³ in many ways and from a number of different perspectives. Each collecting area is maintained and developed by a team of curators, all of whom are experts in their particular field. Curators working in design not only

3. **Interpretation:** an intellectual process in which information and evidence is selected, gathered and reassembled within the framework of an individual or group's own ideas. Interpretation can take the form of facts or opinions and can come from a variety of sources.

Design research



A display in the Redesigning Your Future section of the *EcoLogic* exhibition.

have access to the material culture which forms part of the collection, they also have a working relationship with designers and other design professionals.

After conducting your initial research, you may decide to interview an expert. This could be done in person, over the telephone or via email. Remember when interviewing an expert, you must be prepared. Write down the questions you would like to ask and note down how these relate to your MDP. Ensure that your questions are focused and specific. Always make thorough notes of your conversations and document this research in your design folio. Don't forget to acknowledge the people who have assisted you in your research.

It's also worth remembering that museums and curators have extensive contacts with designers and design professionals. Due to privacy laws, they cannot give you contact details although they may be able to steer you in the right direction. If your own research is leading to a dead-end and there is something you really need to know, send your questions via email to edserv@phm.gov.au.

Checklist for design research

1. After viewing the Museum's collection on site and online, make a list of what inspires you and examine how it might impact on your MDP.
2. Research designers in the Museum's collection who have explored similar ideas or design areas to you. Find out what might have influenced their work.
3. List other related areas you would like to explore, such as materials technologies.
4. List the skills or courses you might require to realise your design project.
5. Prepare questions to ask an expert.
6. Document and record your findings. Remember to acknowledge the people who have assisted you.

Please note: the websites referred to in these notes were available and suitable at the time of publication. We advise teachers to check sites before recommending them to students.

**For more information visit the
Powerhouse Museum's website**
<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com>

Please note: these notes were correct at February 2011.

Subscribe to our free E-News newsletter for updates and special announcements
www.powerhousemuseum.com/teachersguide/teacheremailsSignup.php



500 Harris Street Ultimo
PO Box K346 Haymarket 1238
www.powerhousemuseum.com

© 2011 Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. This publication is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of research, study, criticism or review, or as otherwise permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission.

 Text may be used under Creative Commons Licence, Powerhouse Museum, 2009. Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5 Australia.

The Powerhouse Museum, part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences also incorporating Sydney Observatory, the Powerhouse Discovery Centre and the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, is a NSW government cultural institution.