

# V&A

## MARY QUANT

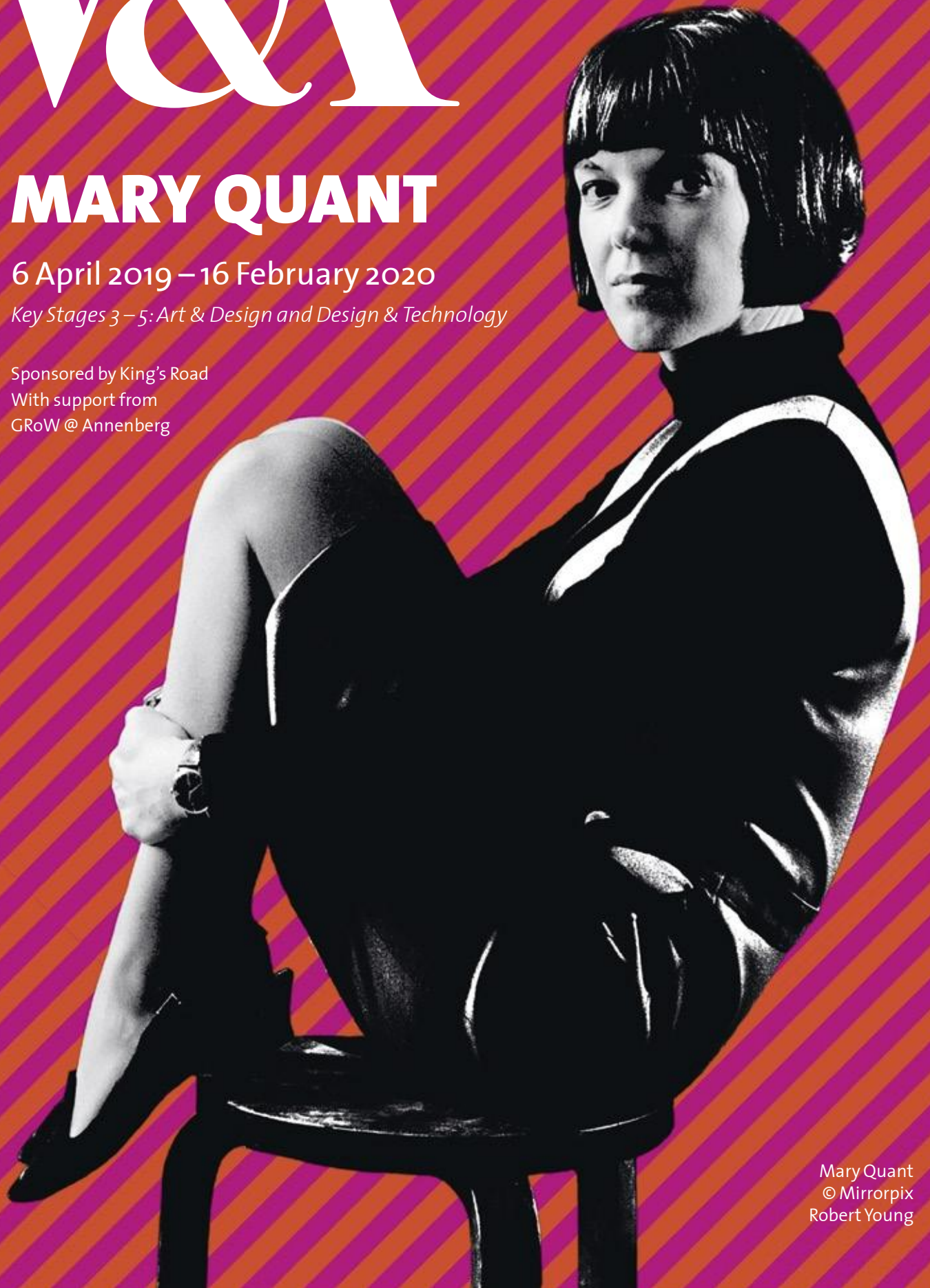
6 April 2019 – 16 February 2020

*Key Stages 3 – 5: Art & Design and Design & Technology*

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Mary Quant  
© Mirrorpix  
Robert Young

# MARY QUANT

## Teachers' Resource: Key stages 3–5

### Art & Design and Design & Technology

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#### Introduction

This exhibition explores the career of Dame Mary Quant, one of Britain's best-known designers and a powerful role model for working women. It spans twenty years of her career, from her experimental boutique Bazaar in 1955 to her international Mary Quant brand during the 1960s and '70s. Quant shook up the established fashion system, challenging the dominance of Parisian couture and cementing London as a new centre of street-style. Her products were mass-manufactured and exported around the world, reflecting the profound changes in the industry during this formative period. An important creative influencer, Quant popularised the controversial miniskirt and tights marketed with her instantly recognisable daisy logo.

This resource is suitable for Key Stages 3–5 Art & Design and Design & Technology students and explores some of the key themes from the exhibition. It unpicks the power of Quant's brand, the movement towards globalised mass production, the use of innovative materials and the idea of liberating women through fashion.

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#### Pre-visit activities

Before visiting, research fashion and culture from the 1960s. What made this period so revolutionary? Create a mood board of the different designs that emerged during that time. What were the key symbols, colours, patterns and icons from this era?

Many of the objects included in the exhibition are cherished garments, accessories and photographs donated or lent by women who responded to the V&A's call-out for Quant clothes and memories. Search #WeWantQuant to explore more.

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#### The Museum visit

Use this resource to introduce the key themes and ideas in the exhibition and get ideas for discussion points and activities, which can be developed further into project work back at school.

#### Before Bazaar

Despite her desire to train in fashion, Quant initially studies to be an art teacher to fit in with her parents' preconceptions of a conventional career. Art school gives her the freedom to socialise with forward-thinking classmates, and there she meets her future husband, and business partner.

#### Building the Brand

Bazaar, Quant's tiny boutique, gains a loyal following including influential journalists who generate publicity. Quant collaborates with manufacturers to make her designs for new products available on high streets across the UK. Strong branding helps to tap into the new consumerism and the daisy logo is trademarked in 1966.

#### Making for the Masses

American chain store giant J.C. Penney invites Quant to update their image, with her 'Chelsea Girl' line of dresses. Inspired by the US fashion industry, Quant partners with a UK manufacturer and releases her Ginger Group collection in 1963, mass-producing her vibrant, good-value ideas for the UK and export market.

#### Innovative Textiles

Quant experiments with fabrics to inspire her designs and persuades manufacturers to produce traditional tweeds in bright colours and stripes. She uses new synthetics, and an acetate-backed wool jersey for her trademark stretchy mini dresses, to create a bold look with solid blocks of bright colour. She is fascinated by the colour and texture of PVC, creating waterproofs that are functional and fashionable.

#### Liberated Fashion

Quant's energising, practical and fun clothes express the rebellious attitude of many younger women in the 1960s. The miniskirt, which she helps to popularise, becomes an international symbol of the London look and women's liberation.

#### Quant's Influence

By bending the rules, exploring gender roles and identities, and creating affordable clothes to enjoy, empower and liberate, Quant predicts the opportunities and freedoms of future generations.

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#### Find out more

Visit Fashion (Room 40) to discover a broad range of historical and contemporary fashion design and textiles.

Fashion in Motion is a series of live catwalk events presented at the V&A. Explore more and watch online at [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)



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## BEFORE BAZAAR

Born in 1930 in Plumstead, south-east London to Welsh parents, Quant is evacuated during the Second World War and experiences food and clothing rationing. As a teenager, she longs to study fashion design, but her parents insist she should follow them into teaching – a more conventional career choice for a woman. As a compromise, she trains as an art teacher at Goldsmiths College. But attending the school allows her to socialise with exciting, pleasure-seeking, free-thinking people from different walks of life.

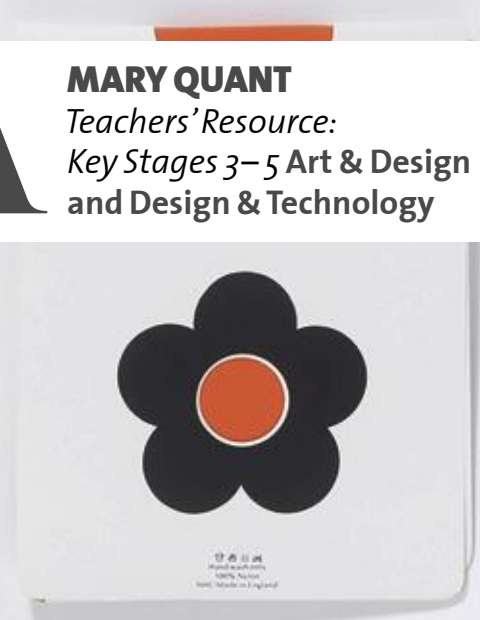
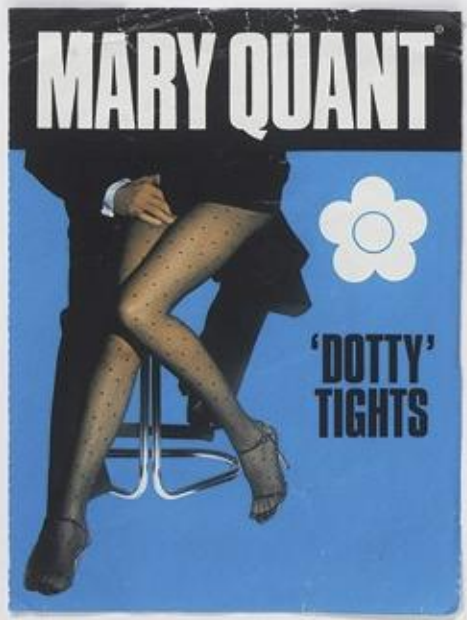
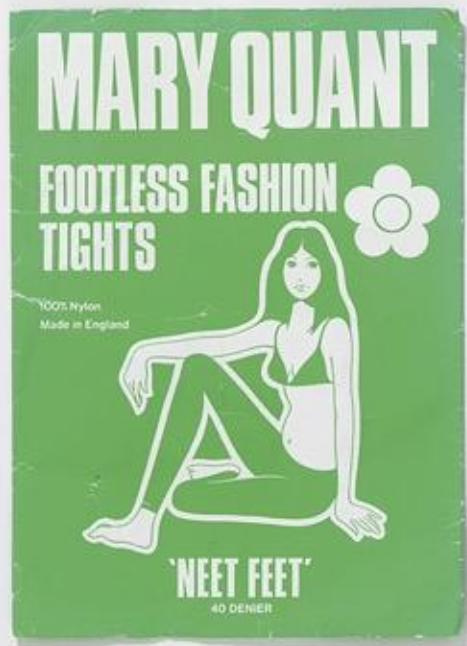
### Activity:

Discuss gender roles and careers from the early 1930s to the 1940s and compare them to now. Have they changed? If so, how? Think about the differences in the following areas:

- Jobs
- Education
- Roles within the family

Download the 'Fashioning the Future' resource as part of the 'Fashion & Textiles: States of Modern Undress' resources by visiting [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)

Use the resource to explore some of the different careers within the fashion industry today and where you can study. Select three that sound interesting to you and research further.



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Mary Quant stockings and tights in original packaging, 1965–80  
©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## **BUILDING THE BRAND**

In 1955 Quant, her husband Alexander Plunket Greene, and a friend, lawyer-turned-photographer Archie McNair open a boutique called Bazaar in Chelsea, west London.

Bazaar's commercial success builds on London's boutique scene, which is thriving thanks to the growing wealth and social mobility of young people who have benefitted from further education and higher wages. Shopping for clothes becomes a leisure activity.

Quant commissions bold new designs for her carrier bags, labels and stationery, using large lettering to amplify the strength of her designs and her classless and catchy name.

In 1966, Quant trademarks the daisy logo which becomes like a badge, instantly communicating her brand's youthful spirit and connecting with more customers.

### **Activity:**

Find a symbol, logo or typeface in the Museum, which you feel makes a statement. Take a photograph or make a sketch of it.

Use this to develop a brand or logo for your generation. Play with scale and colour to make your design striking and bold. Consider today's fashion, music and pop culture as important references.



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Mary Quant's Ginger Group  
Pinafore dress, 1963  
Jersey  
©Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London

## **MAKING FOR THE MASSES**

Quant revamps the US department store giant J.C. Penney's image. She designs the 'Chelsea Girl' line of pinafores and party dresses for Penney's younger customers. The collection is launched in September 1962 and displayed at their stores across the country. Soon, the designs are available by mail order too.

After this, Quant strides into new territory with her Ginger Group collection of 1963. The Ginger Group range is a collaboration with Steinberg & Co., a manufacturer who contribute a network of factories and suppliers and extensive experience of the export trade. By 1965, Quant is producing four collections of 50 designs a year for Ginger Group alone. Once the designs are costed and approved, the clothes are made up by seamstresses in Steinberg's workrooms in London's East End and in their huge factory in Treforest, South Wales, to be sent all over the world.

### **Activity:**

Discuss what the terms 'Fast Fashion' and 'Fashion in a Globalised world' mean.  
How does one impact the other?

Visit Japan (Room 45), China (Rooms 44, 47e) and the South Asia gallery (Room 41) to explore dress from other cultures.

Work in small teams to design garments inspired by global fashion. Try to incorporate a range of cultural influences into your designs.





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Mary Quant  
Peter Pan collar dress, 1967  
Wool jersey  
©Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London

## INNOVATIVE TEXTILES

Quant pushes conventional boundaries between different fabrics for types of clothing, discovering a new type of wool jersey that she repurposes for fashionable dress. Previously used for rugby or football kit, jersey's fluid qualities are perfectly suited to Quant's signature minidresses. She also finds a manufacturer to develop an expanding range of colourful stockings and tights to complement her clothes, creating a total top-to-toe block of colour. These are sold alongside new technology-based products like plastic-moulded shoes and PVC bags.

### Activity:

Materials like PVC and plastic were innovative at the time. But since then, there has been more research into sustainability and the impact materials have on the environment, including their ability to be recycled or degrade naturally.

Consider the environmental impact of clothes. Use the Fabric of the World website to research biodegradable fabrics. What makes them better for the environment? Choose a few garments from your wardrobe and use the clothing tags to identify the materials which make those pieces of clothing. Do any of them contain sustainable materials? Discuss your findings with your classmates to hear how their findings compared.

*[fabricoftheworld.com/infographic/fabrics-ability-biodegrade](http://fabricoftheworld.com/infographic/fabrics-ability-biodegrade)*



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Mary Quant for Alligator  
Raincoat, 1966-7  
PVC  
©Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London

## INNOVATIVE TEXTILES CONTINUED

Quant's fascination with shiny, waterproof PVC is realised through her collaboration with Alligator Rainwear, a specialist manufacturer. She develops a bright new range of waterproofs in primary colours with contrasting collars and cuffs, which combine functionality with striking visual effects.

She also pushes Alligator to try innovative synthetic materials like nylon to produce exciting new looks.

### Activity:

PVC is a form of plastic. Recently there has been a huge drive to reduce and re-use plastic, which pollutes and severely damages our oceans. For a week, collect packaging and paper that you would have ordinarily thrown away. Does the amount surprise you? What small changes could you make to reduce this?

Re-purpose the plastic waste you've collected to create 3D sculptures. Play with large and small-scale models, photographing the process as you go. If you have a printer, print out the photographs and then cut them out and manipulate them into garments to stick on magazine cut-outs of people. Create a line-up of six figures using this fast-fashion technique.



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Mary Quant  
Playsuit, c.1967  
Stretch terry towelling  
©Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London

## **LIBERATED FASHION**

In a period that sees growing activism and a global struggle for equal rights, Quant has a visionary take on the role of women. She leads by speaking out, working hard and taking risks. Her assertive, liberating mini dresses express the changes for women of post-war Britain, giving them a strong, independent style of their own. Despite provoking outrage among the older generation, the mini eventually becomes an accepted part of fashion as well as an international symbol of London's youthful look and of women's liberation.

Her designs in the later 1960s and early '70s continue the theme of questioning traditional stereotypes, and Quant herself wears increasingly androgynous clothes, gently feminised and casual versions of masculine tailoring, as if to prove the point. Quant designs action-clothes for the new woman, with fashion that enables free movement and self-expression.

### **Activity:**

What are the current cultural shifts in our society today? What does it mean to be conforming or rebelling in our society? How is this influenced by social media?

Visit the Rapid Response gallery (Room 74a) to find examples of clothing used in forms of activism.

For each object ask yourself:

- Why was the item produced?
- How does this object make a statement, provide a call to action or move against something?

Discuss this with your classmates.



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Meadham Kirchhoff;  
Nicholas Kirkwood  
Ensemble, 2011  
©Victoria and Albert  
Museum, London

## QUANT'S INFLUENCE

As the fashion industry transforms with offshore manufacturing and digital technology, Quant, along with her two business partners, anticipates the future dominance of visual branding and marketing. Her brand helps to shape the global identity of British fashion today, making London a centre of street-style, creativity and innovation.

Perhaps Quant's greatest influence is her vision of fashion as a means of communicating new attitudes, ideas and change for women.

### Activity:

Search for examples of how Quant's designs may have inspired contemporary styles in the Fashion gallery (Room 40). Make studies of common themes in your sketchbook and annotate your ideas.

Do you feel Quant's fashion has had an impact on society? Consider women's liberation and class movement.

What would you like to advocate for your generation? Make a list of ideas and develop this into a manifesto. Look up the organisation Fashion Revolution for an example of how a manifesto can be turned into a movement:

*[fashionrevolution.org/manifesto](http://fashionrevolution.org/manifesto)*