

# Exhibition

## TURNING FULL CIRCLE

**THE PETER SAVILLE SHOW**  
**Design Museum, Shad Thames**  
**until 14 September**  
 Reviewed by Pamela Buxton

When someone so known for their brilliant appropriation of image starts to reference their own work, you know it's probably time for a retrospective. Things certainly seem to have come full circle for Peter Saville, the much-lauded and hugely influential designer and art director who finally, after a career so far spanning 25 years, gets his own show at London's Design Museum.

Bauhaus designers, neo-classical sculpture and vortocist art all had a role in his prolific early work for Factory. Now, a couple of decades on, we find him putting his own designs through Photoshop to create new paintings, and being sampled by others – two parkhas in the show by Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons are a homage to his early designs for New Order and OMD.

Saville closely collaborated on this show with curator Libby Sellers and the designers, New York architect Lindy Roy and Graphic Thought Facility. You can imagine that he was in his element – he is clearly someone keen to document his own design journey who never seems to throw anything away. There's even the two leaves used for the True Faith artwork, lovingly preserved since 1987 in a shoebox.

Iggy Pop's The Passenger and other footage from Factory founder Tony Wilson's TV show So It Goes blasts invigoratingly over the early part of the exhibition, which deals primarily with Saville's work for the Factory label and club in 1979-84. This is undoubtedly the highlight of the show. It will be heaven for music fans of a certain age and anyone fascinated with the creative process, showing how Saville selected and used diverse imagery for record covers and posters of bands such as Joy Division, New

Order, OMD, and Martha and the Muffins. It takes a little poring over (the work is not always helpfully arranged in the display cases) but the delight in seeing, through sketches and source material, how Saville arrived at the final designs displayed in a row of posters along one wall, is worth it.

It's great to get the story behind the designs – how Saville's late delivery of an early Factory poster meant that the proofing stage was left out, explaining the spelling mistakes. How he rarely listened to the music before doing the artwork. And how he happened upon a picture by Henri Fantin-Latour's Basket of Roses in

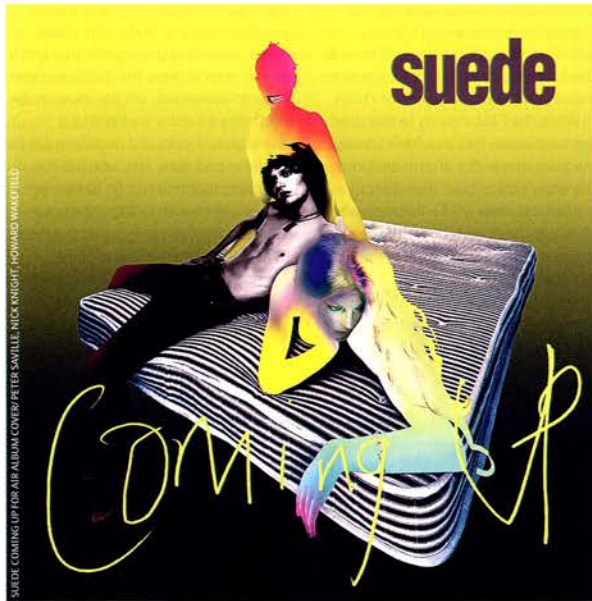
him as free a creative rein as Factory had and Saville didn't disappoint, shocking the fashion world with his ahead-of-its-time use of photo-library images and sharp captions. A 1991 advertising shoot dispensed with models and clothes altogether in favour of images of an old factory, to the confusion of the magazines, some of which refused to run the ads.

After a difficult period in LA, Saville returned to London and enjoyed a return to form with a new wave of musical clients such as Suede and Pulp, this time using the latest technology, plus more recent fashion clients including Stella McCartney and Givenchy. Great stuff, but without the ephemera explaining the design processes they don't make as gripping exhibits as his early work.

While plenty has been written about his perfectionism and exasperating difficulty keeping to deadlines, the show itself reveals little about his personality or life away from his work. Indeed, apart from a photograph of a youthful Saville at Factory in 1979, and a series of enigmatic mirrored silhouettes at the entrance to the show, there is little pictorial trace of him throughout the show. The captions offer nuggets of information along the way to flesh out his thoughts – towards the end of the show, we learn that he is now, fresh from sifting through his own archive for the exhibition, planning a series of books documenting his oeuvre.

But what of new work? Surely there's a limit to his interest in recycling his own (and others) work, however ingeniously. Admirers of his designs will love this show. But where, if anywhere, Saville goes from here, is less certain.

*Peter Saville is due to speak at the Design Museum at 7.15pm on September 2. The accompanying book *Designed by Peter Saville*, edited by Emily King, is published by Frieze, price £19.95*



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