

## Design nightmares V&A takes look at dark side



### Maev Kennedy

Standing under a chandelier, above, depicting the tangled bodies of the damned tumbling into hell, gazing beyond the fur-lined skull designed to close like a tomb around an amorous couple, and a crimson mat made of poured plastic representing the amount of blood in two bodies, curator Gareth Williams hardly needed to say: "This isn't really a 'how to get the look' show, I don't think."

The startling exhibition which opens at the V&A next week is perfect, however, for anyone who regards interior

design as a nightmare. There are wardrobes rippling like snakes, a bronze cabinet which appears to have a hole blasted clear through it by some giant shotgun, and soft sculptures and fluffy floor cushions modelled on images of real nuclear explosions.

The exhibition is called *Telling Tales, Fantasy and Fear in Contemporary Design*, and was conceived when Williams was struck by an eerie element in the work of many modern designers.

Once he began to collect for the show he found it everywhere, particularly for some reason in the Netherlands. Wieki Somers has contributed a porcelain teapot modelled as a pig's skull, with most

of a water rat as the tea cosy. Niels Ivan Eijk and Miram van der Lubbe made the pair of slippers, each the pathetically small body of a mole complete with claws and little black nose.

"They're very interested in the natural world," Williams said, "but there's no doubt that the Dutch do have a dark side which some designers have really run with.

"It's about subverting what we expect objects to be," he added. "It's about discombobulation."

*Telling Tales, Fantasy and Fear in Contemporary Design*, V&A, 14 July - 18 October 2009, free

Photograph: Martin Godwin