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Tools: Extending Our Reach

Cara McCarty, Matilda McQuaid

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Tools celebrates the richness of the human imagination through a surprising range of juxtaposed and seemingly disparate objects. Accompanying an exhibition of the same name that celebrates the fall 2014 reopening of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, *Tools* is unprecedented in its composition of collaborators--the exhibition is Cooper Hewitt's first pan-institutional show, spanning ten Smithsonian museums. From the earliest times to the present, tools have been at the frontier of design, demonstrating how technology and culture are inextricably linked. Consider, for example, that hand axes remained the dominant tool for 1.5 million years before any significant change was made to the human toolkit, and that the range of tools began to expand only 10,000 years ago. It is notable that the design of our basic tools--hammers, saws, screwdrivers, drills--has remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of years, indicating not only their continuity of need and function, but also the effectiveness of their design solutions. Their various incarnations and histories link us to the past. Other tools highlight new technologies and scientific breakthroughs that have opened new worlds to us. Through lush images, authoritative essays and superb design, the book shows the interconnectedness of scientists, designers, historians, anthropologists, engineers and artists through design-thinking and problem-solving, while also looking at various design perspectives and methodologies. *Tools* explores the world of design ideas while celebrating human ingenuity across cultures and over time.

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