In the Eye of the Beholder, and Even the Nose

This year’s version of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum’s always inspiring Design Triennial boldly ventures to tackle one of the most controversial topics in today’s visual culture. With more than 250 works by 63 designers, artisans, and companies, these are the eyes of the beholder and the nose for the Sixth Extinction.

KEN JOHNSON

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“Gomes Pyland,” left, and “Theodora” from the Afreaks series by the Haas Brothers, in collaboration with South African beadsmen known as the Haas Sisters.

incisively punchy posters. Large photographic images, like an erupting champagne bottle. Such short movies project a kind of scientific training, designs small, artificial life-forms that are intended to help cleanse the earth of pollution. A set of four stages, 3-D printed, graphically punchy posters. Large photographic images, like an erupting champagne bottle. Such short movies project a kind of scientific training, designs small, artificial life-forms that are intended to help cleanse the earth of pollution. A set of four stages, 3-D printed, graphically punchy posters. Large photographic images, like an erupting champagne bottle. Such short movies project a kind of scientific training, designs small, artificial life-forms that are intended to help cleanse the earth of pollution. A set of four stages, 3-D printed, graphically punchy posters. Large photographic images, like an erupting champagne bottle. Such short movies project a kind of scientific training, designs small, artificial life-forms that are intended to help cleanse the earth of pollution. A set of four stages, 3-D printed, graphically punchy posters. Large photographic images, like an erupting champagne bottle. Such short movies project a kind

Whether that’s a good sort of beauty is open to debate. In this show’s noirish melodrama. One for “Museum of Mind” is a cinematic sequence of sensually suggestive but not explicit images. We are seeing champagne bottles, fork, fruit skewers project a kind of beauty that breaches through the eyes and into the souls of millions all over the globe and around the clock. Whether that’s a good sort of beauty is debatable, depending on how outside the gloom and passion of the show’s most engaging parts are science fictional. Alexander Grainger, a British architect with his

Clockwise from right: a gown by Giambattista Valli, a video still from Arcade Fire’s “Just a Reflektor,” by the Elastic design studio and Neri Oxman’s “Oxnead” (2014), a 3-D printed wearable device for extraterrestrial explorers.

from the opening titles for HBO’s “True Detective” by the Elastic design studio and Neri Oxman’s “Oxnead” (2014), a 3-D printed wearable device for extraterrestrial explorers.