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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nelson-Atkins Exhibition Features Latest Technological Breakthroughs in Accessible Design

Access+Ability Merges Practicality and Functionality

Kansas City, MO. Oct 9, 2019– The exhibition *Access+Ability*, opening Oct. 19 at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, will feature research and designs developed over the past decade with and by people who span a range of physical, cognitive, and sensory abilities. Visitors will view innovative tools that allow people to connect with each other and the world around them, including foldable wheelchair wheels, glasses for colorblindness, and even a robotic dog used as a therapeutic device.

Access+Ability was organized by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City and runs through February 2020. Advances in research and technology fueled the objects and experiences in the exhibition, which were selected based on input from users, designers, caregivers, activists, researchers, occupational therapists, and neuroscientists.



“Many of these remarkable objects, some of which are still prototypes, represent the future of accessibility design,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “There is enormous potential in these innovations that will allow people the ability to overcome everyday obstacles and give them greater access to the world around them.”

The exhibition consists of functional, life-enhancing products that have created unprecedented access in homes, schools, workplaces, and the world at large. In Kansas City, the exhibition was co-curated by Stefanie Dlugosz-Acton, Assistant Curator, Architecture, Design & Decorative Arts, and Sarah Biggerstaff, Curatorial Assistant for the Director, Curatorial Affairs.

“People are the most important component of this exhibition,” said Biggerstaff. “One out of every four individuals has some type of disability, and not all of them are visible. We want to raise awareness, understanding, and empathy with *Access+Ability*.”

More than 70 user-centered and inclusive designs developed in the past decade will be on view. Some of the objects are prototypes that have yet to enter the market, while other works are in production and available to the public.

“This is a new way to address accessibility at the museum and also a learning opportunity for our staff and visitors,” said Dlugosz-Acton. “We have partnered with local organizations to gather resources, and develop new and existing relationships. All of our programs have come from conversations with community partners and build upon the museum’s education events and initiatives.”



Access+Ability features a range of objects, from those that assist with daily tasks, such as elegant, colorful canes and magnetic clothing fasteners, to more elaborate objects that incorporate groundbreaking technology, such as a shirt that translates the notes of a symphony into vibrations, allowing the wearer to feel the music.

Visitors will have the unique opportunity to interact with several objects on view, such as a monitor that translates eye movement into text, a wristwatch with a dynamic braille pin display, and a digital version of a book that helps readers understand the challenges experienced by people with dyslexia.

To celebrate the opening of this exhibition, a field day highlighting adaptive sports designed for all, including archery, power soccer, and tennis will be held on Saturday, Oct. 19 from 2–4 p.m. on the J.C. Nichols Plaza on the north side of the Nelson-Atkins. Rick Haith, recreation outreach coordinator at The Whole Person and a certified therapeutic



recreational specialist and adaptive recreation and sports specialist, leads the event joined by experts and athletes for an afternoon of learning and fun. Special thanks to Mobility First and Kansas City Parks and Recreation.

Access+Ability is open at the Nelson-Atkins through Feb. 9, 2020.

Image captions:

Design: Nouveau shown in Charcoal + White. Model: Emery Vanderburgh. Photo: ALLELES Design Studio

Prosthetic Leg Covers, ca. 2011. Designed and manufactured by McCauley Wanner, (Canadian born 1986) and Ryan Palibroda, Canadian (born 1980) for Alleles Design Studio, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (founded 2013). Digitally fabricated ABS plastic, polyurethane straps, metal books. Photo courtesy of The ALLELES Design Studio Ltd.

Soundshirt (prototype), 2015–16. Designed by Francesca Rosella (Italian born 1975) and Ryan Genz (American born 1975) for CuteCircuit, London, England, UK (founded 2004). Stretch microfiber fabric with laser-cut decoration and embedded with 16 micro-actuators. Photo courtesy of CuteCircuit. © Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum



Access+Ability was organized by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

In Kansas City, generous support provided by The Karbank Family Foundation and The Neil D. Karbank Foundation in memory of Barney A. Karbank.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

The Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's finest art museums. The museum, which strives to be the place *where the power of art engages the spirit of community*, opens its doors free of charge to people of all backgrounds. The museum is an institution that both challenges and comforts, that both inspires and soothes, and it is a destination for inspiration, reflection and connecting with others.

The Nelson-Atkins serves the community by providing access to its renowned collection of more than 41,000 art objects and is best known for its Asian art, European and American paintings, photography, modern sculpture, and Native American and Egyptian galleries. Housing a major art research library and the Ford Learning Center, the Museum is a key educational resource for the region. In 2017, the Nelson-Atkins celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the Bloch Building, a critically acclaimed addition to the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins Building.

The Nelson-Atkins is located at 45th and Oak Streets, Kansas City, MO. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday/Friday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. The museum is closed Tuesday. Admission to the museum is free to everyone. For museum information, phone 816.751.1ART (1278) or visit nelson-atkins.org.

For media interested in receiving further information, please contact:

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