

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT THE V&A

This strategy paper sets out how the V&A will continue to meet and exceed our duties under the Equality Act and be proactive in recognising and removing the barriers which people from all backgrounds may face in accessing the Museum's collections and services.

One of our strategic aims is to strive to make the V&A matter to more people and in that context we work to provide all our visitors with the best quality experience and optimum access to our collections, both physically and digitally, and to inspire creativity in them all.

Our goal is to integrate equality and diversity into everything that we do and ensure that all aspects of the Museum - the staff profile, the collections, audiences, programmes and events - reflect the diversity that exists within society in the 21st century.

We believe that being committed to equality and diversity is central to creating a positive environment which makes full use of the wide range of talents and resources i.e. our staff, which benefit our visitors.

The following factors are central to our success:

- Access

We offer the widest and most appropriate forms of access to the Museum's collections, expertise, facilities and services, actively working to overcome physical, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal and financial barriers that prevent this.

- Inclusion

We work in partnership with others to help tackle social inequality, discrimination and disadvantage; empowering communities, improving the quality of people's lives, contributing to social cohesion and acting as a catalyst for cultural and social change.

- Diversity

We embrace and reflect diversity, harnessing the potential of all stakeholders (staff, volunteers, existing and potential audiences, and key partners) in the development of a truly inclusive museum that inspires, promotes learning, creativity and participation.

With the implementation of the Equality Act in 2010, public authorities such as the V&A are subject to the equality duty in carrying out our functions. This means we must consciously consider the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Protected Characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 are: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; Sexual Orientation.

We believe that increasing the diversity of our paid and unpaid workforce will enable us to respond better to the needs of our current and future audiences. We aim for our workforce to be reflective of the community from which our candidates are drawn, whether this be a national recruitment pool for senior or specialist museum professional roles such as senior managers, curators and conservators, or a local, London and South East England regional pool for more junior, technical or core administrative roles.

To continue to diversify the Museum's audience in South Kensington, we will actively maintain participation from: Black Asian Minority Ethnic BAME; and Disabled people. We will increase audience participation by focusing on men who are currently under represented and people from socio-economic class NS-SEC 5-8.

At the Museum of Childhood, where we have achieved a 90% rise in visitor numbers over the past 6 years, we will continue to diversify our audience by maintaining participation from: Families; Schools (formal education) and Community (including BAME and NS-SEC 5-8 audiences); and focus upon increasing participation from: adults - (young creatives, and general adult museum visitors).

An action plan for 2014-2017 is currently being developed and will set out a plan of action and achievable goals for a period of three years. The Equality and Access Officer will report on the actions in the plan and their progress, up-dating on an annual basis.

The action plan will be monitored by the Equality Strategy Group and reported to the Director on a six monthly basis.

The V&A

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design. We use our outstanding collections and extensive knowledge to inspire creativity in all our visitors. The V&A is a superb resource for everyone working in the creative industries and makes a major contribution to the UK's creative economy.

The V&A is part of a family of museums consisting of the V&A in South Kensington and the V&A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green. The Archive of Art and Design, the Theatre and Performance Study Room and the new Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion are located at Blythe House, Kensington Olympia.

Staffing

The V&A is driven by highly professional staff who work with the following shared values:

- Generosity: Being accessible, open, welcoming, respectful and collaborative.
- Imagination: Being creative, original, progressive, taking risks.
- Coherence: Being clear, consistent, engaging and articulate, with a unique V&A voice.
- Rigour: Being informed, scholarly, challenging, authoritative and consistent

These values are promoted across all of the V&A's activities so that they inform and support working practices, creating an environment that is both challenging and rewarding.

As well as increasing the diversity of our workforce, we recognise the importance of raising awareness of diversity and developing the skills of our current and potential future workforce. Central to our people strategy is a commitment to developing all our staff so that we can ensure the Museum has the range of skills, competencies and behaviours in place that are needed to achieve our objectives. The Training & Development team support the delivery of our people and diversity strategies through: the provision of learning opportunities for all staff; establishing workforce development programmes, such as work experience, apprenticeships and internships; and skill sharing partnerships both nationally and internationally.

Policies underpin our diversity practice. In our staff handbook, the Diversity Policy, sets out our commitment to principles of equality and diversity that we believe are central

to creating a positive working environment, and our aim is to make equality and diversity a natural and integral part of management. All staff have a core performance management objective around equality and diversity, and diversity competencies are incorporated into management and leadership competency frameworks.

Exhibitions and Displays Programme

We present a broad range of exhibitions and displays as part of the Public programme which reflect many cultures and creative practices.

Our future exhibitions include themes on diverse international cultures to sustain and develop the work previously undertaken. In recent years, we have shown exhibitions such as Black British Style, Contemporary Chinese Photography, Maharajas, Contemporary South African, Yoji Yamamoto, and Photography from the Middle East, and The Supremes, all of which attracted culturally diverse audiences. Exhibitions such as Hollywood Costumes and David Bowie Is have also brought in new audiences and many first time visitors.

Our Learning Departments has a reputation for providing innovative programmes that reach out to new audiences. We run projects which promote social inclusion and which seek to reflect the cultures represented in the Museum's collections. The inclusion of practitioners from diverse backgrounds has enabled the Museum to illustrate new and exciting themes through historical and contemporary context.

Communication

We aim to raise awareness of the Museum and build the profile of the V&A brand, by promoting the V&A as the premier visitor attractions in London for both domestic and overseas visitors.

By utilising many communication tools, including, e-marketing, print and advertising and targeting key audiences through networks and specialist media, we reach a broader and more diverse audience.

The Museum has continually improved the visitor experience and environment to support new audiences, by improving orientation and information and making appropriate use of foreign languages and accessible communication in information provision.

FuturePlan

FuturePlan is an ambitious programme dedicated to restoring and enhancing the V&A's original 19th-century architecture, opening up previously hidden areas to the public and improving visitor facilities and accessibility. FuturePlan Phase 1 has significantly renewed both the South Kensington site and the Museum of Childhood. Over the past ten years 70% of the Museum's public space has been transformed.

FuturePlan has incorporated new and existing interpretation and communication into galleries, being the bridge between the Museum's objects and expertise and our visitors' curiosity and knowledge. All new interpretation takes account of the diversity of our visitors, including those with disabilities where there is a particular focus on improving access for visually impaired visitors.

Appendix 1: Sample Programmes and Projects – South Kensington

Africa at the V&A

Since an HLF-funded research project in 2005-8, which systematically identified and documented African material in the collections, we have continued to build on this body of work. This is evidenced by the recent display of African objects in the V&A, entitled V&A Africa: Exploring Hidden Histories, the drive to catalogue and digitise more than 4,300 objects on 'Search the Collections', make more visible the relevant material in the National Art Library (which was not addressed by the original project), and pro-actively collect examples of art and design from Africa and the African Diaspora. Recent acquisitions include photographs from South Africa and Morocco, prints from the 1980s addressing the issue of apartheid by South African artist Sue Williamson, prints by the Black British artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, as well as material produced by black activists such as PESTs in 1980's New York.

A book, *In Black and White: Prints from Africa and the Diaspora*, by Gill Saunders and Zoe Whitley is in preparation and will be published by the V&A late 2013. A display on the same subject is scheduled for November 2014. We also hope to have an African artist-in-residence in early 2014. The Africa Curators Group (which includes colleagues from Learning and from Research as well as the Collections) continues to meet quarterly to drive all activities relating to the Africa collections, such as documentation, displays, research seminars, Study Days, and events such as Friday Late, as well as building contacts with individuals and organisations in the UK and beyond to support and develop our knowledge of and engagement with cultural practice in Africa and the Diaspora.

Staying Power

Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience 1950s-1990s is a project to increase the number of black British photographers and images of black Britain in the V&A collection. It aims to raise awareness of the contribution of black Britons to British culture and society, as well as to the art of photography. Photographs collected by the Museum will be used to generate oral history testimonies from photographers and community members. To date the project has acquired over 100 photographs by 18 artists and we intend for the photographs and oral histories to be jointly exhibited at the V&A and Black Cultural Archives (BCA). The five-year project is a partnership between the V&A and the BCA, largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Exhibitions and Displays

The V&A presents a broad range of exhibitions and displays which reflect many cultures and artistic practices. For example, Black British Style, Kylie and a forthcoming major exhibition on Masterpieces of Chinese Painting. In the future, an India Season is planned for 2015, where Indian arts and culture will be showcased in a series of displays and events.

Public Events

Public events seek to reflect the cultures represented in the V&A's collections, such as a thriving Black Heritage Programme which draws a crowd of 78% BAME participants, regular curatorial tours and talks reflecting different cultures and religions, MY V&A Tours given by refugee guides, at least one core-funded annual cultural festival (such as Diwali or Chinese New Year) per year, regular Friday Lates aimed at culturally diverse audiences (such as the Norouz Friday Late for Persian New Year in 2012) and monthly Friday evening concerts showcasing performances of World Music. We also programme tours in BSL and Touch Tours that include a practical workshop element in order to offer a programme accessible to people with disabilities.

Community and Social Inclusion Programme: Adults

We have recently re-launched our community and social inclusion programme and have started new on- and off-site community projects aimed at developing skills, inspiring creativity, reducing feelings of isolation and improving mental well-being. Examples include costume design classes for ex prisoners with Synergy Theatre Projects, a series of artist-led workshops for adults and young people with learning disabilities, a furniture design project with St Mungo's homeless hostels, free exhibition talks with complimentary refreshments as part of a mentoring scheme for ex-offenders, and workshops for older people suffering from dementia.

Community and Social Inclusion Programme: Young People

CreateFutures is a free programme of projects and events which offers young people, particularly those who are not in employment, education or training (NEETS) opportunities to acquire and develop creative skills and knowledge, share talents, raise aspirations, widen knowledge about the collections and exhibitions, and contribute to the life of the Museum. We work on four Arts Award accredited CreateFutures projects per year. These projects are led by artists, designers and other professionals working in

the creative industries, are related to the V&A's collections and headline exhibitions and are designed for young people at risk of exclusion. Some of the young people participating in projects go on to join CreateVoice, our youth forum which regularly meets the V&A's Director in order to inform youth programming at the Museum as well as curate events for their peers. Through CreateFutures, the V&A aims to strengthen links with local councils and continue to develop long term relationships with existing community organisations such as the Metropolitan Housing and Kids Company.

Special Educational Needs and Hospital Schools Sessions

In 2011/12 the V&A developed a programme for students with special educational needs based around star objects in the collections. The sessions combine multi-sensory resources to help students engage more meaningfully with the objects. They also incorporate the use of iPads, which allow the facilitator to show videos and play music to bring the collections to life. The range of objects used as the focus for each session reflects the breadth and diversity of the collections and includes 'Tipu's Tiger' (an 18th-century Indian automaton), a Mantua Court Dress, Chinese Dragon Robes and Iranian Picnic Tiles. The sessions have been designed to work on-site in the galleries and as outreach sessions in hospitals and other settings. We are also developing a learning programme around a V&A display for patients at the Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea. The display will feature artworks by three contemporary digital designers and the learning programme will focus on open-source coding to create artworks that will be projected in the hospital for patients and family members to view.

Interpretation

Participation is one of the core principles in our gallery interpretation strategy. Visitors' voices are present both in the development of the interpretation and in the continued life of galleries after opening. Opportunities for dialogue and consultation with visitors are actively sought. For example, the Europe 1600-1800 project has run focus groups with BAME and faith audiences, as well as people with personal heritage in continental Europe. Gallery interpretation plays an important role in enabling independent access to the V&A for visitors with disabilities. Our efforts are focussed on ensuring that insofar as possible the hands-on and digital interpretation is accessible to all our visitors by providing alternative formats where necessary, especially for visitors with visual impairments.

Appendix 1: Sample Programmes and Projects – V&A Museum of Childhood

Child in the World – AHRC Extended Collaborative Doctoral Award Programme

The V&A Museum of Childhood has partnered with Queen Mary, University of London to host three AHRC-funded doctoral studentships which aim to understand the changing ways in which children in Britain have understood their relationship to the wider world through their everyday lives. The three linked collaborative doctoral studentships study: (i) children, home and empire; (ii) children, migration and Diaspora; and (iii) children and global citizenship.

The research involves the re-interpretation of childhood objects and archival material; oral history collection; and participatory research involving primary and secondary school children in London's East End.

In addition to contributing to original academic research, outcomes include: running a series of academic seminars (2010–2014); The Child in the World conference (2013); the development of online learning resources (2014); input into temporary exhibitions and the re-display of the Museum's permanent galleries; and the creation of a Children's Forum (2014 onwards).

Exhibitions and Displays

The MOC presents a broad range of exhibitions and displays which reflect many cultures and artistic practices. For example, *World in the East End* (2002-05); *Khel: Toys from India* (2004); *Teen Knife Crime* (2012-13); *Afro Supa Hero* (2013-14) exploring Afro-Caribbean representation in super hero-based media; and *Hand Me over, Hand Me Down* (2014) looking at the adoption of Chinese babies through clothes, photos and ephemera.

Public Programme

The MOC also seeks funding support from external sources to run family workshops and events for 'hard-to-reach' audiences. For instance, our Family Explorers Programme (2009-2013) was funded by The Big Lottery and consisted of 4 strands: Wondertots - an under 5s programme that explored art, storytelling, and music targeting local families at risk of social exclusion; Grand Explorers – an after school programme for local grandparents and their grandchildren; Wordburst – a half term

programme which encouraged family literacy; and Making SENSE – workshops/events for families with children who have special educational needs.

Public events and festivals are organised through our Community and Social Inclusion Programme. Recent examples include: 'A Glimpse of Asia' to accompany 'Sense of Place' exhibition which targeted South Asian audience; and 'Fulfil My Dream' Iraqi Weekend - a collaborative event with the Iraqi Fine Artist Association, Evelyn Oldfield Foundation and the Children's Society. The focal point was an exhibition of 1000 paintings gathered from children living in Baghdad and throughout the Iraqi diasporas. The paintings were an expression of the childrens' experience of war and aspirations and hopes for the future of their country.

Community and Social Inclusion Programme

Since 2002, the MOC has run an innovative and ambitious Community and Social Inclusion Programme which includes long-term collaborations with local colleges and the creative industries; themed festivals and events; international artist exchange projects; and a well-received exhibition programme combining work of local artists/designers and community participation.

The Programme combines on- and off-site projects aimed at developing skills and confidence, inspiring creativity, reducing feelings of isolation, and improving mental well-being. The objective of the Community Programme is to work with local schools, community groups, support organisations and educational institutions, and to involve participants who are not traditional museum visitors - many of whom are at risk of social exclusion. Much of this work happens in artist-led participatory projects that create work for display or performance in the Museum.

Examples include: workshops with elders from Toynbee Hall; the annual Praxis New Voices Festival in partnership with London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Praxis Refugee Organisation; 'Sense of Place' – an international artist exchange developed in collaboration with the Harley Gallery in Nottinghamshire and A Fine Line, which involved two UK artists being sent to Bangladesh and India and three South Asian artists coming to the UK for 10 week residencies; and a long-term collaboration with Tower Hamlets College to facilitate the creative element of their ESOL/Childcare Courses (since 2006).

Special Educational Needs – Quiet Days

Quiet Day events at the MOC take place once a term and currently run at full capacity. Introduced in 2008, these events are externally funded and are attended by schools from London and beyond. Free teaching sessions, as well as SEN activity boxes and making activities have been developed for these events.

The Learning Team have also liaised with external agencies to reach new audiences, for example the organiser of the Inclusion Team of The Hackney Learning Trust (Specialist Teacher for those with Complex Needs and ASD)- who arranged for 26 children and their dedicated one-to-one assistants from different Hackney schools to attend for the first time. There has also been an increase in adult visitors and their carers on these days for example from Westminster Community Access. They currently service over 400 users per year.

Volunteers

The MOC has recently secured fixed term funding (from the Friends of the V&A) to further develop our volunteer programme. One strand of our volunteer programme is to extend our links with local agencies like the Hackney Work Placement scheme which places adults with additional needs into work place environments to help them build skills and confidence for future employment and/or increase their personal independence. This project has run on a small scale at the MOC since 2008.

Interpretation

With families and children as our primary target audience, interactivity and participation are core principles in our gallery interpretation strategy. Displays like our Families cases reflect the real lives of local families – their journeys, shared memories and treasured childhood objects.

The MOC offers multi-lingual signage of gallery introduction panels translated into the three dominate local languages (English, Somali and Bengali).

Large print text is used on all interpretation panels and we are increasingly using audio interpretation in temporary exhibitions.

Hands-on interactivity is key with our families audience, and it integrated throughout the permanent galleries. These low-tech inclusions are also popular with our SEN audiences and ESOL visitors.

A permanent Sensory Pod and Quiet Room is also on offer to support the needs of all visitors, but are particularly appreciated by SEN users.

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