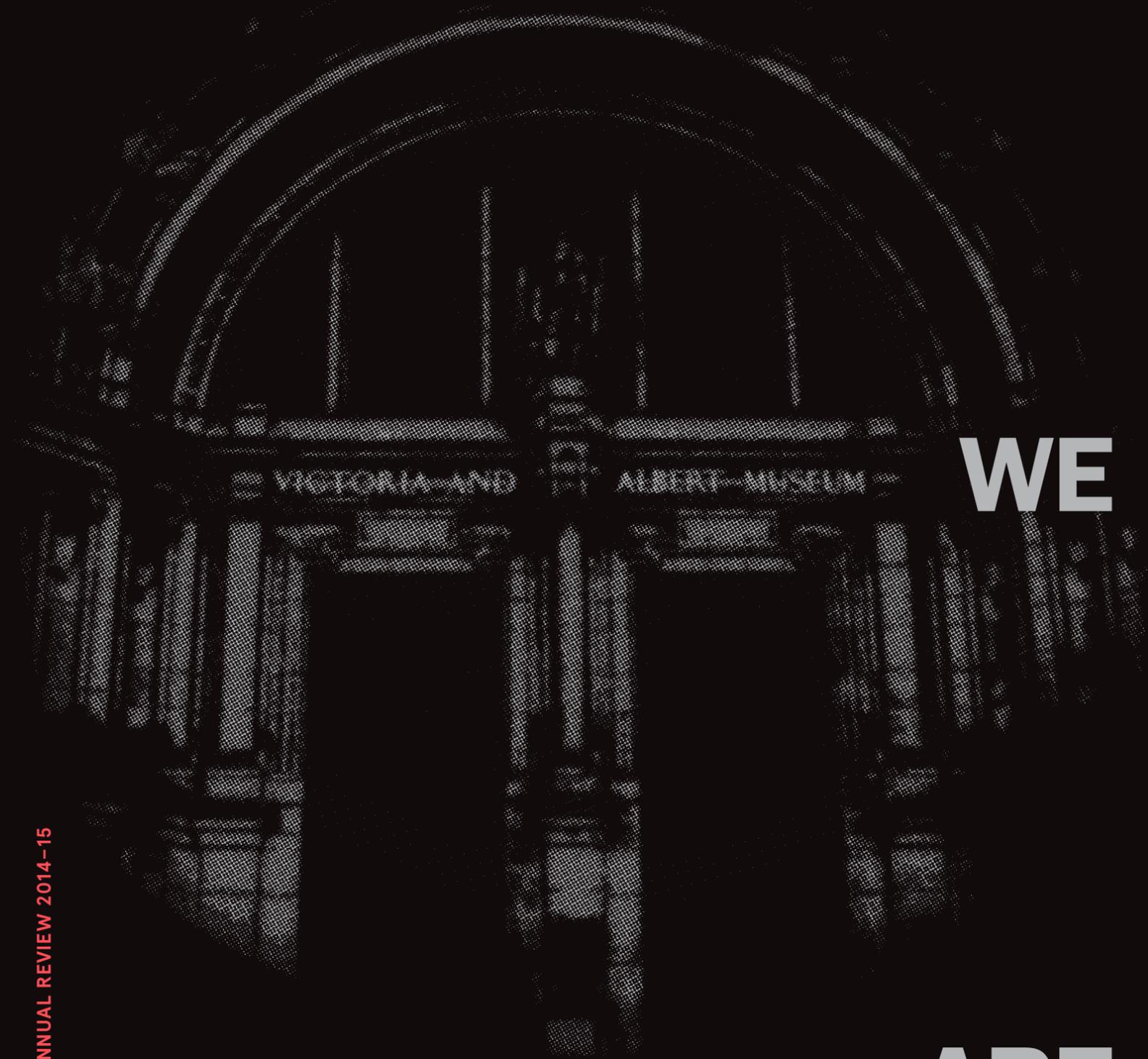




V&A

WHO



WE

ARE

V&A

V&A ANNUAL REVIEW 2014-15

V&A ANNUAL REVIEW 2014-15

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Chairman's foreword

The Paul and Jill Ruddock Gallery, Medieval & Renaissance, Room 50a



This is my last foreword after eight years as Chair and more than thirteen years on the Board of the V&A. The period has seen a remarkable transformation of the museum. We have completed more than 45 projects in our FuturePlan programme, including the creation of the Sackler Centre for arts education and spectacular renovations of galleries devoted to sculpture, jewellery, ceramics, furniture and art and design from the Medieval and Renaissance period, the Middle East and Britain.

Going forward, the museum is not slowing down. We are just a few years away from the opening of the first purpose-built museum for design in Scotland, V&A Museum of Design, Dundee, designed by architect Kengo Kuma. Construction work is well under way for a wonderful new courtyard entrance and exhibition space at the V&A in South Kensington, designed by Amanda Levette Architects. In 2017 we will open a dedicated gallery of design within the Shekou Design Museum in China, in partnership with the China Merchants Group. Looking further ahead, the V&A has ambitious plans for a new branch of the museum in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London. University College London, the University of the Arts, Sadler's Wells and the Smithsonian will also have a presence in the Park, creating a cultural and academic hub to match that of South Kensington.

This year's exhibition programme has yet again been exciting, stimulating and diverse. The V&A has shed new light on the work and influence of William Kent, John Constable and Horst P Horst, delighted many with 'Wedding Dresses 1775–2014' and provoked debate with 'Disobedient Objects', an exhibition about design for grass-roots social protest. 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty' was an outstanding success, with visitors and critics alike.

None of this would have been possible without the many dedicated world-class curators and museum staff that we are so lucky to have at the V&A, along with a senior management team under Martin Roth and his predecessor Sir Mark Jones, which has pursued the museum's vision with determination and tenacity. Our donors have been a constant support and many of our projects would not have been possible without them. I want to pay a special thanks to the Board of Trustees, as well as to those retired trustees with whom I have served. They have given generously of their time and expertise — academic, financial and commercial — and provided vital support for the museum's staff. I know that they will join me in thanking this talented group of people for all that they do.

Last year saw the highest number of visitors to the V&A in its 163-year history: 3.3 million — four times the level of fifteen years ago. The Museum of Childhood is also seeing record attendance with 450,000 visitors, three times the level of 2000. So while I am sad to be stepping down, I feel that the museum has rarely been stronger or more vibrant. My excellent successor in November 2015 will be Nicholas Coleridge CBE, current trustee of the V&A, and I know that he will take the museum on to new heights.

As you read through this year's Annual Review, you will get a sense of how the V&A is becoming so much more than its South Kensington origins — that through some thrillingly ambitious projects it is growing into a truly global museum, fit for the modern age and the future, yet one whose thinking is very much in accordance with its founding principles. The publication makes clear that through bold and dynamic planning, world-class scholarship and unified effort an extraordinary future, matching and exceeding its extraordinary recent past, awaits the V&A — in London, in Dundee, online and around the world.

To close, let me thank again all at the museum and every one of our supporters and visitors for helping to make the V&A, without doubt, the world's greatest museum of art and design.

Sir Paul Ruddock
Chairman, V&A

The Curtain Foundation Gallery, Ceramics Study Galleries, Room 136



A Message from the Director

Site sketch of the Stratford Waterfront area of the Olympicopolis project, part of the winning proposal submitted by Allies and Morrison. LLDC



The year 2014–15 has seen significant and exciting departures for the V&A. We have broken new ground, in quite literal terms, with the construction of the V&A Museum of Design, Dundee, in Scotland and the Shekou Design Museum in Shenzhen, China. We have also committed to create a new branch of the museum in east London, which will give more people more access to more of our collections, both historic and contemporary. “V&A East” will be one of the most innovative museum building projects to take place in Europe in the twenty-first century. We are already working hard to make the most of this wonderful opportunity to design galleries and archives that meet the needs and desires of our visitors. Back at “home” in South Kensington, we are entering into the final stages of restoration of our Europe 1600–1815 Galleries, and we are making great progress towards the opening of our Exhibition Road development. The latter project, as many of you know, will provide the South Kensington building with a spectacular new exhibition space framed by a welcoming and beautiful new courtyard entrance. We have also continued to push the boundaries of contemporary exhibition-making this year with the innovative ‘Disobedient Objects’ and landmark retrospectives on Constable and Alexander McQueen.

It is perhaps a cliché to say that none of these advances would be possible without the support of our many visitors, donors and staff — but it is no less true for that. This issue of the Annual Review, entitled *Who We Are*, reflects on the achievements we have made collectively and which we will make together in the future. The V&A is fortunate to have a loyal and large group of supporters and an ever-growing audience. I am always conscious of the responsibility that comes with such support to maintain the high standards of scholarship, design, education and curatorial work for which the V&A is known and respected worldwide. Saying “thank you” is not the end of the story — in return for every contribution, we make a lasting commitment. On this occasion, I would like to say a particular, heartfelt “thank you” to our outgoing Chairman, Sir Paul Ruddock, and make a commitment to continue the wonderful transformation of the V&A that he has done so much to support over the past decade. I hope you enjoy reading the thought-provoking series of articles that follow, especially the interview with Sir Paul that opens this Annual Review.

Martin Roth

Director, Victoria and Albert Museum

THE POWER

AND

ART OF

Josh Spero

PHILANTHROPY

WHO WE ARE

“That can be lumpy.” For a second, I think Sir Paul Ruddock is talking about the Great Bed of Ware, whose restoration he and his wife Jill funded — and which a young godson assumed he therefore got to sleep in. But no, even the museum’s most generous donors aren’t allowed to spend the night on its exhibits.

What *is* lumpy, however, is the way donations are processed through the museum’s balance sheet. This perhaps sounds less enticing than that abortive nocturnal sojourn, but there can be few things more attractive to the Chairman of the V&A than a bottom line swollen by philanthropy, allowing the museum’s work of explanation and transformation (in Sir Paul’s words) to continue.

As the strains of a soprano rise from the Brompton Oratory just across from our meeting room, I ask him whether he regrets that such massive philanthropy is now necessary for the V&A; it would be much sweeter, surely, if the government covered all its costs. Not at all, he fires back: first, the institution doesn’t rely on it, and second, “what it has allowed us to do are things that we never did before. If I go back to the period where we were entirely government-funded, the museum had leaking roofs and terrible cabinets and lighting. It was dusty. By the late 1990s South Kensington had under a million visitors a year”. This year, that figure is 3.3 million.

Museums today pin all kinds of hopes on philanthropy in the face of core cuts from central government, and the V&A is no exception: its grant-in-aid will have fallen from £44 million to £37 million by the end of the announced reductions, a decline in real terms of 25 per cent, and worse may come. But in 2013–14 the V&A recorded an increase of almost £4 million in fund-raising, to £14.5 million, and this year this has leapt to £28 million.

Sir Paul’s philanthropic engagement started over a cup of tea. Earlier in his financial career, which has taken in two major banks and his own pioneering hedge fund firm, Lansdowne Partners, he had phoned the museum to ask if he could help, and “a nice lady called Victoria Timberlake” invited him in. He soon became one of the V&A’s few patrons (now called the Director’s Circle); indeed, they could all have come in for a cup of tea and not have used up a pint of milk. From the handful in the mid-1990s, the number of Director’s Circle members has grown to over 170.

Gifts from private individuals and trusts have allowed the refurbishment of 75 per cent of the South Kensington galleries in the past two decades under the two stages of FuturePlan, the ongoing development programme. FuturePlan has been vital, Sir Paul says, for conceptualising and crystallising what the V&A could and needed to be: “If you’re doing it on a completely ad hoc basis, who’s to define your scope of ambition?”

As chairman, he has overseen (and supported) several acclaimed projects: the bright, generous Medieval & Renaissance Galleries; the innovative Furniture Gallery; and the Ceramics Galleries, with their towering glass cases of fragile masterworks. And he will just miss the opening of one further renovation, that of the Europe 1600–1815 Galleries.



The Dr Susan Weber Gallery for Furniture

“Olympicopolis should follow the conurbation of intellectual, artistic and scientific expertise that we see in South Kensington”



At the same time, Amanda Leveté’s architectural practice AL_A is opening up the Exhibition Road side with a new space for temporary exhibitions underneath a courtyard. And there are plans to restore the north-east quarter of South Kensington, where temporary shows sit at the moment, creating a new space for the display of more of the permanent collection. This last has been one of the keenest beneficiaries of charitable giving, with a syndicate of a dozen donors allowing regular purchases of art photography. Sir Paul seems guilty of understatement when he says: “We’ve come a long way since the 1990s in terms of how we engage patrons to help us.”

This may all sound sufficiently exhausting — from fixing roofs to future-proofing — but perhaps the most astonishing facet of the V&A during his tenure has been its almost imperial expansionary plans. Three projects have been conceived to take it to Scotland, China and (most dauntingly) east London.

V&A Museum of Design, Dundee “was a desire to show that we are a national museum”, to share the V&A collections as widely as possible and to contribute to the city’s development, alongside its universities, after a century of uncertainty. On Dundee’s waterfront will be a Kengo Kuma-designed building, funded largely by the Scottish government, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Dundee City Council and Creative Scotland — arguably the first major design museum in the UK outside London, and, it is hoped, the catalyst for the complete redesign of the waterfront and the regeneration of the city. The centrepiece will be Scottish Design Galleries, due to open in 2018.



Left: Medieval & Renaissance Galleries
Above: Exhibition Road site under construction

In Shenzhen, the V&A is working with China Merchants Group, advising on the creation of the first major design museum in China. The V&A will have a named gallery within the complex — a space where it can show some outstanding examples of twentieth and twenty-first-century design from around the world, its curatorial approach predicated on research and discussion with the region’s creative communities. It is very important to gain a foothold in China, says Sir Paul — presumably because the country is emerging as a centre for progressive thinking in design.

Hardest work of all might be a new museum a mere nine miles from the original. Boris Johnson, unwilling to squander the potential of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and desirous of a new Albertopolis (the South Kensington complex with its museums and the Albert Hall), has enticed national and international institutions to E20. “Olympicopolis” could end up with a UCL campus, a University of the Arts campus, a Sadler’s Wells, the first Smithsonian outside America — and a V&A. It should follow, says Sir Paul, “the conurbation of intellectual, artistic and scientific expertise” that we see in South Kensington, leading to a “fantastic” regeneration.

But doesn’t this all seem like the museum — and its chairman — is biting off more than it can chew? Sir Paul rejects this confidently: “If we were failing, you could criticise us, but we’re not failing.” You could take it, instead, as a sign of confidence in the resilience of the museum’s budget, its brand, its governance. He points out that two of the projects consume curatorial and managerial capacity, but are well-funded, and that Olympicopolis won’t happen if the government doesn’t open its wallet. It wouldn’t even take much: “A relatively small amount of money can create something quite extraordinary.”

While doing background reading for our interview, I came across something that I found quite extraordinary — but not in a positive sense. I say to Sir Paul that a V&A report contains the ambition to raise the average visitor donation to 22p, and before I can even get to an expression of shocked puzzlement, he jumps in: “One of my disappointments is that while we have very generous supporters, the average contribution to the donation boxes is 13p. A takeaway coffee costs about £2.50, but a visiting family of four is donating 50p [to the V&A] in total. It’s a challenge: when something is free, people don’t expect to give.”

Visitors to European museums may pay €10 to €15 (although their temporary exhibitions tend to be included), which at least ensures a steady income. Still, Sir Paul is “a great believer in free entry”. The V&A, then, must be more creative in how it gets visitors to donate. “If the average person gave 50p, we’d be getting £1.5 million extra a year — which would be very useful.”

Sir Paul was almost never chairman of the V&A, but was asked to consider it in 2007. He consulted the partners at his hedge fund business about taking up such a time-consuming position, and they told him to go for it. He could bring a childhood love of the V&A to the job, as well as his financial and strategic skills — in particular that sensitivity to risk which hedge funds demand in their expectation of rises and falls. This has led to his insistence on prudent budgeting: “When you run a partnership, it’s your own money that’s on the line, so you have, I think, a much more nuanced understanding of risk than if it’s somebody else’s money.”



He says, though, that his true skill lies elsewhere: “Fundamentally, a love of the art is the most important thing. The finances — and everything else — is just to facilitate an appreciation and a conservation of the amazing collections that we have.”

Towards the end of our conversation, I ask Sir Paul what he thinks his legacy as chairman will be. He talks about “a sound financial footing” and “the vibrancy and the fabric of the museum”, but then moves on to an unexpectedly detailed disquisition on the renovations he has seen undertaken. He pays tribute to Moira Gemmill, the V&A’s director of projects and design from 2002 to 2014, who was killed in a road accident in April 2015. He talks about the 30-year lifespan of galleries, and goes on to describe in learned, enthusiastic terms the glass technology used to house the Ardabil Carpet, the galleries’ pinpoint LED lights and the formatting of the labelling of individual items.

He takes a collector’s interest in these matters, as indeed he might: he grew up near fine National Trust houses in Warwickshire, acquiring a taste for the medieval, and bought his first item when he was about 30: “You could still buy quite a good medieval work of art for not much more than a painting from a Royal College of Art degree student.”

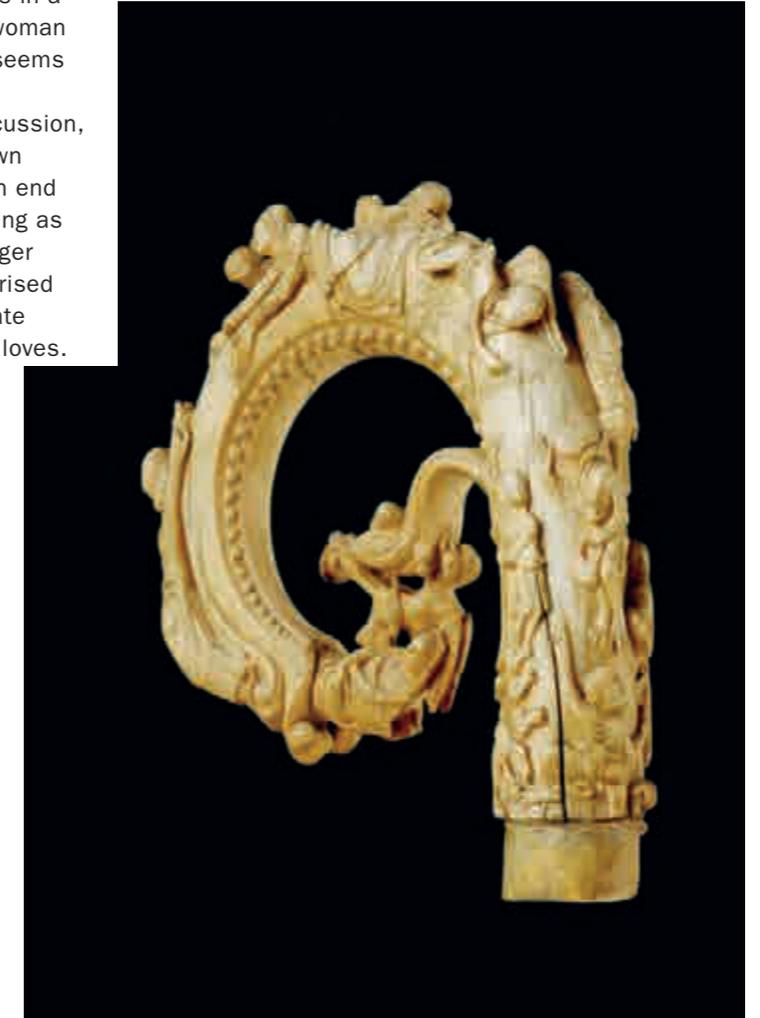
When I suggest Sir Paul takes me to some of his favourite galleries to conclude our interview, it doesn’t surprise me that we end up in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries. The four Wolsey Angels, commissioned for Cardinal Thomas Wolsey’s tomb and commandeered by Henry VIII for his own uncompleted burial monument, are standing in the Paul and Jill Ruddock Gallery. He tells me how two came from a dealer and two from a golf club, and marvels at the other exhibits.

Above left: architect’s impression of the Shekou Design Museum in Shenzhen © Maki and Associates
 Left: V&A Museum of Design, Dundee design by Kengo Kuma and Associates © KKAA/Design Dundee Ltd

In the William and Eileen Ruddock Gallery, named for his parents, he takes a very specific joy in the objects on display. He points to what was formerly known as the Eltenberg Reliquary, a Romanesque tabernacle, and talks about its luxuriant enamelling and whalebone carved ivories, before trying to guess its year: “I would have said 1160.” The Gloucester Candlestick, tall and finely wrought with a fantastical array of apes, winged dragons and conjured creatures, is important, he says, because it shows how we have underestimated the relevance of the celtic tradition in medieval art, overrating the Roman. He takes particular pleasure in the St Nicholas Crozier, an shepherd’s ivory crook that has scenes from the gospels and the saint’s life cycle on its own curve, a medieval marriage of form and message. There is a delicacy of carving and subject — the baby Jesus in a bough, the Annunciation to the Shepherds, the woman reaching for Nicholas’s charitable money as he seems to slip away — that is moving.

Earlier, when we had been finishing our discussion, Sir Paul talked about “the guillotine” coming down and his time as a trustee of the V&A reaching an end — thirteen years in all — and how he’d miss being as involved as he has been. After such a tour of eager erudition as I’ve just received, I’d hardly be surprised if his next move is one that allows him to dedicate himself wholly and exclusively to the art that he loves.

“The St Nicholas Crozier” carved ivory staff head, c1150-1170



Josh Spero is editor of *Spear’s* magazine, *Tatler’s* art critic and the author of *Second-Hand Stories* (Unbound, 2015)

THRIVING AGAINST THE FUNDING ODDS

Tim Reeve

WHO WE ARE

So, here we are again, with a government “spending review” looming large, and the case to maintain levels of grant-in-aid needing to be restated with added vigour and vision. Was it really only five years ago that the tectonic plates of public funding for museums and other cultural organisations shifted so dramatically? Remember, these were cuts ranging from fifteen per cent for national museums to an extraordinary 34 per cent for English Heritage — a tipping point that led inexorably to its risky new venture as two separate organisations. As the *Guardian* put it: “The arts are a big loser in today’s spending review, facing a cut of 30 per cent, which will be seen as devastating to England’s cultural landscape.” Therefore, as we approach SR15 — for that is its catchy and unthreatening title — presumably we do so looking across that very desolate cultural landscape, making a perfectly compelling and straightforward case that further cuts cannot be countenanced...

Well, no. Museums have not just survived, they have thrived — however you choose to measure success. Record visitor numbers and revenues, fabulous and scholarly exhibitions, eye-catching acquisitions, vibrant research and learning programmes, new wings and buildings sprouting from the ground from London to Dundee, growing membership schemes, TripAdvisor ratings through the roof, and the engine of UK in-bound tourism driving London to be the “best city in the world”. So what’s going on here, and where is the pain? The picture is complex, and seems almost counter-intuitive.

First, there is, at least to some extent, a “lag effect” from the events of 2010 — the formation of a coalition government and the so-called age of austerity. The way museums work, along with other cultural and educational organisations, is well researched, carefully

considered, methodical and requires lengthy lead times for key projects and programmes. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that museums are making some of their hay on a momentum generated some time ago. So, if the pain is not visible now, it does not necessarily mean that it isn’t going to appear — and no one should be complacent about that, least of all the public funding decision-makers.

But I would prefer to look at the second, and more positive, effects. Let’s start by facing an inconvenient truth, which is that organisations such as ours do sometimes need to be pushed, quite firmly, towards a more efficient, effective, fleet-of-foot, modern and streamlined way of doing what we do. I don’t want to dwell on details, but those involved will concede that they were handed a copper-bottomed justification for implementing some difficult but necessary changes that they’d always wanted to realise. It turns out that most of us could take a little more pain than we had thought, and are undoubtedly more effective in some areas and activities as a consequence. We just don’t want to say it too loudly, lest government assumes we can take the same medicine again, and as we all know, medicine in large and repeated doses can lose its power to cure.

Thriving against the funding odds

Object handlers and curatorial staff install ‘Constable: The Making of a Master’ at the V&A, September 2014





Top: staff in the V&A Café
Above: audience members at a V&A lecture

The most interesting (and I assume unintended) consequence of 2010, though, was the effect that it has begun to have on the funding model for museums, and the very positive cultural impact that should follow in due course. A tipping point has been reached, or is fast approaching, which sees the balance between public funding, revenue through fund-raising activities, income generated through museum activities and — in the case of the V&A — a growing endowment start to even out. This mixed economy of support — “troika” if you prefer — could be the model for sustainable and vibrant cultural institutions for decades to come *if* it can remain balanced.

First, in terms of the grant-in-aid leg of the tripod — this gives a level of ongoing public funding support that tells us we are custodians of valued and much-loved public cultural assets that are of great benefit to the UK economy, and the burgeoning creative economy, which has been the success story of recent years. Of equal importance is the support it gives to our way of life and our belief in the role of knowledge and its ability to inspire. This is the funding stream that should protect the assets — our staff, the collections themselves and the buildings in which they are so beautifully displayed.

The second strand is the one that seeks to grow our network of long-term supporters, from our Friends of the V&A through to corporate partners, trusts and foundations as well as individuals who support us annually or give to our major capital and endowment campaigns. This is about the long term. It is about expanding a V&A community who want to belong and who want to contribute, and the creation of a museum culture that is constantly seeking to understand a complex web of desires and interactions in dialogue with its support network, not just broadcasting to it.

The third and final strand invites us to become more creative, ambitious and entrepreneurial in how we generate our own income, and this should be a liberating and enticing prospect for any forward-thinking institution. Museum brands have been carefully nurtured over decades. They are imbued with a depth of knowledge, quality, style, authenticity — even glamour — which, if carefully developed, protected and deployed, can be so much more than chic shops and well-appointed restaurants (vital as those are as, among other things, leitmotifs of modern cultural experiences). This permission to take risks (and, by

implication, be prepared to fail), and to see the value of what we have beyond our walls, is what led to the V&A's collaboration with the China Merchants Group for a new design museum in Shenzhen, or to develop a new “learning academy” alongside our post-graduate programmes and free schools programmes, which will pull together an astounding range of paid-for courses and activities into an entity that will be comfortably more than the sum of its individual parts. Not everything will succeed, but the need to explore and innovate is giving rise to brilliant new ideas.

I'm not suggesting that these three areas of funding should be equal, but that all of them are necessary and should be fully integrated, understood and respected parts of the museum ecosystem, and, crucially, that no one aspect should become dominant if a “virtuous circle” is to be created. This cycle places great emphasis on an underpinning level of public support to safeguard, expand and understand the collections that we are tasked under statute to protect. This, in turn, gives us a platform supported by, and contributing to, our income-generating potential — to create the distinctive and authentic experiences and programmes that history and deep audience insight tell us our visitors crave. This, finally, will create stronger, deeper relationships with our audiences, enabling us to develop long-term plans, to invest in the museum, its collections, its research, its programmes, its talent and expertise, its infrastructure, in order to deliver our mission: to be recognised as the world's leading museum of art, design and performance, and to enrich people's lives by promoting research, knowledge and enjoyment of the designed world to the widest possible audience.

Tim Reeve has been the V&A's Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer since August 2013. He was previously Director of Historic Properties at English Heritage

A

JOYOUS

Rachel Potts

PROCESS

WHO WE ARE

Rachel Potts tells the story of the saving of the Wolsey Angels and the Wedgwood Collection

Thomas Wolsey was Archbishop of York, a cardinal, chief adviser to Henry VIII and consequently vastly wealthy. In 1524 he commissioned the Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Rovezzano to make him a tomb that would rival anything in Europe. It was inspired by Henry VII's Westminster memorial, but far outstripped it in grandiosity. Bronze angels were made to sit atop nine-foot columns surrounding Wolsey's effigy.

Ultimately, the cardinal died on the way to a hearing for treason and was buried in a wooden coffin instead. Henry VIII made a plan for Benedetto to reconfigure elements of the tomb into an even more spectacular one for himself, but was also thwarted by fate: Henry died before its completion. Parts were later sold, and the angels were not seen again.

That is, not until the 1990s, when two angels were stolen from the gateposts of the entrance to Wellingborough Golf Club, Northamptonshire, which had come to own all four. Their significance was unknown at this point, as remained the case when the stolen pair resurfaced at Sotheby's in 1994, catalogued as anonymous "Italian Renaissance-style" pieces. They journeyed to France, and a Parisian dealer showed them to art historian Francesco Caglioti, who recognised them as Benedetto's work. Wolsey's seized property records helped to join the dots, and the pair still at the golf club were identified in 2008. The V&A's Keeper of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass, Paul

Williamson, describes the discovery and reunion of all four angels as "astonishing". After a fund-raising target of £5 million was set, they were temporarily displayed in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries at the V&A.

Significant funds from the Friends of the V&A (£200,000) and the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts (£100,000) provided essential momentum and were boosted by £2 million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and £500,000 from the Art Fund, in addition to a gift in memory of Melvin R. Seiden and support from V&A Members, individuals and trusts.

Wolsey had been in the public's mind in 2014 — thanks largely to Hilary Mantel's Man Booker Prize-winning novel *Wolf Hall*, which had been adapted for stage to great acclaim. Understanding Mantel's potential influence, Jane Lawson, Director of Development at the V&A, involved the author in the Wolsey Angels campaign, and Mantel thus wrote and lectured on their importance.

On 10 July 2014 the actor portraying Wolsey in the RSC's production of *Wolf Hall*, Paul Jesson, stepped in for a photocall to launch the appeal. The public responded to all of this activity with a collective contribution of over £60,000 through a public appeal, on-site donations and purchasing £1 "Save the Wolsey Angels" badges. And in February 2015 the angels were saved for the nation and became part of the V&A's collections.

Left: Benedetto da Rovezzano, one of four candle-bearing angels originally designed for the tomb of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, 1524–1529



Actor Paul Jesson adopts his role of Cardinal Wolsey from the RSC productions of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up The Bodies* at the Aldwych Theatre, London, as he visits the Wolsey Angels on temporary display in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, 10 July 2014



Wedgwood teapots (front to back): Brewster shape teapot in white jasper with pale green dip, 1785–1790; Queens ware satsuma shape teapot with design by Colonel Crealock, 1875; Barlaston shape teapot and cover in “Summer Sky” pattern, 1955 © Art Fund. Photograph: Phil Sayer

They are “undoubtedly among the most important items we’ve acquired in terms of the national heritage in a long time”, says Williamson — and now stand near a fountain also attributed to Benedetto. He points to their “beautiful faces” and, most importantly, their link to Wolsey and the best-known British monarch in history.

Surface analysis has been carried out and the cleaning and harmonisation of the figures is now underway. Once conservation is complete the angels will move from their current location in Room 50a to Room 63 of the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, where they will help to articulate important international links between artists, patrons and the creative process in the sixteenth century.

THE RETAIL VISION of Josiah Wedgwood — world-famous ceramics manufacturer, social reformer and entrepreneur — thrilled and absorbed eighteenth-century London. The humble craftsman from Burslem, Staffordshire, achieved breakthroughs in the science and technology of his trade, mastered logistics to get his products out of Staffordshire and into the world, and went on to eclipse the great European ceramics producers of Meissen and Sèvres. An archive, begun in 1759, tracing his experiments, creations, letters, documents and works — along with the output of his company for the next 250 years — is now accessible to the public at the Wedgwood Museum on the firm’s “World of Wedgwood” complex in Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent.

The archive was very nearly dispersed into the private market when Waterford Wedgwood plc collapsed in January 2009 and the Wedgwood Group Pension Plan inherited its £134m liability. The debt passed to its only solvent associated company, the Wedgwood Museum, via five employees’ pension plans. Several years of legal wrangling later, the estate’s administrator agreed

to sell the collection to the nation — providing £15.75 million was secured by 1 November 2014.

With the inclusion of a £1 million grant, the Art Fund raised more than £13 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and private trusts and foundations. On 1 September 2014 it launched a public appeal for the last £2.74 million. With the campaign supplemented by significant press coverage, much of it emphasising that UNESCO lists the Wedgwood Collection on its Memory of the World Register, public donations to save it came in at record speed. On 3 October 2014 the appeal reached its target. The V&A has been gifted the collection thanks in part to its reputation as a centre of excellence in ceramics and related scholarship, and has loaned it to the Wedgwood Museum on a permanent basis.

“I don’t think we felt the need to exaggerate or to make the campaign sound more exciting than it already was,” explains Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund. “The quality of the collection, the historical importance of Wedgwood as a phenomenon, the very real fact of a clock ticking and the strong likelihood that if we missed the deadline, Christie’s would actually go to market [with the collection] — their auction catalogue had been prepared [for print] — was enough.”

DEUCHAR BELIEVES that fund-raising for the arts is in a new phase based on a “joyous process”, perhaps linked to the proliferation and popularity of the online crowd-funding model, which may have helped to encourage a culture of giving to cultural causes. He also feels that art and national collections increasingly “sit at the heart of British life”.

The recent growth in the number of V&A Members, from 57,000 to 61,000, supports this perspective. Their backing, alongside that of other important supporters, is key to acquisitions-related funding, Jane Lawson says, highlighting a magnificent Napoleonic medal cabinet saved from export with £534,000 raised between January and July 2014 — an important addition to the V&A’s new Europe 1600–1815 Galleries.

Rachel Potts is a London-based writer and deputy editor of *V&A Magazine*

HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A FASHION EXHIBITION?

WHO WE ARE

Claire Wilcox

In September 2000 American *Vogue* published a portfolio of images by Annie Leibovitz entitled *How many people does it take to design a dress?* Various designers, including Alexander McQueen, were invited to select their indispensable others — the creative teams and confidants that helped nuance their particular style of fashion. Yves Saint Laurent chose Pierre Bergé, Catherine Deneuve and his faithful studio assistant. Miuccia Prada asked to be photographed with a mirror. McQueen, to Leibovitz's dismay, invited 27 people along — plus two dogs that rampaged through the set. The notion was not a new one. From the early twentieth century, the pages of fashion and society magazines often showed couturiers at work in their ateliers, or among their models and muses. Poiret, known as the “Pasha of Paris”, was depicted amid the Oriental splendour of his showrooms with his wife Denise, telling *Vogue* in 1913: “She is the expression of all my ideals.” In the 1930s Chanel was snapped with the San Tropez set, and Schiaparelli among the Surrealists, while Christian Dior was shown conducting fittings in his studio while his *directrice* and *vendeuses* stood admirably by. Such publicity pictures gave the impression of a privileged insight into the designers' creative practice, but were in fact as styled and controlled as fashion shoots.

Leibovitz's photograph of McQueen among his creative milieu in his Shoreditch studio gets rather deeper under the skin. It was taken at the cusp of the new century, midway through his twenty-year career and at a time when the designer was particularly involved with the V&A. The model Liberty Ross wore an embroidered hessian dress from his No. 13 collection (spring/summer 1999) for the shoot. Inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement (McQueen was particularly fond of the V&A's William Morris room), it was featured in one of the museum's first Fashion in Motion events in 1999. A coiled metal corset by the jeweller Shaun Leane, McQueen's close friend and collaborator, is semi-revealed by the edge of the camera's framing. Like many of McQueen's one-off creations and showpieces, the corset had multiple lives. It was first modelled with a grey wool skirt and skating shoes in *The Overlook* (autumn/winter 1999), a collection inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, and took its place inside a glass cube, complete with snow and ice; it was then worn for Fashion in Motion in 2001 (the last to be staged as a walk-through in the museum). More recently, the corset took pride of place in the 'Cabinet of Curiosities',

which formed the heart of 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty' in its manifestations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2011 and the V&A in 2015.

The photograph included Sarah Burton, who started as an intern from Central Saint Martins in 1996 and became creative director on his death in 2010. She advised on 'Savage Beauty' as only someone who had helped to cut, pin and stitch many of the 250 pieces on display could. The late Isabella Blow, who bought McQueen's 1992 graduation collection in its entirety (it was delivered to her in black bin bags), wore an acid-yellow beaded and horsehair dress that was displayed in the “Primitivism” gallery in 'Savage Beauty', among skulls and bones. Katy England, McQueen's stylist and aesthetic sounding board from his first collections to long after the Givenchy years, advised on the “London” gallery, a new addition specific to 'Savage Beauty' at the V&A. It was filled with her own clothes, which, like so many of the pieces in the exhibition, were given away by McQueen in lieu of payment. As she recalled of the early days: “We were never paid; it was really personal. He was brave and courageous, and said, 'we can do whatever we want'”. This fearlessness was evident in his guest editing of *Dazed & Confused* magazine's “Fashion-able” issue in September 1998, which included the first fashion shoot (by Nick Knight) to feature people with disabilities. One of the models was Paralympic athlete Aimee Mullins, whose carved prosthetic legs, inspired by Grinling Gibbons carvings that McQueen had seen in the V&A, also found sanctuary in the 'Cabinet of Curiosities'. Jefferson Hack, the founder of *Dazed & Confused*, recalled the photoshoot in his essay for the V&A's publication, *Alexander McQueen*. Strangely, the book, like the photograph, also involved 27 contributors — but no dogs.

London gallery, 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty'



'Coiled' Corset, *The Overlook* A/W 1999–2000, Shaun Leane for Alexander McQueen

How many people does it take to make a fashion exhibition?

In Leibovitz's image McQueen paid tribute to his close working team, but also his wider artistic peer group, for his work is impossible to understand fully without being seen in the context of London's Young British Artists movement of the 1990s. It is no surprise, therefore, that he should include the Chapman Brothers, whose studio was next to his in Hoxton, or to discover that he once made clothes for their mutant figurines. Sam Taylor-Johnson (née Taylor-Wood) is also present. Her time-lapse digital video of fruit decaying into a mass of rotting matter, *Still Life* (2001), inspired the flower-filled dresses of McQueen's Sarabande collection (spring/summer 2007). As the catwalk show progressed, the blooms fell on to the catwalk, where they withered and died, a metaphor perhaps for fashion's transience. Pieces from this collection were shown in the "Naturalism" gallery of 'Savage Beauty', displayed in mahogany cases like fragile specimens. We allowed the hastily attached silk flowers that fell from the dresses as they were being installed to also lie where they had fallen. During Taylor-Johnson's visit to the exhibition, she silently contemplated the designer's melancholy tribute to her work.

What McQueen really wanted to demonstrate with his Leibovitz grouping was that his singular vision was achievable because of his ability to recognise talent in others, whether artists, prosthetic makers, pattern cutters or milliners, and because of his charismatic powers of persuasion. Each individual in the photograph had a specific role to play in facilitating his shows, whether practical, technical, artistic or emotional. But it would not be right to suggest that he was a despot, for many of his peers in the photograph had highly successful careers beyond McQueen. However, the risk-taking artistry of his presentations clearly offered enough excitement — and enough time in-between to recover



Annie Leibovitz's photograph of Alexander McQueen with his contemporaries and his team in his London studio, *American Vogue*, September 2000. Back row (l-r): Jake Chapman, Dinos Chapman, Kim Sion, Deepika Patel, Jefferson Hack, Catherine Brickhill, Leslie Johnson, Daniel Landin, Sidonie Barton, Trino Verkade, Sarah Burton (née Heard), Jenne Osterhoudt, David Cooper, Isabella Blow. Centre row (l-r): Sam Taylor-Johnson (née Taylor-Wood), Amie Witton-Wallace (née Witton), Liberty Ross, Annabelle Neilson, Guido Palau, Elsa-Mia Elphick, Sam Gainsbury, John Gosling, Sarah Harnarnee, Anne Deniau. Seated front (l-r): Shaun Leane, Val Garland, Andrew Heather. Pictured with Alexander McQueen (far right), his two dogs Juice and Minter © Annie Leibovitz/Contact Press Images

“McQueen paid tribute to his close working team, but also his wider artistic peer group”

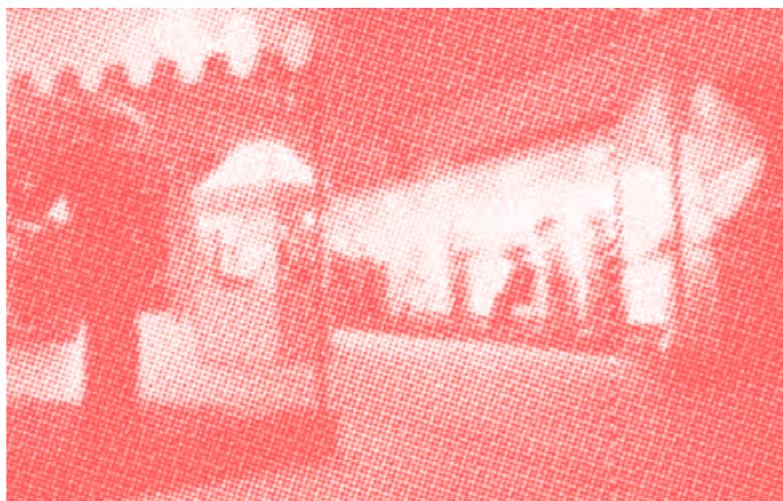
— for his fellow creatives and compatriots to remain enthralled by being part of them, whatever the cost.

By extension, Leibovitz's image acts as a leitmotif for 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty', for many of those in the photograph were involved in making the exhibition, either on a creative level, or as advisers and lenders. These included the exhibition's creative director, Sam Gainsbury, McQueen's show producer for many years; Guido Paulo, who created the chilling face masks for the mannequins; John Gosling, aka DJ Mekon, whose soundscape transformed the exhibition into something between a club and a ghost train ride; and Daniel Landin, the lighting director who transmuted what was already spectacular scenography, featuring Gothic mirrors, a baronial hall and a ghostly apparition of Kate Moss, into something akin to a film set. Indeed, during installation, as the lighting began to throw dark shadows and highlight the intricate details of McQueen's extraordinary creations, and the layered sound began to infiltrate the galleries, the project team felt moved to pause, and consider what had been created. Like McQueen's 27-strong team, we too had pulled out all the stops, for we felt we owed it to him to make it good.

In light of Leibovitz's image, one might ask how many people it takes to make a fashion exhibition at the V&A. The staff group shot taken in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries for last year's Annual Review could well offer an approximation, for exhibitions on the scale of 'Savage Beauty' have enormous institutional impact as they evolve through the different stages of their lifespan, steadily gathering more and more people and departments into the maelstrom, before emerging fully formed, as beautiful and ephemeral as a butterfly.



Below: Cabinet of Curiosities gallery, 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty' at the V&A
Bottom: 'A Lady of Fashion: Heather Firbank and What She Wore between 1908 and 1921' at the V&A, 1960



'Savage Beauty' was the most recent of a stellar series of exhibitions at the V&A in the past few years featuring fashion and dress, from 'Hollywood Costume' and 'David Bowie is' to 'The Glamour of Italian Fashion', the museum's first exhibition on that country's lavish sartorial history. Currently, we have 'Shoes: Pleasure and Pain', inspired by the merging of two diasporas, the European and Asian shoe collections in the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion. With each success, the ambition increases to create exhibitions that are both spectacular and rigorously researched, enlightening and entertaining. The role of the curator has also become more complex, as Deborah Landis asserted: "It has evolved to that of an artistic director. We seek to create kinetic production rather than a static exhibition, and an active engagement rather than passive spectatorship."

It should not be surprising that fashion exhibitions at the V&A are well-attended, given the Fashion Gallery has been enduringly popular since opening in 1962, shortly after 'A Lady of Fashion', an exhibition of Edwardian dress belonging to the socialite Heather Firbank, took the museum by surprise and had to be extended. Cecil Beaton's 1971 show 'Fashion: An Anthology' was another landmark, its theatricality setting a new bar for exhibition design, and resulting in the acquisition of the most important collection of haute couture in the museum's history. The plethora of fashion exhibitions since then has been matched by a growing appreciation of fashion's social, historical and cultural significance and an increased respect for our shared sartorial history. Perhaps the only downside is that designers are less generous than they used to be

— because they are busily building their own archives. Alexander McQueen's, for example, has evolved from bin bags and rails in direct sunlight (I remember trying to wrestle a chewed-up shoe from one of his dogs) to a state-of-the-art archive more than capable of supporting shows such as 'Savage Beauty'.

Deborah Orr observed in a recent *Guardian* column that "Alexander McQueen's work is a strange and wonderful gift to human culture". It was also a gift to the museum, for while his work was spellbinding on the catwalk, it also looked extraordinarily magical on display, with its virtuoso tailoring, breathtakingly inventive construction techniques and exquisite embroidery more than adequately rewarding close scrutiny. While the exhibition can be deconstructed into its constituent parts — objects, set, film, sound, graphics — the emotional impact 'Savage Beauty' had on the 493,043 visitors who saw it at the V&A (and the legions who saw it in New York) continues, on some level, to be inexplicable.

Why was the exhibition so powerful? Was it because those beautiful, extraordinary clothes were imbued with McQueen's dark spirit? Was it the soaring imagination of his catwalk shows? Or was it, perhaps, simply a case of the teamwork of a creatively brilliant generation of British artists and designers that McQueen permitted to share his vision and gave licence to transgress. Tellingly, in Leibovitz's image, he is not positioned at the centre like the couturiers of previous generations, but to the side, throwing a ball for his dog, Juice, whose muscular body is freeze-framed mid-air. McQueen is smiling, his outstretched arm like that of a ringmaster lobbing a grenade into the world of fashion.

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THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSION

Dr Ruth Adams

WHO WE ARE

“A book with its pages always open, and not shut” is how the V&A’s founder Sir Henry Cole envisaged his museum. A committed utilitarian, he was driven by a powerful ethical zeal to make the world a better and more beautiful place, and to be *useful*. His museum was to be a dynamic vehicle for social and material progress.

Cole’s vision appears to animate recent initiatives at the V&A — exhibitions such as ‘Disobedient Objects’ and ‘All of This Belongs to You’ and the increase in the Rapid Response Collecting of objects of contemporary significance. These represent not just a revived emphasis on the political and the social at South Kensington, but also stress the importance of opening up the museum, its spaces and its procedural norms both to scrutiny and to previously marginalised communities. They tackle current issues through an examination of art and design objects, from the unique and spectacular to the cheap and banal, encouraging questions and debate.

Catherine Flood, co-curator of ‘Disobedient Objects’, an exhibition about art and design produced by grass-roots social movements, asserts that a key motivation was to introduce different narratives into the galleries, to give space to “history from below”, and, in doing so, encourage discussion. Conscious of the dangers of appropriating — and perhaps even distorting — the cultures and narratives of marginalised and resistant communities, the show’s organisers engaged in collaborative research with the individuals and organisations contributing the objects for display. Inspired by the principles of “participatory action research”, political activists were permitted and indeed encouraged to help to shape the content and form of the exhibition in a genuinely fundamental fashion; their contributions far exceeding the customary token inclusion of a few quotes on information panels. The curators took seriously their ethical responsibilities to

the exhibitors — they should not be put at any risk, and complex ideas and associations should not be (over) simplified for ease of communication. Lazy associations likely to reinforce stereotypes (such as equating the Middle East with political and religious strife) were to be avoided as far as possible. Consideration had to be given also to diplomacy within the exhibition design, to who or what might be shown next to one another, and the effects that that proximity and juxtaposition might have on interpretation.

The curators’ intentions were to encourage critical thinking by introducing into the museum ideas and objects that were surprising and even shocking. Although the range of its holdings is dizzyingly diverse, the V&A’s collecting policy broadly tends to prioritise aesthetics and quality of craft production over political or social significance. In ‘Disobedient Objects’, the exhibits were characterised by the communal, pragmatic and sometimes rough nature of their manufacture as much as their political content. The challenge these types of objects pose to museum taxonomies is one element of the resistance they offer to prevailing political power structures both within and beyond the institution.

The social and political dimension

Installation view of ‘Disobedient Objects’



Entrance to ‘Disobedient Objects’ at the V&A, designed by Barnbrook



Tables and chairs in use during *Testing Space no. 1*, with *Women for Refugee Women* (2014) and seating both installed in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries by muf architecture/art as part of the project *More Than One (Fragile) Thing at a Time* for 'All of This Belongs to You' at the V&A

Other established norms of museum exhibition policy were subject to critical scrutiny, and in some instances foregone, deemed inappropriate to the context. Reflecting the view of some of the lenders that “use is preservation”, visitors were allowed to take photos of the exhibits, and interact with some of them, making the gallery an active space. This unusual degree of licence was apparently appreciated and respected: nothing was damaged. Corporate sponsorship of the show was, understandably, problematical, and the exhibition’s marketing needed to be sensitive. After much discussion it was decided that a small selection of carefully chosen merchandise would be sold in the main museum shop.

All involved believed it important that this be an open and ongoing project for which the exhibition itself was merely the start. Exhibiting and collecting these dissident objects represents a step towards keeping them and the stories they represent part of “official” history, making it less easy for them to be erased. Displaying such political objects within a national museum can bring them to the attention of a much broader audience, and facilitate the circulation of radical ideas beyond their original, often very localised contexts. Actively encouraging this wider reach and an “afterlife” for the exhibition were the yellow “how to” guides given away free to visitors, containing instructions on constructing tear-gas masks, bucket pamphlet bombs, human blockades and other forms of D-I-Y protest technology. On a recent trip to Rio de Janeiro I visited Casa Nuvem, a communally run social space for local political groups. One of the walls had been papered with these yellow sheets — evidence of the exhibition’s success in these terms.

‘All of This Belongs to You’ encouraged visitors to engage with objects and collections that they might otherwise overlook, or take for granted. Scattered throughout the South Kensington site, a mixture of artistic commissions and politically resonant objects generated some surprising associations and, here and there, took people on a treasure hunt through a few of the less visited areas of the museum. The experimental nature of this type of curating reflects the novel thinking of the team behind it — although, as its co-curator Corinna Gardner observes, there is something very traditional, perhaps even conservative, about a mode of display that puts things in glass cases and places an emphasis on relationships between objects. That said, done with care and wit, as it was here, this approach can still produce radical outcomes.

Although an exhibition with a political edge, the curators assert that they are offering information about — rather than a reading of — objects. They are not telling the public what to think, but giving them the tools to think. Related events were designed to generate debate and an understanding of design in its broadest context, with a focus on issues such as the relationship between public and private. These are issues that do not map neatly on to the ideologies of particular political parties, or even broader categories of left and right. Vexed topics such as freedom of information or the right to privacy unite and divide people across the political spectrum.



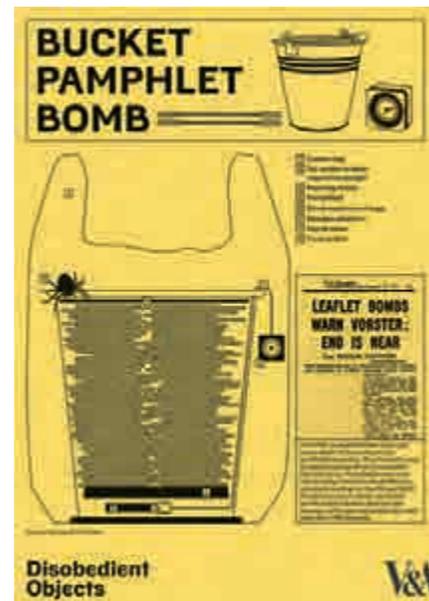
The artist Bob and Roberta Smith at 'Election Night Special' Friday Late, 7 May 2015

That said, the statement ‘All of This Belongs to You’ is unavoidably political, and, in the context of the recent general election, could arguably be interpreted as opposing the cutting of public services and increasing privatisation. These are sentiments that can also be discerned in some of the gallery interventions. The comfortable seating inserted by muf architecture/art into the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, for example, created a different atmosphere in the museum and facilitated an experience neither monetised nor pressured. Visitors were free to sit for as long as they liked and watch the world go by, read, sketch, even sleep.

‘All of This Belongs to You’ is a deliberately ambiguous title, playful, yet prompting interrogation. It does beg the question of who the “you” is in this context — particularly given that an estimated 50 per cent of visitors to the museum are from overseas. Just what does the ownership of “all of this” mean in real terms? Does it promise access, and if so, how much? Does it imply an obligation of protection and conservation?



Below: *How to Guide: Bucket Pamphlet Bomb*, 2015, illustrated by Marwan Kaabour at Barnbrook, based on a sketch by Ken Keable, anti-apartheid activist and author of *The London Recruit*
Left: MacBook Air casing and components that held data leaked by Edward Snowden, destroyed by the *Guardian* in 2013. V&A/*Guardian* 2015



A perhaps anachronistic element of these exhibitions is the emphasis on the material in an era when the digital, and social media in particular, have become so ubiquitous. Although technology is on display, it is dead, empty hardware — quite literally in the case of Edward Snowden’s disembowelled laptop. The new V&A site in Stratford will “include the first dedicated museum space in the UK to document the full breadth of digital design and begin to write the design history of that fast moving field”. It will be interesting to observe how the V&A responds to the inevitable challenges of conservation and display that this will pose: how the virtual will be accommodated alongside the material.

Guy Tarrant, a boys’ primary school Confiscation Cabinet (detail), 1980s © Guy Tarrant



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How best to chronicle and convey this technological shift is a task that must also be tackled by the V&A Museum of Childhood, given the increasingly large part played by computers, video games and mobile phones in the lives of children. This branch of the museum has already shown itself able to respond to change, such as the demographic transformation of its Bethnal Green locale from a majority white working class to a much more mixed and transient population. However, Director Rhian Harris stresses that within this environment of cultural mutability the museum’s commitment to engagement remains constant, as do problems such as poverty and access to education. While the permanent displays at the Museum of Childhood are designed to be suitable for family visits, more difficult and controversial issues can be tackled by smaller, temporary displays. The ‘Confiscation Cabinets’, an artwork by artist and teacher Guy Tarrant, is another show of “disobedient objects”; items “confiscated in 150 different London schools over three decades that focus on the everyday actions of school students, with objects including pen tubes used as pea shooters, toy guns, jewellery, make-up, gadgets and improvised missiles”.

For the past decade the V&A Museum of Childhood’s pioneering outreach programme has also produced community-led exhibitions, staged in the museum, that aim to give a voice to local people and generate a sense of “ownership”. V&A East is planned as a hub for learning and public participation. While the project will be entirely embedded in the V&A, it will be run by its own dedicated team who, it is to be hoped, will draw on not just the insights gained from their recent experiments in opening up the museum, but also the experience and expertise of their colleagues at the Museum of Childhood, long an integral part of the east end of London and its local community.

UNITED

WHO WE ARE

Rob Lynes

NATIONS

In 2003 Jonathan Jones wrote a fascinating piece in the *Guardian* about the forgotten story of the India Museum, and how it went from a hugely popular London institution when it opened in 1801 to a “dusty failure” by 1879. He argued that an important reason for its demise was that the British public no longer found India fascinating.

More than 200 years later and Britain has many reasons to find India fascinating again — not least because it is among the countries that will shape the twenty-first century. The world’s largest democracy will have the world’s largest population by 2050, and Britain is looking to the nation, which has one of the fastest growing global economies, as a focus for economic growth and new export markets. As the UK prepares to welcome Narendra Modi in November — the first time an Indian prime minister has visited in more than ten years — now is an opportune moment to reflect on the influential role that museums such as the V&A can play in strengthening the relationship between the two countries through soft power and cultural relations.

It was Joseph Nye who coined the term “soft power”. All nations wish to communicate the attractive elements of their culture; this can also potentially aid political and economic discussions. John Holden from Demos, author of the British Council’s 2013 report *Influence and Attraction: Culture and the Race for Soft Power in the 21st Century*, argues that “cultural exchange helps us to innovate” and that “cultural co-operation supports social and economic development and political change”.

The significance of cultural relations and soft power was also highlighted in the House of Lords Select Committee report on *Soft Power and the UK’s Influence: Persuasion and Power in the Modern World* (published March 2014). This looked at the changes that are taking place in the international landscape. The conditions under which international relations are conducted have

undergone, and are continuing to undergo, major shifts which will accelerate and be compounded in the years immediately ahead. At the same time, the increasing economic and political strength of non-Western countries is altering the balance of power and influence.

The UK, like other nations, is directly affected by these new conditions. They create a demand for original approaches in the exercise and deployment of our influence. The UK finds itself with a tremendous range of institutions and relationships in politics, economics, science and culture, many amassed over generations, which give it a great deal of internationally recognised soft power.

It is within this new paradigm that the idea of the museum is changing, and with it its role in the world. While the India Museum in London no longer exists, the bulk of its collection is now part of the V&A, British Museum and National History Museum. These institutions attract millions of people a year from around the world to view their wonderful exhibits. Museums of the past were primarily focused on collections, preservation, cataloguing, scholarly research and education. Such aims are still valid and remain at the core of their work. However, museums of today, particularly international ones, are more attuned to the political landscape, are connected globally and operate effectively in the art of cultural relations.

In the modern museum the understanding of objects and their histories is incomplete without understanding what happened to similar objects at the same time in different parts of the world. The interpretation of contexts, in a very wide sense of the term, is assuming importance. This is where museums are increasingly playing a new role in cultural relations. They are also addressing the threats to cultural and natural assets worldwide and the development of international conservation standards.



Far left: page from the *Mewar Ramayana* © The British Library Board, Add. 15296(2), f.49
Left: the East India House Museum, London, 1858 © *Illustrated London News* Ltd/Mary Evans

We didn't always pay so much attention to the conservation and preservation of our cultural heritage and the pieces we acquired for our museums. The India Museum was a case in point, with its objects crammed into a basement, or neglected and abandoned. The British people's cultural awareness of India in 1801 was limited. While our understanding and engagement today is much richer, it is still not as deep or as broad as it should be. The UK no longer has the same resonance with India that it once had, with some observers suggesting that the relationship has plateaued. It is in these new realities that we should adopt a fresh and more nuanced approach to strengthening ties.

Trust is essential in this relationship. However, the results of a BBC poll conducted in 2014 indicate a need for improvement: only 43 per cent of Indians were found to view the UK's influence in the world as positive, while 27 per cent considered it to be negative. The UK is currently seen as being "complacent" and unclear about how much time, effort and financial commitment to put into India. Increased trust has to be generated between the citizens of India and the systems of the UK, and vice versa, as this is seen as one of the key "glues" needed to strengthen the relationship between the two nations. Though cultural collaboration with the UK is highly appreciated in India, there is a perception that it is not as extensive as it could be. While they have a famous shared history, neither country has seriously invested actively in building upon this. India does not know contemporary Britain, while Britain has little idea of how the new India is emerging. Stereotypes exist and remain damaging. There is a need for greater awareness of cultural differences in the interests of tolerance and openness.

In research carried out recently by the British Council as part of the "Re-imagine: India-UK Cultural Relations in the 21st Century" initiative, a number of key themes emerged. These include the importance of the relationship being an equal partnership; the relative lack of cultural engagement by the UK outside the four main metro cities; the potential for digital technologies to transform the cultural relationship; the valuable opportunities for both countries to learn from each other; and the importance of reciprocity and mutuality.

Institutions such as the V&A, the British Museum, Tate and the British Library are leading the way in addressing some of these issues by building partnerships in India and developing exciting mutually beneficial projects.

In recent years there have been some excellent collaborations. For example, in 2009 the V&A and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) in Mumbai presented 'Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists', an exhibition of paintings and drawings from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century made complete with 125 drawings from both museums. In a way history was being stitched together through the joining of the collections. By offering glimpses of architectural and archaeological wonders, of temples, mosques, palaces, customs, ceremonies and villages, it also gave a sense of Western artists' perception of India at the time.

There was another angle to it, as manifested in the exhibition's run at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata. At very short notice, almost as a matter of urgency, the Victoria Memorial decided to display its own collection of life and landscape paintings in parallel with the show. This was not rivalry, but rather the

hosts subtly emphasising equality in partnership. The point was driven home in the 2011 exhibition 'Kalighat Paintings', where the Victoria Memorial Hall and the V&A collaborated from the beginning to present more than 100 paintings, including fifteen contemporary works created by artists currently working in rural Bengal, acquired by the V&A specifically for the show. This was the first time the two museums were partnered to put together a body of works held in parts by both.

In 2009, under the leadership of the then Secretary of the Ministry of Culture of India, Jawhar Sircar, the first formal cultural agreement between the UK and India in 63 years was signed. This has led to a number of positive outcomes, such as the Leadership Training Programme with the British Museum, which ran for three years, and a training programme for audience development with the V&A.

Collaborating with other museums of any kind is a relatively new idea in India, and very few had hitherto looked at it seriously or even considered it relevant. Now there is a new beginning, led in part by the CSMVS in Mumbai, which published a special report on the subject entitled *Bridging the Gap: CSMVS connects UK Institutes*. The National Museum in New Delhi is also organising a large-scale exhibition titled 'Everlasting Flame' for 2016 with loans from several UK institutions, including the British Museum, the British Library, the V&A, the John Rylands Library and the Wellcome Collection.

At the same time, smaller UK museums and galleries are forging new links in India. Since 2012, twenty have been able to visit the country, meet museum officials, access some of the collections and build strong partnerships. Museum professionals have had the opportunity to share their skills and knowledge with their Indian counterparts, and in turn enhance their understanding of a shared history and heritage.

Thrown into the mix are what can be described as digital cultural relations — new ways for nations to promote their cultures to those who are not able to travel, and for researchers to access materials. Among the most outstanding recent examples of this new development is the digital reunification of the *Mewar Ramayana*. This grand, beautifully illustrated manuscript of one of the greatest Indian epics was commissioned by the Rana Jagat Singh I of Mewar (1628–1652) of the Rajput clan

that refused to be subjugated by the powerful Mughals and who counted Lord Rama as one of their ancestors.

Over time, the manuscript was split into separate portions and dispersed among various institutions. The British Library and the CSMVS digitally reunified the *Mewar Ramayana* and have made it accessible for the first time in 200 years. The British Library has further ambitious plans to digitise the whole of its India records, which will be of enormous value to researchers, academics and others in both the UK and India.

In 2014 the V&A, with the support of the Parasol Foundation Trust, completed the digitisation of the museum's collection of "company paintings" commissioned by British East India Company officials from Indian artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In addition, it digitised its wonderful south Asian textiles collections. The potential of digital cultural engagement through museums is almost limitless.

The desire to re-create, reinvent and refresh the cultural relationship exists on both sides. The launch of the V&A's India season in 2015, marking the 25th anniversary of the opening of the museum's Nehru Gallery, is an important milestone to celebrate, and has already excited both the public and the media. The India Festival will include 'The Fabric of India', the first major exhibition to explore the world of handmade Indian textiles from the third to the twenty-first century.

We are unlikely to see any significant dramatic interventions that are going to transform the wider UK-India relationship in the short to medium term. However, long sustained partnerships will be the catalyst for creating new opportunities in the future. The 200-year connections that the V&A and British Museum have are in many ways unique, but our shared history should not be taken for granted. We need to continue to invest in the relationship.

What the V&A and other museums are doing today is pushing from the margins towards the centre of soft power and cultural relations, and helping to rekindle the fascination Britain had with India. When David Cameron visited India in 2013 he spoke of the importance of cultural exchange. When Narendra Modi visits London in the autumn I hope he and Cameron acknowledge the strength and depth of our cultural ties past and present, and how valuable they are for the future.



David Cameron with Manmohan Singh, India's former prime minister, in New Delhi during his three-day visit to India in February 2013. Photograph: Graham Crouch/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Rob Lynes is Director, British Council, India



OBJECTS OF INTERNATIONAL DESIRE

My favourite pieces in the V&A collections — by a selection of staff

WHO WE ARE



1

Katie Hinchliffe

Canadian
Gallery Assistant

My family has a penchant for the strange and wonderful. Knowing that I love Hogarth, my parents made me aware of the BBC4 programme *One Man and His Pug*. In it this porcelain figure and the dog on which it is modelled are discussed. The programme aired shortly after I moved to the UK, and it is one of the first connections I had between the V&A and my family at home in Canada. Every time I visit Trump in the British Galleries, I think of them.



2

Christian Gastaldello
Italian
Front of House Volunteer

Among my favourite V&A attractions are the cartoon panels by Raphael. The simplicity of the apostles and their humble work is transcended by the beauty of their rendition. *The Miraculous Draft of Fishes* is the one I really treasure. The passing of centuries may have faded some of the colours, but, to my mind, the panel retains a strong sense of architectural balance, classical proportion and spirituality in the modest but grandly set out figures.



3

Tim Reeve
British
Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer

I was always likely to choose something from the Cast Courts because they are majestic, the soul of the museum. They are a clear example of Victorian ambition — quite apart from the considerable skill that went into making the casts. It's the part of the museum that feels most rooted in the heritage of the V&A, even though they are not the earliest galleries. I have seen the original of this cross many times; it is magical, in a magical location — a part of the world that I love, and from a period in which, if I have a specialism, I consider myself to have at least some expertise.

Left to right: Louis François Roubiliac, *Hogarth's Dog, Trump*, 1747–1750; Raphael, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes (Luke 5: 1-11)*, c1515–1516. On loan from the collection of Her Majesty the Queen; plaster cast of a late ninth-century pillar cross from Gosforth, Cumbria, cast in 1882 on behalf of the museum by Sergeant Bullen



4

Lina Hakim
Lebanese
Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Research Fellow

This games box is at once a beautifully crafted piece of furniture, an ingeniously articulated set of board games and a cabinet of curiosity revealing worlds of play. What draws me most to it, however, is what I imagine must be its sound when in play — the sound of sophisticated recreation in courtly interiors of early nineteenth-century southern India, but also a sound much more familiar to me, that of idle afternoons on the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean, the sound of outdoor pastimes from home.



5

Roxaneh Horswell
British-Iranian
Volunteer Guide

I feel a strong connection to the Persian tile panel, in part because I am half Iranian and have visited Esfahan, where it once hung in the Chehel Sotoun Palace. When I first set eyes on it, memories flooded back of my grandparents' garden in Iran: the scent of roses and jasmine in the air, and mouth-watering platters of fruit piled high. Further, the vibrant colours and patterns remind me of luxurious Persian carpets. The image exudes romance and sensuality — embodied in the female figure at its heart — but also celebration: perhaps this is more than a mere flirtation.



6

Deborah Sutherland
Zimbabwean
Curator of Operations in the National Art Library

Joseph Muzondo's print represents, for me, the complexities of art made in Africa. The geometric patterning is characteristically African. The forms echo typical Zimbabwean stone carving. But it is essentially of its maker: an artist celebrated for breaking with traditional Shona sculpture to create mixed material pieces, who studied textile design in Tanzania and drawing in Austria, and who chooses here to print from a textured collage rather than the customary linocut. And who has drawn on his personal experience as a freedom fighter to convey the universal human experience of suffering.



7

Kate Quinlan
Irish
Assistant Curator in Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass

I am fascinated by Hans Stofer's ability to manipulate objects in ways that reflect on their value and meaning. The original eighteenth-century cup and saucer was a favourite of his friend Jane. When the cup got broken it was given to Stofer to repair. His deliberate misalignment of the pieces suggests that its power as a memento does not rely on its aesthetic perfection, and attempts to preserve it only add new layers of meaning. Although not perfect, this cup and saucer is still a testimony to the value placed upon these objects.

Clockwise from left: tile panel, Isfahan, Iran, seventeenth century; Hans Stofer, *Jane'scupreallybadlygluedtogether*, 2004. Acquired through the generosity of Gerard and Sarah Griffin; Joseph Muzondo, *The Five*, 1993; games box, Mysore, India, 1825–1850

ACQUISITIONS

This year has seen an exceptional growth in the museum's collections. In purely financial terms, objects valued at £24m came into our stewardship. The Wedgwood Collection at Stoke-on-Trent was transferred to the V&A in order to save it for the nation. The Wolsey Angels were purchased, thanks to staunch support from donors and supporters. The Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, the Friends of the V&A, along with generous support from private trusts and individuals, has not only enabled the above but also a dizzying array of other examples of excellent and significant art and design to join our holdings. The V&A collections now number over 2.28 million. In the years ahead, we will make these collections more accessible, presenting them in the future V&A East in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and researching them imaginatively and collaboratively under the auspices of the planned V&A Research Institute (VARI). Looking to the future, we are delighted that the Cultural Gifts Scheme offered through Arts Council England will help more supporters to donate objects to the V&A. The following pages illustrate 22 of the 14,869 items that were added to the collection during the year.

V&A Annual Review 2014-15



The Wolsey Angels by Benedetto da Rovezzano
Bronze, 1524-1529, London. Purchased with the support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, a gift in memory of Melvin R. Seiden, the Friends of the V&A, the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, the American Friends of the V&A and many other generous donors thanks to a major public appeal in 2014.
H: c.108cm, W: 47cm



Jewels Verne fighting fish bracelet
By Stephen Webster, 2009, titanium set with 189 black spinels, 229 blue sapphires and 24 white diamonds. Given by the artist.
H: 83.5mm, W: 67.3mm, D: 60.5mm



Medal cabinet
Martin Guillaume Biennais, c.1810, Paris. Purchased with the support of the Art Fund, the Friends of the V&A, Stephen and Anne Curran, the American Friends of the V&A, the Gilbert Trust for the Arts, Dr. Susan Weber*, The Leche Trust, the Audrey Love Charitable Foundation*, the Gilbert Public Arts Foundation Trust*, and many other donors. *These donations were made possible by the American Friends of the V&A.
H: 88.2cm, W: 52.3cm, D: 31.8cm

WHO WE ARE

Set of six original artworks for a nursery frieze
By John Hassall, 1900, England. Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund.
H: 48.3cm, L: 150cm



Collection of archive papers from the theatre director Peter Brook
Collection of working papers from the director Peter Brook. Peter Brook Collection acquired with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a private donor



Hat, coat and umbrella stand
England, made by the Coalbrookdale Company, Shropshire, designed and made for Christopher Dresser, 1870.
H: 190cm, W: 54.5cm, D: 22cm

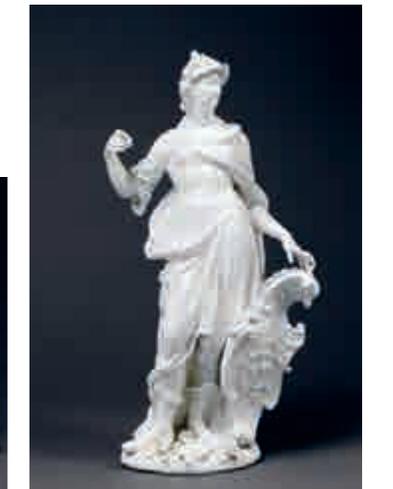


Green and Brown Pot
Alison Britton and Bryan Illsley, 1996, London, England. Earthenware. Gift of Ed Wolf.
H: 51.5cm

Birth of Bacchus
Johann Joachim Kändler, 1760-1762, Meissen, Germany, hard-paste porcelain, mould-pressed, glazed.
H: 14.4cm, L: 14.2cm, W: 9.9cm



Figure of Minerva
Johann Joachim Kändler (modelled), 1747, Meissen, Germany, glazed porcelain. Purchased with funds from the Capt. H.B. Murray Bequest.
H: 38.5cm



Acquisitions

Giuditta Pasta as Norma
Maxim Gauci, c.1831,
watercolour on ivory. Part
of the Gasson Collection,
purchased with the support
of the Friends of the V&A.
H: 12.7cm, W: 9.4cm



**Photograph of Wakem
sisters with dolls' house**
1855–1860, London, salt
print photograph.
H: 12cm, W: 9cm



Vivien Leigh award
1963, Central and North
America, struck metal.
Diam: 7.3cm, D: 0.4cm

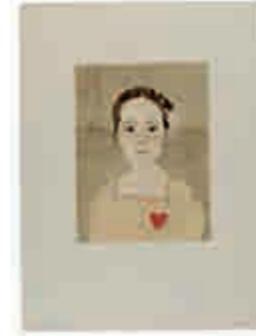
White Collar Black Man
Marcelle Hanselaar,
2013, London, etching
and chine-collé.
H: 70cm, W: 56cm



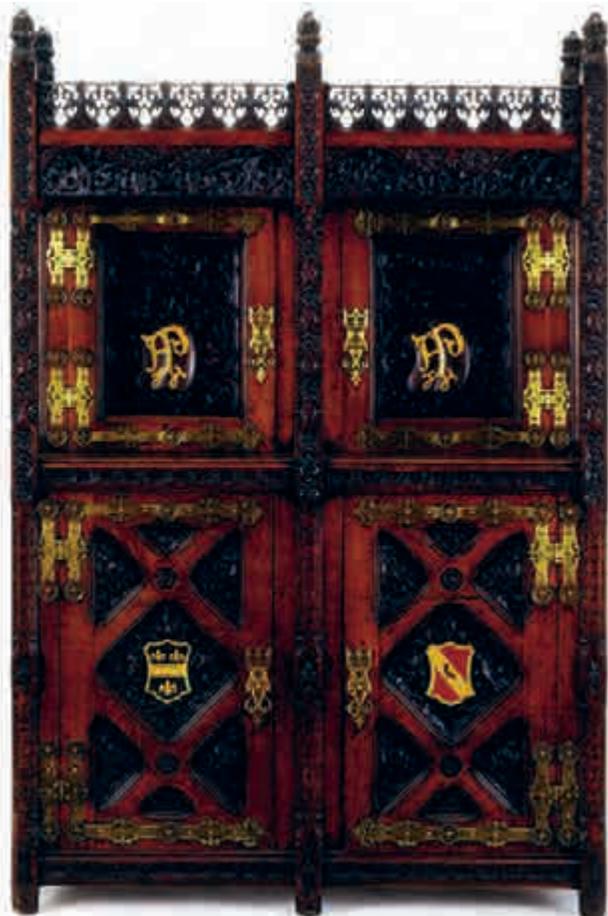
**The visit of Louis XIV
to the Château de Juvisy**
Pierre-Denis Martin, c.1700,
Juvisy, oil painting. Purchased
with the support of the Friends
of the V&A, a gift in memory of
Melvin R. Seiden, the Art Fund
(with a contribution from The
Wolfson Foundation), the John
Webb Trust Fund, the Coral
Samuel Charitable Trust and
many other generous donors.
H: 191cm, W: 287cm, D: 10cm



Ava as Frida from Forty Fridas
2012, a series of 40 woodcut
and drypoint prints by Ellen
Heck. Given by the artist.
H: 38cm, W: 30cm



**Donne Buck Archive of Play
and Playgrounds**
Documents, photographs
and audio recordings of
adventure play in Britain
from 1950s to 2000s.
Image: Boys in Notting
Hill Adventure Playground,
photographed by Donne
Buck, about 1964 © Donne
Buck/Victoria and Albert
Museum, London



Cabinet
Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin
(designer), George Myers (maker),
1846, Birmingham, oak, carved,
painted and gilded, with brass fittings.
Purchase funded by the Barrie and
Deedee Wigmore Foundation, the Art
Fund and the Friends of the V&A.
H: 229.5cm, W: 151.5cm, D: 60.5cm



Augustus
Brooch of pearls, cement
and silver, designed and
made by Terhi Tolvanen,
Netherlands, 2013.
Purchase funded by the
Friends of the V&A.
H: 56mm, W: 67mm,
D: 45mm



Slow Motion
Teapot, Leif Stangebye-
Nielsen, 2013, Oslo,
Norway, silver, raised, with
a jacaranda handle and
knop. Supported by the
Friends of the V&A.
H: 14cm, L: 19cm, W: 7cm



Kimono
1870–1890, Japan,
satin, embroidery,
applique.
L: 182cm, W: 134cm



**Model of the
Campanile Tower
of Siena Cathedral**
Silver, polymer resin and
glass, London hallmarks
for 2011, mark of Vicki
Ambery-Smith. Gift
of Donna Stevens in
memory of her brother,
Paul William.
H: 18cm, W: 4.4cm,
D: 3.3cm (top)

Vase
Christopher Dresser
(designed), c.1880 (made),
Linthorpe, moulded and
modelled earthenware with
green, brown, blue, purple
and semi-lustre glazes.
Purchased with the support
of the Decorative Arts
Society and its Members.
H: 37.5cm, W: 15.2cm



ESSENTIALS

2014–15

Exhibitions

William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain 1686–1748 22 March 2014 – 13 July 2014

Organised by the Bard Graduate Center, New York City, and the V&A. Support generously provided by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts; with thanks to the American Friends of the V&A through the generosity of The Selz Foundation
“As this exemplary exhibition attests, no British designer made a bolder claim on posterity than the phenomenal Kent”
– *Daily Telegraph*

The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945–2014 5 April 2014 – 27 July 2014

Sponsored by Bulgari; with support from Nespresso; with thanks to the Blavatnik Family Foundation; with additional thanks to the American Friends of the V&A
“Beautifully and intelligently staged”
– *Guardian*

Daydreams and Diaries: The Story of Jacqueline Wilson V&A Museum of Childhood 5 April 2014 – 2 November 2014

A touring exhibition originating from Seven Stories, National Centre for Children’s Books. Supported by Random House, Arts Council England and Newcastle City Council
“The exhibition is a very enjoyable outing – a celebration of reading, writing, drawing and pursuing your ambitions”
– *Parentish*

Wedding Dresses 1775–2014 3 May 2014 – 15 March 2015

Travel partner Kuoni; supported by Monsoon Bridal and Waterford Crystal
“Some of the most memorable and dreamy wedding gowns ever created”
– *Sunday Times, STYLE*

Consumption: Prix Pictet at the Victoria and Albert Museum 22 May 2014 – 15 June 2014

“Thought-provoking images of consumerism take over the V&A”
– *Harpers Bazaar*

M.F. Husain: Master of Modern Indian Painting 28 May 2014 – 27 July 2014

With thanks to Mrs Usha Mittal; with kind support from Christie’s
“The V&A’s retrospective presents a deeply personal portrait of an artist who spent his career seeking the intersection of art, politics and history”
– *Architectural Digest*

Disobedient Objects 26 July 2014 – 1 February 2015

Supported by Cockayne – Grants for the Arts, a donor-advised fund of The London Community Foundation
“A thought-provoking and mind-nourishing show”
– *Observer*

Horst: Photographer of Style

6 September 2014 – 4 January 2015
Travel Partner American Airlines; with thanks to Bicester and Kildare Village; supported by the American Friends of the V&A
“A triumph for curator Susanna Brown... Throughout, the exhibition has a compelling energy and deep knowledge, but delicately expressed”
– *Vogue*

Constable: The Making of a Master 20 September 2014 – 11 January 2015

Supported by the Friends of the V&A; with thanks to Winsor & Newton
“... a punctiliously scholarly show”
– *The Times*

Russian Avant-Garde Theatre: War Revolution and Design 1913–1933 18 October 2014 – 15 March 2015

Made possible with the co-operation of the A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum, Moscow, and St. Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music
“The legacy of Russian theatre remains indelible”
– *Financial Times*

Small Stories: At Home in a Dolls’ House V&A Museum of Childhood

13 December 2014 – 6 September 2015
Supported by the Friends of the V&A, The Mercers’ Company and The Leche Trust. With thanks to Sanderson, Morris and Co, and LASSCO
“A fascinating tribute to some of the original dolls’ houses in the Museum’s collections”
– *Cassone: The international online magazine of art and art books*

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty 14 March 2015 – 2 August 2015

Made possible with the co-operation of Alexander McQueen. In partnership with Swarovski; supported by American Express; with thanks to M·A·C Cosmetics; Technology Partner Samsung
“That McQueen was a visionary and a genius is obvious, but applause should also go to curator Claire Wilcox and her team who have done an incredible job in completely transforming the V&A galleries... It is unlikely you will ever see a better fashion exhibition”
– *The Huffington Post*

All of This Belongs to You 1 April 2015 – 19 July 2015

“It is hugely ambitious, and this is an important, subtly subversive show of a kind that is rare in the world of consumer-led contemporary design”
– *Financial Times*

Displays

Building Memories: the Art of Remembering 31 May 2013 – 22 May 2014

Selling Dreams: One Hundred Years of Fashion Photography 28 March 2014 – 4 May 2014

Simon Carroll: Expressionist Potter 14 April 2014 – 4 January 2015

A World to Win: Posters of Protest and Revolution 1 May 2014 – 2 November 2014

The Great Diary Project V&A Museum of Childhood 17 May 2014 – 12 October 2014

Hand Me Over, Hand Me Downs V&A Museum of Childhood 24 May 2014 – 31 August 2014

Illustration Awards 3 June 2014 – 2 July 2014

Toy Stories V&A Museum of Childhood 7 June 2014 – 14 December 2014

Rapid Response Collecting From 4 July 2014, ongoing

This Time in History: What Escapes (2014–1914), by Rose Frain 9 July 2014 – 1 February 2015

London Design Festival 13 – 21 September 2014

Design Fund: New Acquisitions 13 September 2014 – 6 November 2014

It’s My Party V&A Museum of Childhood 20 September 2014 – 18 October 2015

Personal Favourites: Highlights of Gold and

Silver from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection 1 November 2014 – 21 February 2016

Architects as Artists 15 November 2014 – 15 March 2015

Exhibition Road Building 27 November 2014 – December 2016

In Black and White: Prints and Posters from Africa and the Diaspora 29 November 2014 – 6 July 2015

Hidden Identities Unfinished V&A Museum of Childhood 20 December 2014 – 28 June 2015

Blue and White: British Printed Ceramics 31 January 2015 – 3 January 2016

Nursery Classics: Frederick Warne’s Fine Art Picture Books 3 February 2015 – 11 May 2015

A History of Photography: Series and Sequences 6 February 2015 – 1 November 2015

Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience, 1950s–1990s 16 February 2015 – 24 May 2015

The Curious Neoclassical Vision of Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot 23 March 2015 – 6 December 2015

Touring venues

Overseas

- Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix
- Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin
- Hermitage-Kazan Exhibition Centre, Kazan
- Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Los Angeles
- Moscow State Exhibition Hall 'New Manege', Moscow
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis
- A.A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum, Moscow
- Queensland Museum, Brisbane
- Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow
- Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam
- Portland Art Museum, Portland

UK

- The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent
- Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle
- Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff
- Millennium Gallery, Sheffield
- The Woodville, Gravesend
- SeaCity Museum, Southampton
- The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge, Canterbury
- Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Sunderland
- Palace Green Library, Durham
- Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth
- Maidstone Museum & Bently Art Gallery, Maidstone
- Victoria Art Gallery, Bath
- Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle
- The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum, Dundee
- Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Inverness
- Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

Visitor figures

2014-15

- Total visits to V&A South Kensington, 3,736,300
Museum of Childhood and Blythe House Archive
- Total visits to V&A Touring Exhibitions 1,476,600
(29 Venues)
- Total unique web visits 15,366,400
- Total visits by children aged 16 and under 480,200
- Total visits by school pupils aged 18 and under 118,900
- Percentage of BAME visitors to V&A sites 22
- Percentage of visits by professionals, teachers 40
and students in the creative industries
- Percentage of visitors who would recommend 98
a visit to V&A sites

UK and INTERNATIONAL VISITORS 2014-15

- Greater London 1,293,800
- South East England 286,500
- Rest of UK 494,900
- UK Visits 2,075,200
- Europe 929,200
- North America 313,700
- South and Central America 80,500
- Asia 201,800
- Rest of World 135,900
- Overseas Visits 1,661,100

3,736,300

Financial review

		2013-14	2014-15
		£m	£m
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government grant in aid of £31.15m was received in the year, and an additional £7.5m allocated for this year had been received in 2012-13. Overall this represents a fall of 2% against the baseline grant for 2013-14 	• Grant in Aid	39.4 31.1
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an exceptional period for fundraising, a total of £25.5 million was raised across all areas representing a 50% increase on the previous year. • Grants and donations towards FuturePlan rose significantly with the Europe 1600-1815 Galleries and the Exhibition Road building project boosted by major contributions. • Just under £5 million was secured towards important acquisitions, including the four Wolsey Angels, the painting of The Château de Juvisy and a nineteenth-century Medal Cabinet. Further support for the collections came from the Photographs Acquisition Group and the Design Fund. • The exhibition programme received strong corporate support from new and returning sponsors and income from museum hire and corporate membership reached unprecedented levels. • Membership programmes were successful across the board. The number of Friends of the V&A continued to increase sharply with almost 61,000 members generating income of over £2.5 million (additional to total given). Revenue from the Director's Circle demonstrated both the loyalty of our patrons and growth. • Efforts to secure the Museum's long-term future progressed with gifts towards the V&A FutureFund endowment matched under the Heritage Lottery Fund/ Department for Culture, Media and Sport Catalyst: Endowments fund. 	• Fundraising	14.5 25.5
FuturePlan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of £17.3m was spent on FuturePlan projects and other fixed assets. Major work on the Exhibition Road building (due for completion mid-2017) and Europe 1600-1815 Galleries (due for completion late 2015) took place, and the refurbished Cast Court reopened in November 2014. • Some of the funds used for these projects had been raised in previous years and designated for capital projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FuturePlan and other fixed assets • Lottery • Use of reserves • Addition to reserves 	-10.1 -17.3 1.7 3.8 — 1.4 -5.6 —
Acquisitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of £7.1m was spent on acquisitions for the collection; a significant increase on last year due to the acquisition of the Wolsey Angels for £4.6m. Acquisitions are largely funded by private donations, sometimes supported by the Art Fund or HLF. In addition, objects worth £16.9m were donated to the Museum in the year, including the Wedgwood collection with a total estimated value of £15m. 	• Acquisitions	-2.3 -7.1
Visitors & Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across our three sites we have attracted our highest annual number of visitors, 3.7 million. We have maintained spending in core areas to ensure the collection is properly protected. 	• Collection & Visitor costs	-35.5 -37.5
Exhibitions & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong exhibition programme, and the continuing success of our touring programme have supported income growth in the year. • Demand for our learning courses remained strong but restrictions on capacity as a result of the Exhibition Road project slightly reduced activity in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition income • Exhibition & learning costs 	6.0 6.4 -13.3 -12.5
Trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was the best ever year for V&A Enterprises, the trading arm of the Museum, supported by record visitor numbers and exhibition attendances. 	• Trading profit	2.6 3.5
Other Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This comprises fees charged to other organisations. 	• Other Income	2.6 2.9
Total			0.0 0.0

The V&A would like to pay special tribute to the following past and present major benefactors for their exceptional support

- The American Friends of the V&A
- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- The Art Fund
- William and Judith Bollinger
- Julie and Robert Breckman
- The Canadian Friends of the V&A
- Vladimir Caruana and Ivan Booth
- The Clore Duffield Foundation
- The Clothworkers' Foundation
- The Curtain Foundation
- Mr and Mrs Edwin Davies CBE
- Dr Genevieve Davies
- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation
- DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Sir Harry Djanogly CBE
- The Foyle Foundation
- The Friends of the V&A
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- Sir Paul Getty, KBE
- The Getty Foundation
- Gilbert Public Arts Foundation
- Gilbert Trust for the Arts
- Lydia and Manfred Gorvy*
- The Headley Trust
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation
- The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation
- Andrew Hochhauser QC
- The Iris Foundation*
- Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel
- Pauline Johnstone
- J. Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
- Sir John Madejski OBE DL
- MasterCard
- The Ronald and Rita McAulay Foundation
- The Monument Trust
- National Heritage Memorial Fund
- Parasol Foundation Trust
- The Porter Foundation
- Qipco Holding W.L.L
- Hans and Märit Rausing
- Sir Paul and Lady Ruddock
- Simon Sainsbury
- The Rt Hon Sir Timothy Sainsbury
- Samsung
- Leslie, Judith and Gabrielle Schreyer*
- Anonymous in memory of Melvin R. Seiden
- The Selz Foundation
- Sennheiser
- Swarovski
- Robert H. Smith*
- Toshiba Corporation
- Mr T. T. Tsui
- Wartski

- Dr Susan Weber*
- The A. H. Whiteley Family
- The Wolfson Foundation
- Würth Group
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

The V&A would like to thank the following for generously supporting the Museum's ongoing redevelopment in 2014/2015

- The Arnhold family
- Mr and Mrs Edward Atkin CBE
- The BAND Trust
- The David Berg Foundation, New York*
- C. Jay Moorhead Foundation*
- The Canadian Friends of the V&A
- Cecil and Hilda Lewis Charitable Trust
- Dr Genevieve Davies
- DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- The Friends of the V&A
- Lydia and Manfred Gorvy*
- The Headley Trust
- The Henry Moore Foundation
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Sir Michael and Lady Hintze
- The Idlewild Trust
- The Leche Trust
- William Loschert*
- The Monument Trust
- Qipco Holding W.L.L
- Mr Stuart Roden
- The Ruddock Family
- The Ruth Covo Family Foundation*
- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation**
- The Salomon Oppenheimer Philanthropic Foundation
- Vionnet S.p.A
- The Ronald and Heather Acton
- Lady Estelle Wolfson of Marylebone
- The Worshipful Company of Grocers
- Würth Group
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

The V&A is most grateful to the following for their long-term support towards the Museum with an endowment gift to FutureFund

- Linda Margaret Bullock
- Dr Genevieve Davies
- Heritage Lottery Fund/Department for Culture, Media & Sport Catalyst: Endowments Fund
- V&A Museum Events Ltd with thanks to the contribution of those who attended the Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty Fashion Gala

The V&A is very grateful to those who have made a contribution to the Museum's work through the Director's Circle

Platinum

- William and Asli Arah
- The BAND Trust
- Mr and Mrs Thomas Brenninkmeijer
- Noah and Avital Bulkin
- Jordan Cook and John Burbank
- Stephen and Anne Curran
- Dr Genevieve and Mr Peter Davies
- Comte and Comtesse Charles-Henri de La Rochefoucauld
- Judy and Frank Grace
- Mrs Olivia Harrison
- Andrew Hochhauser QC
- Mr and Mrs Jerker Johansson
- Maurice and Rosemary Lambert
- Harvey and Allison McGrath
- Sarah Nichols
- Mr Alireza Sarikhani
- Mr J and Mrs HM Shafran
- Mrs Virginia Shepherd and Dr Paul Shepherd
- Peter Williams and Heather Acton
- Lady Estelle Wolfson of Marylebone
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

Gold

- Eric Abraham and Sigrid Rausing
- Mr and Mrs Vahid Alaghband
- John V Bloomfield
- Krishna Choudhary
- Mrs Sophie Diedrichs
- Nicoletta Fiorucci and Giovanni Russo
- Sam Fogg
- Lisa and Brian Garrison
- Mr and Mrs Arne Groes
- Charles and Kaaren Hale
- The Helen Hamlyn Trust
- Mary and Douglas Hampson
- Janice Hughes and Stephen Taylor
- Peter Williams and Michael Jaharis
- Sir Henry and Lady Keswick
- William Loschert
- MAECENAS
- Kira Malysheva
- Christina Mattin
- Ali-Reza Rastegar
- Bianca and Stuart Roden
- Elaine Rowley and Tony Luckhurst
- Mr and Mrs William Salomon
- Mrs Lorraine Spencer
- Margaret and Jeremy Strachan
- Frederick and Kathryn Uhde
- Miss Rebecca Wang
- Simon Weil
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

Silver

- Toby and Kate Anstruther
- Harriet Anstruther
- The Hon Mrs Nicholas Assheton
- Jane Attias
- John and Paula Attree
- John and Bernadette Barber
- Tom Beazley QC and Ingrid Beazley
- Molly Lowell and David Borthwick
- Jean and John Botts
- Ms Elena Bowes
- Mikael and Leonie Brantberg
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- Iain Cullen
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- Mireille Ellington
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- Mr and Mrs Erik Engstrom
- Jeff and Emily Fergus
- Lt Cdr Paul Fletcher
- Joachim Fleury and Vita Gottlieb
- Joscelyn Fox
- Prince and Princess Frankopan
- Claire and Dominic Freemantle
- Francesca Galloway
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EMBRACING

THE

DIGITAL

Kati Price

AGE

WHO WE ARE

Every generation has its distractions. For us, it might be Facebook, Snapchat, Minecraft, or a Netflix series. For the Victorians, it was the gin palace. Such was the allure of these establishments that founding V&A director Henry Cole believed a “powerful antidote” was needed — a museum that could be as attractive as the gin palace. To attract the widest possible audience, he decided to open the then South Kensington Museum in the evening, and this was made possible only because of a recent innovation — gas lighting. In fact, it became the first museum in the world to use gas lighting in its galleries.

Were Cole around today, one imagines he would be making the case for building-wide Wi-Fi — something we have recently invested in. Like gas lighting in its day, Wi-Fi has swiftly moved from being a desirable novelty to an essential utility. It allows us to deliver digital content and experiences to anyone with a mobile device. Visitors to the soon-to-reopen Europe 1600–1815 Galleries, for example, will be able to use our new mobile audio guide to listen to the seductions of Casanova, or hear Rabbi Jeff Berger talking about the Torah mantle.

Admittedly, Wi-Fi will still enable people to indulge in online distractions and, theoretically, our visitors might well be looking at Tinder or Snapchat while enjoying a coffee in our café. Our challenge is to be noticed amid the cacophony of other online as well as competing ‘real world’ experiences.

Museums are becoming places for increasing degrees of debate and discovery, witnessed (and catalysed) by a gradual blurring between the real and the digital. An ever-growing number of people start their journey to the V&A online, so it is vital that these encounters meet the same standards as a visit to our galleries. To this end, we will in the next year refresh our website and invest in our digital infrastructure.

Our website audience is more than four times the size of our physical one, so we are working on ways to create compelling content and experiences for those who may never make it to the museum. We don’t want merely to replicate our galleries, exhibitions and events, however: we are seeking to tap into what digital media is uniquely able to deliver.

‘Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty’, for example, saw us work closely with curator Claire Wilcox and her team to create the Museum of Savage Beauty, a microsite that tells some of the stories behind the cabinet of curiosities section of the exhibition, and looks at objects in the V&A collection that might have inspired them. It uses a simple open source technology so one can zoom into images of the objects in incredible detail.

For ‘What is Luxury?’ we created Luxury Time, an online game that gives players an insight into the often arduous, painstaking process of the designer-maker (the final element of the game takes an exhausting nine hours to complete). Additionally, we developed the Definery, a playful online quiz that asks people to nominate objects in their lives to assess whether they are indeed luxury, or actually vulgar.

An experiential documentary, The London Recruits, saw us use interactive media to tell the story of the secret war against apartheid to support the exhibition ‘Disobedient Objects’. The interaction design deliberately creates a disruptive viewing experience using pop-ups as a motif to echo the exploding bucket bombs the London Recruits used to spread their anti-apartheid message.

Technology on the move. Photograph: Larry W. Smith/EPA



V&A Web Developer James Docherty at work on an audio guide for the Europe 1600–1815 Galleries. Photograph: Peter Kelleher

Embracing the digital age

As part of a new five-year strategy, we will do more to showcase the best of digital design. To that end, we are working with the V&A's Design, Architecture and Digital Department to commission new online experiences that explore the role of design and architecture in defining civic identity and urban experience. This year we commissioned media artist Kyle McDonald to create *Exhausting a Crowd*. Based on Georges Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, the site allows visitors to annotate the comings and goings of people around Piccadilly Circus over a 24-hour period. We also commissioned designer Femke Herregraven, who created *Liquid Citizenship*, a site that enables people to explore the current opportunities for purchasing national citizenships, passports or visas.

We want — and need — to create more of these sorts of experiences. We know our audiences value them, and we know they're helping us to better understand and explore the many ways digital media can give access to all the V&A does, and bring the museum's stories to life. With new V&A galleries and museums opening up across the globe, we're looking at how technology can help us to connect with increasingly

diverse audiences, from Dundee to Shenzhen. Our Dundee colleagues are examining the use of digital technologies by contemporary designers working in fields from game design to lace-making, as were on show in their 'Design in Motion' travelling exhibition.

Museums of the future will be more collaborative, and more focused on engagement and developing online (as well as physical) experiences. In a hyper-connected, transparent world we need to embrace the multiplicity of voices that we as organisations can generate. We need to collaborate with our online audiences, listen to them, develop shared values and long-term relationships and conceive ideas and content together.

Data is the key to unlocking a deeper understanding of our audiences' wants and needs. By using a data-informed approach to development, we can see exactly what works — and what doesn't. We can test, we can refine and improve what we do, and create personalised experiences for our visitors. This thinking is at the heart of new products and services we're developing, such as our award-winning Explorer map, which draws on our events and collections data to show in real time what is on, and what's in the building.

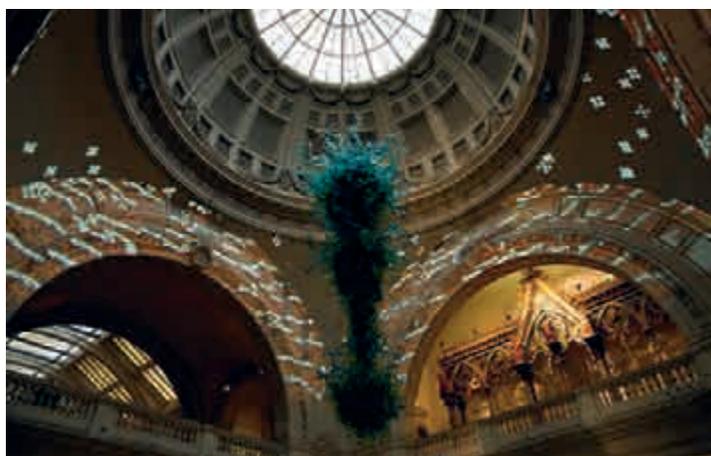
We're now looking at how we might use transmitters such as iBeacons to deliver content that is specific to certain galleries and exhibitions, and to provide tours for visually impaired visitors and exploration trails for children. We're also exploring how wearable technologies, such as Google Cardboard and Oculus Rift, might introduce new layers of experience both inside the museum and remotely.

Back in 2008, the V&A was one of the first museums to open up our collections data through an API (an application programming interface which acts as a window on to our database). This means artists and developers can use our data to create their own applications and visualisations. For 'All of this Belongs to You', artist, writer and technologist James Bridle used our collections API to create *Hyper-Stacks*, a classification and connection engine that analyses more than one million object records to create networks of objects based on today's headlines. Good, Form & Spectacle, a design firm, also used the API to create the V&A *Spelunker*, another tool that unveils the relationships between objects in our collection. The coming year will see us improve the API, including new ways to search through our data.

Over the next five years, our collection may even become part of the growing Internet of Things (IoT), the network of connected objects that can exchange data without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interaction. It has taken a while to move beyond the IoT caricature of the fridge that tells you when it has run out of milk, but there are very real applications for a connected world within and beyond the V&A. After all, museum environments are already full of sensors, the things that will power the IoT. At the most functional level, imagine how it will change areas such as security and conservation.

We are looking at a period of technological innovation that presents an array of new ways to inspire and connect with our visitors, both online and in our galleries. And we believe that many of these technologies will do for us what gas lighting did for our Victorian forebears.

Below: gas light fixtures and statuary in the V&A's Weston Cast Court, c1862
Bottom: V&A Grand Entrance Hall illuminated for 'The World of Minecraft' Friday Late, August 2013



Oculus Rift virtual reality headset, 2014. Given by Oculus VR, Inc.

Kyle McDonald's *Exhausting a Crowd* (www.exhaustingacrowd.com) commission for the V&A on display during 'Digital Public Space' Friday Late, May 2015



Kati Price is Head of Digital Media, V&A

OLYMPICOPOLIS

WHO WE ARE

AND

THE

Dan Cruickshank

V&A

The “legacy” of the London Olympics became an increasingly important — and fraught — topic during the months leading to the opening of the games in the summer of 2012. Their role in Londoners’ lives, and the remorseless process by which the Olympic Park was acquired, designed and constructed was increasingly questioned by a diverse band of doubters. The most robust defence mounted by the supporters and sponsors of the games was to focus on its promised legacy. They pointed out that a generally unkempt and partly destitute portion of east London, centred on Stratford, was to be left, when the games were over, with the 227-hectare Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park — the largest urban space created in Europe for 150 years — within and around which would be a stupendous array of sports buildings and housing. In addition, it was argued, regeneration projects had already spun-off from the Olympics, typified by the construction of the vast Westfield shopping mall. All of this would give east London a new and vibrant heart, would provide a much needed mix of housing stock and give a long run-down area a major economic boost. And the stadia, decommissioned from Olympic use, would also offer future generations of young Londoners a hugely enhanced opportunity to play sport and, in the process, grow healthy and perhaps realise their potential as world-class sportsmen and women.

The doubters — perhaps cynics or perhaps no more than hardened realists immune to the jargon of spin and promotion — offered an alternative, darker, vision. They insisted that the Olympics would do little good for London and Londoners and that much of the games initiative was little more than a gigantic, corporate marketing opportunity which aimed to make vast profits for a few sponsors and was set at seizing — certainly transforming — an area that for generations had been one of the capital’s most curious

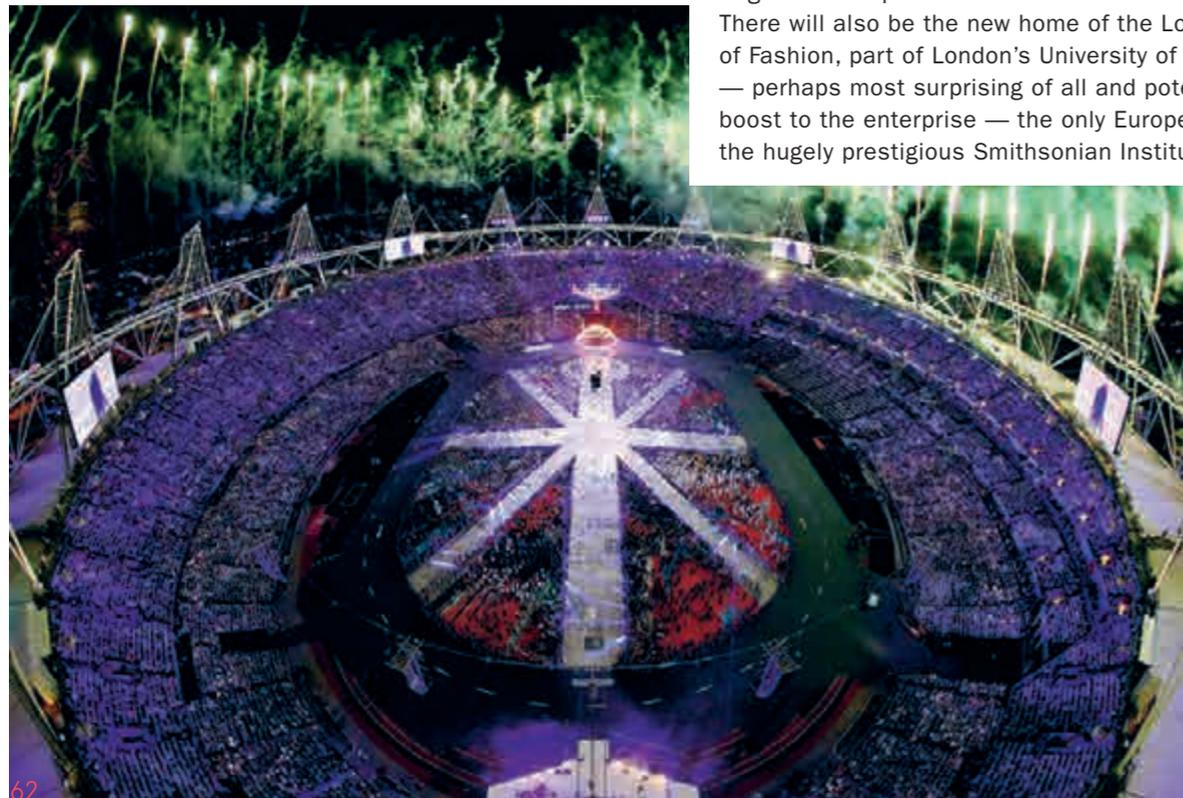
and idiosyncratic places of refuge and employment for the less affluent or least corporate minded. Iain Sinclair became the voice of those who felt themselves dispossessed by the Olympic adventure. He marshalled his misgivings into a book of essays, entitled *Ghost Milk*, which was published on the eve of the Olympics. The essays, reflecting two decades of familiarity with what Sinclair termed Stratford’s “edgelands”, were a bitter farewell to a part of east London where individuality and eccentricity had flourished in the shade of abandonment. The odd-ball and authentic was being replaced by the ersatz and the blandly universal, and these characteristics would characterise the true nature of the Olympic legacy. As he observed, legacy “is a two-edged sword, it cuts both ways through time”. The real legacy of the Olympics would not be a pleasant and regenerated piece of city, but forlorn and friendless wastes dotted with apartment blocks whose “gaudy shells, low-ceilinged, tight-balconied, are doomed to remain half-empty”.

River Lea from Olympic Parklands, Stratford, London, April 2012 © Jason Orton



Even when the old world had been lost, the Olympic Park created and the games about to start there were still sceptics. Edwin Heathcote, writing in the summer 2012 issue of *V&A Magazine*, agreed with Sinclair that the site of the Olympics had formerly been “defined by its wild desolation and... history of neglect” and was “the kind of liminal edgeland that every metropolis needs in which to bury its secrets”. Ironically, of course, the biggest “secret” that the metropolis has sought to bury in this once “desolate” place is the memory of the edgeland’s own past. Heathcote, when contemplating the new look of the transformed area, regretted this policy of forgetfulness: “The easiest solution for development has been to deny that past, to clean up and start again. But how much more interesting would it have been to have... retained some of the fragments of that extraordinary past in a landscape of memory and place?” Instead, he pointed out, “there is a feeling of forgetting. The landscape has been replaced by an architecture of leisure and a developers’ city of housing...”

Fireworks explode over the Olympic Stadium during the closing ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games, 12 August 2012. Photograph: Rob Carr/Getty Images



But the success of the games — almost universally admired for their style, wit and panache as well as for their sporting qualities — seemed to suggest that the concerns of doubters such as Sinclair and Heathcote would be soon forgotten. In fact, many of the key questions they raised have yet to be answered. But answers are on the way.

Broadly, the legacy is to take the form of a “twenty-first-century garden city” in and around the Olympic Park. And what will surely be its key component is a string of buildings now proposed for the long, narrow “Stratford waterfront” site set between the Olympic stadium and the John Lewis store in Westfield and next to the undulating form of the Aquatics Centre, designed by Zaha Hadid and streamlined since its use during the Olympics. The site might appear constrained, perhaps architecturally overpowered, but it is strategically placed within the park and only a few minutes walk from Stratford’s far-reaching transport hub. For the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) this makes it an ideal location for one of its pet projects — the creation of a “cultural and education quarter” that promises to be world class.

Inspired by the transformation of South Kensington into London’s museum quarter after the Great Exhibition of 1851, the LLDC has matured its plans to create what is currently referred to by the somewhat unwieldy name Olympicopolis (South Kensington was nicknamed Albertopolis because of the Prince Consort’s profound influence in the creation of its museums and cultural institutions) that will, in adjoining structures, house large-sized outposts of the V&A and Sadler’s Wells. There will also be the new home of the London College of Fashion, part of London’s University of the Arts, and — perhaps most surprising of all and potentially a huge boost to the enterprise — the only European annex of the hugely prestigious Smithsonian Institute, based in

Washington. Founded in 1846 “for the increase and diffusion of knowledge”, the Smithsonian has nearly a score of museums and galleries throughout the United States and affiliations with many more, but its presence at Stratford would, if it happens, be pioneering. At the moment its involvement in Olympicopolis is under discussion. There will also be a new campus for University College London (UCL), plus 75,000 square metres of residential space.

This project would not only put Stratford well and truly on the capital’s cultural map and give it a new and admirable identity — and indeed confirm the shift to the east of many of London’s cultural institutions and activities — but also provide a huge boost to the local economy. At current estimates the cultural and education quarter would create 3,000 new jobs and attract an additional 1.5 million visitors and £2.8 million of income to the area. Some observers are even claiming that by 2030 the proposed development will generate £5 billion in “gross added value” by, as an LLDC press release claims, capitalising on, and enhancing, London’s “reputation as a creative capital and the world’s favourite visitor destination”.

To help to realise this the government has offered a £141 million investment, but this will have to be augmented in several ways, notably from the Greater London Authority (GLA) through the sale of residential properties on the park and philanthropic fund-raising. For example, as a charity part-funded by the DCMS, the V&A (like Sadler’s Wells) will have to raise money for its portion of the scheme, and this is being led by a separate and newly founded charitable body called the Foundation for FutureLondon.

While the complex financial machinery is being put in place, the architecture of Olympicopolis is currently taking shape. Architects were selected last May via competition and the practices now involved are very promising. They include Allies and Morrison, the initial master planners of the Olympic Park, working with RIBA Gold Medallists Sheila O’Donnell and John Tuomey. Other members of the winning team include Josep Camps/Olga Felip Arquitectura, Gustafson Porter, BuroHappold and Gardiner & Theobald. Works, if they start on schedule, should be completed by 2021 at the latest.

But what are the chances that some of the criticism levelled by Heathcote in 2012 against the Olympic Games-related buildings and planning can be avoided in the creation of Olympicopolis? This must be one of the most important architectural projects in London for decades. The uses are superb. If the design is right, then it could be a new quarter that Londoners as well as visitors will value.

Most of the “edgeland” described by Sinclair and mourned by Heathcote has gone. But not all. And Stratford itself — despite its vast and often crude recent redevelopment that seems almost incomprehensible and placeless — does retain an architectural character, even grandeur, which reflects its distinct history.

Traditionally, it was an agricultural and market town that stood astride ancient routes of commerce and communication, now marked by three thoroughfares running more or less straight through the heart of Stratford: Romford Road, Broadway and the High Street. The road is busy because, to a degree, it still does what it started by doing around 2,000 years ago. It leads south-west to the River Lea, then across to connect to the Roman road at Bow and on, via Mile End and Whitechapel, to Aldgate and the City. The old buildings along its route near the town centre tell the tale of its historical importance.

The church of St John the Evangelist dates from the early 1830s and was designed by Edward Blore, who went on to design the entrance front of Buckingham Palace. Opposite, on Broadway, is a fine collection of buildings including a handsome 1830s terrace, a commanding commercial palazzo of 1867, built as a bank, and the King Edward VII pub. There are two eye-catching buildings on Romford Road: St John’s House, a satisfying Regency villa with a porch incorporating wonderfully gouty Greek Doric columns; and a timber-framed house clad with white-painted weatherboarding that dates from around 1700 and is a haunting reminder of long-lost rural Stratford.

Other characterful architectural delights linger — and in some cases languish — on the High Street. These include the splendid Ye Old Black Bull pub, an exuberant and escapist gin palace, dated 1892, that



St John the Evangelist, Broadway, Stratford, designed by Edward Blore.
Photograph: David Nicholls, 2014

“Stratford’s diverse character should be reinforced by the new architecture in the area”

incorporates a life-size image of a black bull placed against a vibrantly stripy brick and stone elevation and a third-floor “Juliet balcony” set within an arch with the head of a luxuriantly bearded river god for a keystone.

Equally moving, although for its ruthless industrial aesthetic rather than air of tipsy, fantasy leisure, is a late nineteenth-century block just off the High Street in Burford Road, containing the Stratford Workshops. Designed for the railways, which from the 1840s came to dominate working life in the town, this range of pilaster-clad and partly gabled buildings possesses a powerful, Piranesian quality. Nearby is the Borough Theatre and Opera House, a tremendous piece of work created initially by the greatest of Britain’s late Victorian theatre architects, Frank Matcham. The 3,500-seat theatre, described at the time as being designed in the “Elizabethan” style, opened in late 1896 with a production of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, in which Beerbohm Tree starred as Falstaff. The proprietor was Albert Fredericks, who also ran the nearby Theatre Royal, erected in 1884 and now secreted within new development adjoining the Stratford Centre. The latter remains a live theatre, having enjoyed a period of fame and creative excellence from the 1950s under the guidance of the provocative, influential yet deeply

troubled director Joan Littlewood. In sad contrast, the Borough ceased to host live theatre in the early 1930s when it was converted into a cinema, at which time a splendid Art Deco and pilaster-clad curved corner entrance was added. The cinema also eventually closed, and until recently the building housed comedy, concerts and boxing. It seems to be yet again looking for a new use.

Just a few minutes walk south along West Ham Lane is the medieval parish church of All Saints. Dating mostly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it survives as one of the most exciting ancient buildings in London, largely because of its striking monuments that, in their way, make this little church the Westminster Abbey of outer east London. Dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they are of high quality and — with great poignancy — capture the metropolitan life in West Ham and Stratford 250 to 350 or so years ago.

The simple lesson taught by the High Street and its environs is that Stratford is not entirely, from the historic point of view, a *tabula rasa*. It possesses physical remains and reminders of its past — and some of these are considerable, even heroic. Its very diverse architectural character should be acknowledged — and even reinforced — by the new architecture in the area.

Sketch elevations for the cultural and education quarter have been released. Those for the V&A, produced by O’Donnell + Tuomey, suggest a minimal, rationalist architecture characterised by cubic forms and brick cladding. Although the designs are as yet imprecise, it is clear that this building — now generally referred to as the “V&A East” — is potentially epoch-making in the history of the museum. As Kieran Long, Keeper of the Design, Architecture and Digital Department at the V&A, explains, the Stratford outpost is intended to contain 16,000 square metres of space — roughly half the size of Tate Modern. It will be designed to “allow us to do things we can’t do in our grade I listed South Kensington building”. It will present not the conventional circulation route through a “stack” of galleries, but will be a “gallery neighbourhood”. There will be studio galleries, the “largest temporary exhibition space in London”, places for children, outside spaces, all connecting with back-of-house functions — including research and conservation — visible to public view. This, says Long, represents the future of curatorial practice, with visitors encouraged to participate in the working of the museum.

The displays within the building are not yet resolved in detail, but will include the first museum space in the UK dedicated to digital design. And of course there is an opportunity to show more of the V&A’s permanent collection of around 2.5 million objects, only about fifteen per cent of which are currently on display.

The museum also intends to make the most of being neighbours of the London College of Fashion and Sadler’s Wells, which plans to create a “middle-scale, flexible space for contemporary dance”. Consequently, the V&A will place a large proportion of its fashion, textile, theatre and performance collections in Stratford to serve as an immediate resource for the students who will be on site.

There can be little doubt that the cultural and education quarter will make a significant and positive contribution to the quality of life not only in Stratford but in London as a whole — and will do much to confirm the benign nature of the Olympic legacy. And it will be interesting to see how its architecture evolves during the coming year or so. Olympic buildings and the Westfield shopping mall provide the obvious and immediate architectural context for the site. But there is also a wider if more subtle context. Recognition of Stratford’s history as an “edgeland”, and of its own distinct architectural legacy, could add more cultural richness, relevance and complexity to the proposed buildings. Surely, to succeed fully as a piece of contemporary design — and to live up its name — the architecture of the new quarter must learn from its neighbourhood and respond to the area’s particular and peculiar history.

Site sketch of the Stratford Waterfront area of the Olympicopolis project, part of the winning proposal submitted by Allies and Morrison. LLDC



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TOWARDS

A V&A

RESEARCH

Lina Hakim

INSTITUTE

WHO WE ARE

On an afternoon in December 2014 a group of experts — academics, practitioners and professionals from different fields — gathered at a research conference. In a messy bunker-like space, they took scalpel, scissors, pen and glue to printed reproductions from an eighteenth-century album of designs for textiles. This was certainly not the traditional conference setting at which similar groups of specialists usually congregate and sit in silence to watch a succession of Power Point presentations. And, although it was fun, it was not a trivial recreational activity either. What the assembly was engaged in was thought-provoking, collaborative and object-led research.

Divided into four mixed-discipline groups, the participants were interrogating an object by literally taking it apart. This was concrete hands-on thinking. Each group was tasked with examining a theoretical dimension of “un-making things” practically. What narratives could be unravelled by extracting plot elements from the album’s pages and stringing them into stories? What codes deciphered by identifying types and symbols and interpreting them? What information uncovered by gathering data and mapping it? What processes unpacked by tracing patterns and procedures and reconstructing them? The discussions were open and noisy, but also conceptually rigorous. Unusual ideas were tested freely, and risk was encouraged — this was devised as a place for experimentation with plenty of room for failure.

Earlier in the day the group took part in an object-handling session with the real thing: an album of designs by James Leman, a master weaver, manufacturer and designer working in eighteenth-century Spitalfields. Drawn in pencil and ink and painted in watercolour, they form the world’s earliest surviving set of designs for woven silk. It was a rare opportunity to study the loose pages of the album, which has been unbound as it awaits vital conservation. Participants heard responses to the album from different perspectives — including those of curators of textiles and designers, weavers, historians, archivists, digital media professionals, paper and book conservators and conservation scientists — building a multi-faceted understanding of the object. In a series of panel presentations, pioneers in cross-disciplinary object-led research described initiatives and shared their experiences, locating the event’s proceedings in the context of the latest thinking on the subject. Behind-the-scenes visits to conservation studios and exhibition tours led to further discussions of methods, opportunities and resources.

This was the kind of experimental research project that a V&A Research Institute (VARI) is being created to deliver.

The gathering was part of a two-day workshop on “Unravelling — Methodologies & Historiographies”, one of several endeavours developed in the context of a VARI pilot project generously supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Launched in January 2014, this pilot took the V&A’s textile and fashion collections — and its newly opened Clothworkers’ Centre — as a testing ground to explore models and identify needs for a V&A Research Institute. The events organised were all collective projects involving shared spaces, a common agenda, a range of specialisms and a network of partners and stakeholders. These VARI experiments



Far left: “Unravelling – Methodologies & Historiographies” workshop, December 2014
Left: design for woven silk from the Leman Album, by James Leman, 1708–1709

sought to enable the sharing of tools, methodologies and approaches across disciplines in order to produce unexpected insights and suggest new models of research and practice.

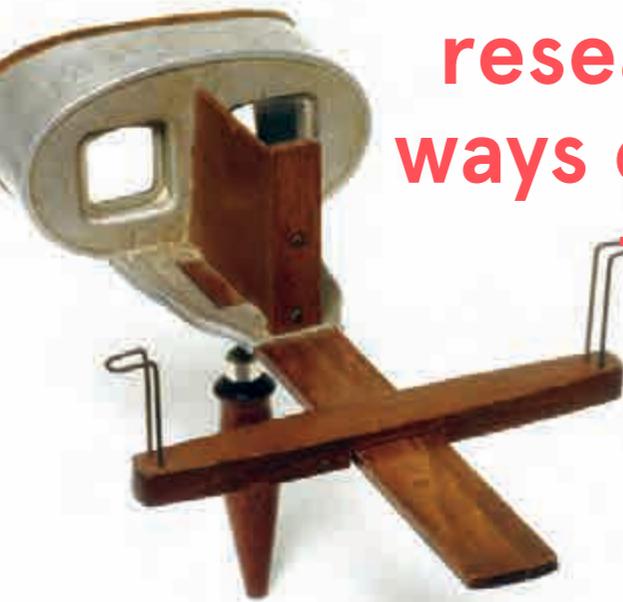
A second two-day workshop, “Weaving — Making & Thinking” (April 2015), focused on links between making and thinking and stitched together textile collections, machinery, sample books and curatorial expertise across the Science Museum and the V&A. Happening at the fringe of regular operations and activities within each field of practice or academic discipline, VARI projects draw questions from these silos and ideally feed back into their protocols and inquiries.

Experiments are usually elaborated around a matter of concern, theory, method, or focal object, which is then investigated within specified parameters and with a suitable team of collaborators. They can be problem-making as well as problem-solving and have the distinct advantage of allowing for failure: they offer a “safe” environment for testing models to their limit, playing with things and playing them out. The ongoing “A history of an object in 100 worlds” project, for example, was sparked by wondering what would happen if the premise of the British Museum’s landmark series “A History of the World in 100 Objects” were flipped on its head. Instead of 100 objects providing a history of the world, it proposes to present 100 different perspectives on a single object. In a series of five-minute “object pitches”, members of staff from across the museum made a case for the object they would chose and explained their reasons.

Exploring ways of investigating things as bearers and producers of knowledge, VARI experiments foster engagements at the level of encounter, production, use, interpretation and (re-)appropriation. They can use practice-based methods to study abstract concepts, and can test the practical application of theoretical propositions. One typical activity, on the theme of “String Surfaces & Curve-Stitching”, examined ways of understanding surfaces through handling and construction. Beginning with a tour of the mathematics gallery at the Science Museum, it looked at the surface-orientated quality of string by engaging participants in curve-stitching, a children’s recreation pioneered by the nineteenth-century self-taught mathematician Mary Everest Boole. VARI investigations also trial innovative formats in an effort to put different kinds of research into conversation on equivalent terms. A good example is a longer-term project, set up in collaboration with Professor Roger Kneebone (Imperial College; Wellcome Trust) and the Art Workers’ Guild. Structured as a series of “Encounters on the Shop Floor” between practitioners of different kinds, it draws comparisons between practice-based knowledge and theoretical thinking to interrogate distinctions and hierarchies.



“Museum-based research can inspire new ways of thinking, learning, training and making”



Some of the objects proposed by V&A staff to be included in the project “A history of an object in 100 worlds” (left to right): stereoscope, by Underwood & Underwood, 1901; John Pasche, artwork for the Rolling Stones lips and tongue logo, 1970. Purchased with support from the Art Fund, the Mavis Alexander bequest and the American Friends of the V&A through the generosity of Chris and Nicky Thom © Musidor BV; Jester Sunglasses, Oliver Goldsmith Eyewear, 1954. Given by A. Oliver Goldsmith, in memory of his father, Charles Oliver Goldsmith; commedia dell’arte mask, moulded leather, Italy, 1700–1725

All VARI experiments are generative: they can produce knowledge, offer a deeper understanding of processes, develop new methods and technologies, support expanded networks of collaboration and/or build cultural capital. Successful ones can be developed into curated platforms for research, collaboration and implementation, transforming the laboratory into a research and development setting. Unsuccessful experiments become practical exercises or analytical case studies and provide research toolboxes and tips for best practice. Documentation, assessment and dissemination are key to both kinds of output. Explorations extend research frameworks to include exhibitions, artefacts and related practices; and new channels and interfaces are developed to do justice to these different ways of working with material culture. One such platform is a series of “object lessons”, brief interviews and short presentations about projects, processes and practices that constitute research in the context of a museum collection. Published on the VARI pilot project’s website, these form object lessons both in the sense of their focus on artefacts and as practical examples of the various kinds of reflection and questioning that can be brought

to bear on objects and on the range of practices articulated around them. Current VARI online resources include an archive of past events and related materials, links to parallel initiatives and projects by our partners, and a growing bibliography of key texts in object-based research (based on the reading list of an internal “Thinking Things Reading Group”).

VARI projects always operate in both a public register and one of knowledge production. This is not the type of research that involves withdrawing from the world to better attend to it: it is about creating new forms of knowledge that bridge the gap between specialised concerns, tools and skills on one hand and public understanding, interest and engagement on the other. Making public what happens behind the scenes (through display, demonstration and opportunities for participation) and sharing insights into the practice of research are key. Ultimately, VARI experiments demonstrate how museum-based research can inspire new ways of thinking, learning, training and making.



Lina Hakim is an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Research Fellow working on the pilot project for a V&A Research Institute



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AND

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HIGHLIGHTS

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**V&A Annual Review
2014–15**

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