

Out on Display

A selection of LGBTQ-related objects on display in the V&A

Detail of printed silk designed by Jean Cocteau, probably made in Paris, 1938. V&A T.274-1974.

V&A

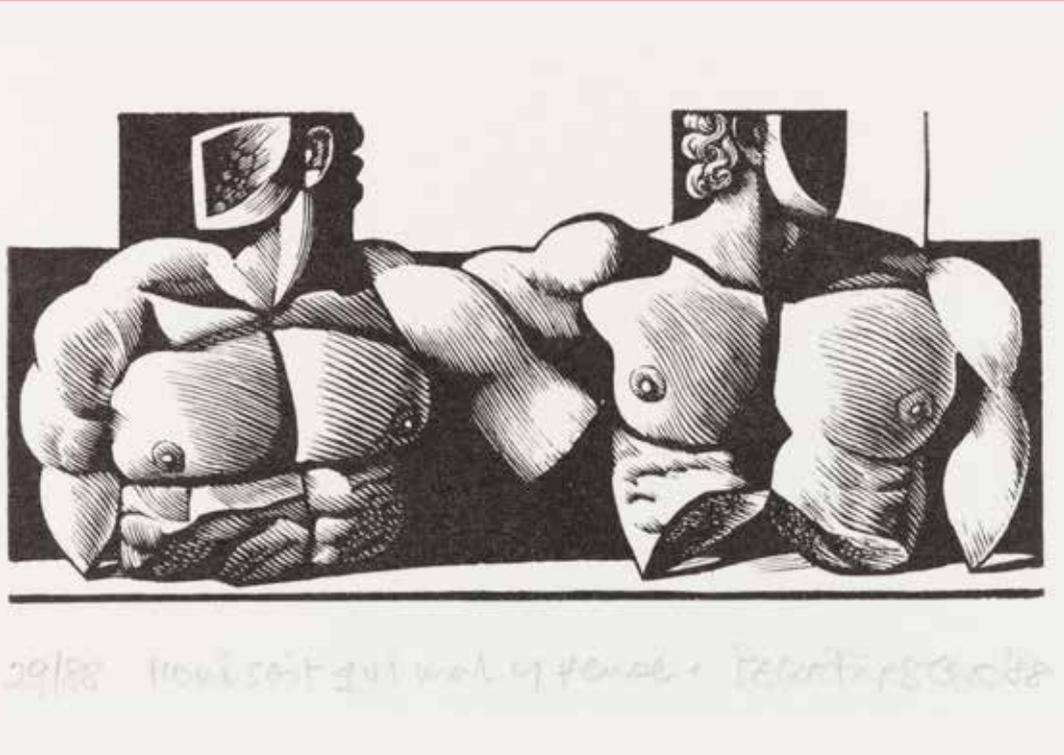
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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) histories can be found in numerous objects within the V&A's rich collections. This guide features 20 objects currently on display which possess a variety of LGBTQ connections and narratives.

This selection aims to highlight how objects can help us to recognise and explore the presence of LGBTQ individuals and communities within different time periods and cultures; encouraging discussion of both gender and sexual identities.

First launched to coincide with the 2014 Pride in London Parade, this guide is a 'work-in-progress' which we are continuing to develop. Please see the back cover for details of how to let us know your thoughts.

This guide should be used in conjunction with the V&A map



Coin, head of the Emperor Hadrian
Roman, gold c.118 AD
A.681-1910
On display in room 8

Hadrian, who is commemorated on this gold *aureus* coin, was known as one of the 'Five Good Emperors' of ancient Rome, who maintained almost a century of peace for the empire. A patron of the arts and a lover of Hellenic culture, Hadrian's love for the Greek youth Antinous was commemorated by him in erotic verse.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Antinous
Zoffoli workshop
Italy (Rome), bronze, late 18th century
A.15-1974
On display in room 117

Antinous, who came of humble origins, was one of Hadrian's many lovers, but the only one to be so favoured. After his early and mysterious death, Hadrian founded the city of Antinopolis in his memory, and had him deified. This bronze statuette is an 18th century copy of the 'Capitoline Antinous', a marble statue excavated at Hadrian's villa and believed to have been a portrait of the youth. Such bronzes were popular souvenirs for wealthy travellers on the Grand Tour. The Capitoline Antinous is now thought to be a Roman copy of a Greek statue of the god Hermes, commemorated by him in erotic verse.



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**Hindu God Shiva as Ardhanishvara
(Lord Who Is Half Woman)
Northern India, sandstone,
Kushan period 150-200
IM.5-1931
On display in room 47B**

Ardhanarishvara is a composite form of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati. Shiva is a popular Hindu deity and within Shaivism is regarded as the Supreme God. Ardhanarishvara is one of the most popular iconographic forms of Shiva, found in temples and shrines dedicated to Shiva throughout India and South-east Asia.

The combined figure is a statement of inclusiveness and completeness. It symbolises the combination of masculine and feminine energies of the universe, and the bi-unity of male and female in God.

This sculpture, from the early Kushan period, is amongst the earliest known examples of the subject. The figure is divided vertically – Shiva is distinguishable by his taut muscular form and aroused penis projecting from his waistband. Parvati's half is more curved in form and displays a single rounded breast. Her hair is shown in the feminine Kushan style with a flat oval bun in front and the remainder pulled back. The figure stands against a phallus-like *linga* (Shiva's emblem), with anatomical markings on the reverse making phallic-associations explicit.

Anthropomorphic jug

England, red earthenware with applied and incised decoration and traces of glazing, late 13th or early 14th century

C.50-1929

On display in room 10A

Vessels depicting human characteristics have been produced for centuries. This early example of a 'face jar' is unusual for being decorated with both male and female features. The clay has been pulled outwards to resemble female breasts with protruding nipples and the face has a beard made from a strip of applied clay. This unexpected combination of genders was likely intended to cause surprised amusement at the dining table or drinking establishment as the jug was displayed and used.



Jug fragment

France (La Chapelle des Pots), buff earthenware with coloured glazes, early 17th century

206-1906

On display in room 137

Vessels designed to entertain or puzzle guests were particularly popular during the 17th and 18th centuries. The suggestive position of the spout in relation to the female-presenting figure on this 17th-century jug was quite deliberate. The combining of different gender traits like this was often found presented for the purpose of comic or sexual innuendo.

However crude their initial intention, today objects like this can be seen to demonstrate a long history of playful challenges to the notion of binary gender.



Ganymede
Guillame Cousteau
France, marble, c.1760
A.15-1964
On display in room 61

The Trojan prince Ganymede was supposedly the most beautiful of all mortals. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the god Zeus desired Ganymede and sent an eagle (or disguised himself as one) to bear the youth to Mount Olympus. There, Ganymede was appointed cup-bearer to the gods, rendered immortal and eternally youthful.

The Ganymede myth was an important homoerotic symbol in ancient art. In poetry, he became a symbol for the beautiful young male who attracted homosexual desire and love. From his Roman name, Catamitus, derives the term 'catamite'; referring to the younger or passive companion in male relationships.

During the Renaissance, artists focused on the Platonic interpretation of the myth, as an allegory of spiritual ascent. By the time Cousteau produced this sculpture, Ganymede had been heterosexualised as a playful erotic symbol in Rococo art. Here, he places his arm affectionately around an eagle. Compared with earlier representations, this eagle is small, reversing the power dynamic in Ganymede's relationship to Zeus.



Ganymede Feeding the Eagle
Richard Evans
Possibly Italy, oil on paper laid on canvas, 1822
Given by the artist
36-1870
On display in room 82

Portrait painter and copyist Richard Evans (1784–1871) produced this oil sketch in 1822, as preparation for an experimental fresco. Evans spent many years in Rome, where he tried imitating ancient wall paintings, seemingly aiming to create works that appeared 'authentically antique'.

The eagle here is larger than in Cousteau's sculpture, but the exact dynamic between the eagle and Ganymede is difficult to determine. The highlighting of Ganymede's soft skin and the turn of his head towards the viewer, lend themselves to homoerotic interpretation. Evans appears to have based Ganymede's pose on Michelangelo's sculpture of Bacchus (1496-97), which was itself modelled on work by the ancients and noted for its androgynous qualities and soft, rather than muscular, flesh.



William Beckford

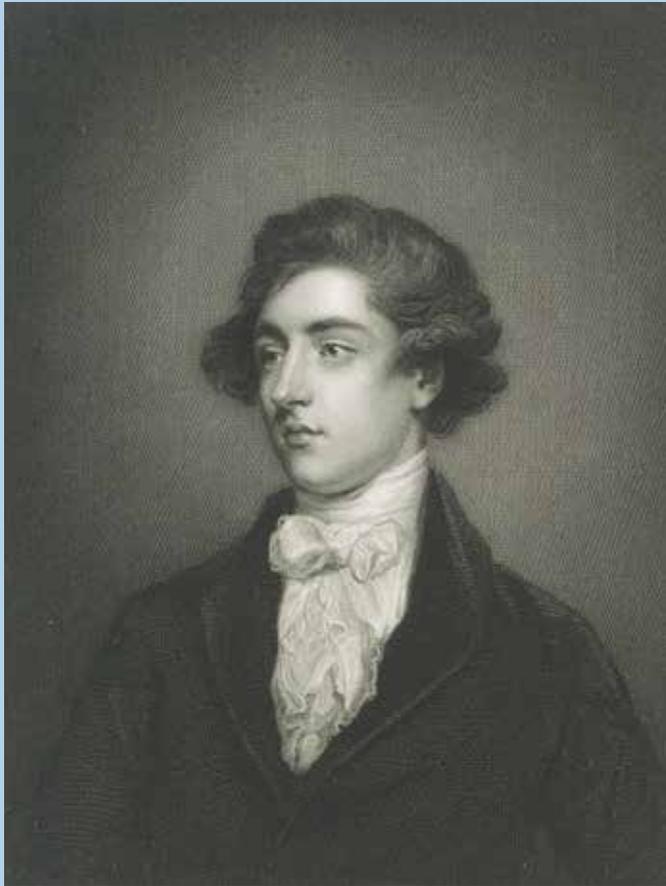
T. A. Dean after Sir Joshua Reynolds P.R.A.

England, engraving on paper, c.1800

E.2046-1919

On display in room 120

Art collecting and 'deviance' were often linked in the 18th century imagination. Many leading collectors, most of whom were wealthy and male, led 'scandalous' lives. William Beckford (1760–1844) was one such personality. A compulsive collector of paintings and furniture, Beckford exiled himself from England when he was discovered having simultaneous affairs with his cousin's wife and the teenage William Courtenay.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Cravat

Grinling Gibbons

England, carved limewood, c.1690

W.181-1928

On display in room 118A

Horace Walpole (1717–97), another collector of importance, also had a notable private life. He never married, wrote affectionate letters to male friends, and contemporaries often commented on his effeminacy. This has encouraged biographers to speculate that he was gay or asexual. This wooden cravat was part of Walpole's collection and worn by him to play a joke on a French visitor. The 18th century was a period of relative sexual tolerance among the aristocracy. However, fear of 'effeminacy' became a major concern, expressed in 'Macaroni' stereotypes of extravagant men, fond of foreign art, with implied homosexual tendencies.



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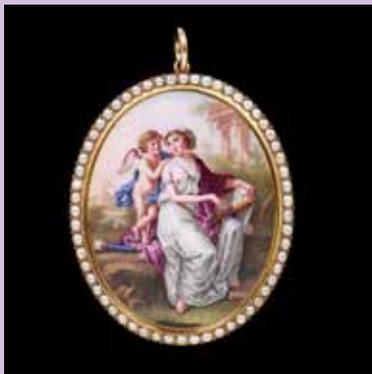
**Sappho, inspired by Love, Composes
an Ode to Venus (after Angelica Kauffman)**
Switzerland, gold pendant with pearl border, c.1800
M.280-1919
On display in room 91M

Born on the island of Lesbos around 620BC, little is known for certain about Sappho's life. In antiquity she was regularly counted among the greatest of poets and was often referred to as 'The Poetess'. Plato hailed her as 'the tenth Muse'.

Little of her work survives but the fragments that do express passions for a variety of people of all genders and include proclamations of love for women and girls. Often held as an icon of the erotic, her attitudes toward love have attracted a great deal of attention throughout history.

Sappho's name is the origin of the word *sapphic* and the term *lesbian* derives from the name of her birthplace. However, both of these terms only came to be applied to developing concepts of female homosexuality in the late 19th century.

Today Sappho's significance can be regarded as largely formed through the history of her reception; crucially the creation, adaption and appropriation of her reputation by moralists and others in relation to their own beliefs and cultural contexts.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Mask of a Dead Faun
Glyn Philpot
England (London), cast bronze, c.1923
A.4-2008
On display in room 21

Glyn Philpot (1884–1937) made his name as a painter of society portraits (including that of Siegfried Sassoon), but in the 1920s he became interested in sculpture and the male nude. This dramatic change of direction was largely due to tensions between his public life of Christian observance and academic painting, and his private homosexuality and desire for artistic experiment.

Mask of a Dead Faun shows the model George Bridgeman, an 'affable drifter', whose good looks and physique represented an ideal for Philpot. From 1919 onwards Bridgeman modelled repeatedly for Philpot who depicted him in a number of striking figurative paintings.

This cast was made around the same time that Philpot was elected a full member of the Royal Academy of Arts. It was the only of his sculptural works that sold well during his lifetime. In the 1930s Philpot went on to adopt a more experimental modernist style and some of his later works were censured for depicting overt sexuality.



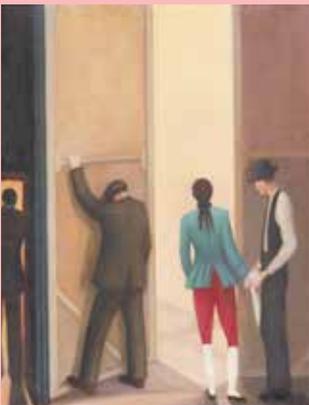
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**Leonide Massine Waiting for his Cue
Gluck (Hannah Gluckstein)
England, oil on canvas, 1925
Given by British Theatre Museum Association
S.83-1986
On display in room 104A**

Born into a wealthy Jewish family, Hannah Gluckstein (1895–1978) defied conventional roles expected of young women of her class and time. Family wealth allowed her freedoms in lifestyle and enabled her to pursue her love of painting. She trained at St John's Wood School of Art and joined the artists' colony at Lamorna, Cornwall. She painted landscapes, floral-pieces and portraits but did not identify with any artistic movements.

At 23 she started insisting on being known only as Gluck, cropped her hair and dressed exclusively in men's clothing. Gluck lived openly with women throughout her life and some of her best known works are stylised floral-pieces inspired by the floral creations of her companion and lover Constance Spry.

Gluck's friends and contemporaries included Radclyffe Hall, Virginia Woolf, Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward. This painting shows the dancer Massine about to make his first entrance in a revue by Noel Coward and Philip Braham. It is in a 'Gluck Frame' – a frame designed and patented by Gluck, which became an integral part of Modernist and Art Deco interiors of the 1930s.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/The estate of Gluck

**Screen
Eileen Gray
France (Paris), wood with lacquer, c.1928
W.40-1977
On display in room 135**

Born into an aristocratic Irish family, the designer and architect Eileen Gray (1878–1976) lived an unconventional life. Gray's visit to the Paris Exposition of 1900 sparked her passion for lacquerwork. By 1906 Gray had apprenticed herself to Seizo Sugawara, a Japanese lacquer master living in Paris.

It was not until her forties that Gray achieved recognition. Her first commission, a Parisian apartment for which she designed now-iconic pieces such as the Bibendum chair, was a critical success, enabling her to open a gallery in 1922. This screen is typical of her aesthetic: minimal and Japanese-inspired.

Living in the avant garde of 1920s Paris, Gray – who was bisexual – was a notable member of Natalie Barney's feminist salon. Barney, an American expatriate and lesbian, reigned over a circle which included the painter Romaine Brooks and the left-wing writer Elisabeth de Gramont. After World War Two, Gray's works faded into obscurity, but enjoyed a rediscovery in the 1960s.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Evening dress

Charles James

France (Paris), printed silk, 1938

T.274-1974

On display in room 40

At first glance, the playful print on this vivid evening gown is merely a collection of disembodied faces, tumbling over the fabric in the Surrealist style so popular in 1930s couture. In fact, the faces are portraits: of the French writer and artist Jean Cocteau, and his lover and muse Jean Marais.

The fabric was designed by Cocteau himself; a multi-talented man whose activities spanned the theatre, film, poetry and the visual arts. Marais starred in many of Cocteau's films including *La Belle et La Bête* and they remained close friends until Cocteau's death in 1963. Charles James, the gown's Anglo-American designer, used this fabric to create a subversive and witty love letter to his friends.

Cocteau, Marais and James all moved in the same cosmopolitan, tolerant and sexually liberated artistic circles of period – as did the photographer and costume designer Cecil Beaton, who donated this gown to the V&A.



Lou Reed in Concert

Blue Egg Printing and Design Ltd.

Great Britain, offset lithograph, 1973

Given by Publicity and Display Ltd.

S.4338-1995

On display in room 106B

This signature image of Lou Reed (1942–2013) was first used as the cover of his solo album *Transformer* (1972). It is reused here to promote the tour of his follow-up album, *Berlin* (1973).

Aged 14, Reed was confined to an institution where he endured electric shock treatment to 'cure' him of supposed homosexual tendencies. Following university, he gravitated to New York where he fell into Andy Warhol's liberated Factory scene as frontman of pioneering rock group, *The Velvet Underground* - their name lifted from the title of a book exploring so-called deviant sexuality in 1963.

The Factory was bursting at the seams with revolutionary figures in gay and trans* liberation, including Holly Woodlawn, Penny Arcade, and Candy Darling. Reed was known for surrounding himself with drag queens and transgendered people and had a seminal relationship with a trans* woman called Rachel Humphreys, who accompanied him on tour and appears in his lyrics and album artwork during the mid-1970s.

Through his songs, Reed helped bring diverse characters into the mainstream consciousness, with 'Candy Says', 'Sister Ray', 'Lady Godiva's Operation', and most famously 'Walk on the Wild Side', all having overtly queer, illuminating lyrics.



Vase

Akio Takamori

USA, glazed stoneware, 1985

C.59-1986

On display in room 142

The Japanese-American ceramicist Akio Takamori (1950–) creates pieces which draw upon traditional Japanese forms to represent the human body in a variety of whimsical and unsettling positions. This vase, in the shape of a flattened oval, represents two nude women embracing each other. Its subject matter recalls erotic *shunga* prints, as does the style in which the figures are outlined; while the shape of the vessel resembles an enlarged *netsuke* (a type of carved fastener for clothing).

Looking at this vase poses the question, 'what makes an object "queer"?' It undoubtedly has erotic connotations – but for whose gaze and whose pleasure? Does any representation of same-sex nudity or physical intimacy automatically make an object a part of LGBTQ history? Or does it depend upon who is producing, purchasing or viewing the object?



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Costumes for *Because We Must*

Designed by Leigh Bowery

Made by Mr. Pearl

London, crewel work & appliqué, 1987

S.101 & 102-2010

On display in room 105

For maverick gay artist, costume designer, club promoter and poseur, Leigh Bowery (1961-1994), fashion and clothing were an integral part of his performance art and public persona. Born in Australia, Bowery moved to London in 1980 where he later hosted nights at the infamous Taboo nightclub. He became a leading figure in underground clubbing scenes, infamous for his outrageous performances and flamboyant costumes.

Bowery played a key role in Michael Clark's post-punk dance company with whom he performed and designed costumes. These costumes were created for a performance of *Because We Must* - their design based on one of Bowery's own clubbing outfits. Bowery's distinctive, androgynous style had an important impact on the development of post-modern drag and the influence of his designs and performances is still visible in the fashion and art worlds of today.



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'KISSING DOESN'T KILL, GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO'

Designed by Gran Fury : Published by ACT UP

USA, offset lithograph, 1989

Given by Shaun Cole

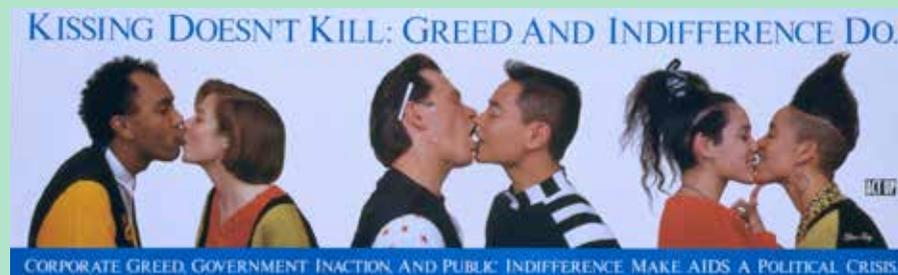
E.472-1993

On display in room 76

Gran Fury was a collective of artists and designers dedicated to promoting AIDS/HIV awareness. They used a variety of media in their efforts to undermine the complacency and inaction of authorities and companies in combating AIDS. Their inventive and thought-provoking posters intervened in public spaces (ordinarily saturated by commercial media), often appropriating the visual language of advertising. This poster is stylistically reminiscent of a 'United Colours of Benetton' advertising campaign at the time and was designed for display on public transport in New York City and San Francisco. Loring McAlpin of Gran Fury has explained:

'The press, government and the medical establishment were not delivering information or countering stigma; we wanted our activist voice to fill that void. Therefore, we tried to insert our message seamlessly into those spaces that were normally occupied by authority, and we used whatever we could to grab attention.'

The depiction of couples of different ethnicities and genders kissing evokes 'Kiss-Ins' – large public gatherings of people kissing to demonstrate their belief that all individuals should be granted the same freedoms to publicly express affection for each other.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

'My Heroes'

Grayson Perry

England, earthenware with decoration, 1994

Bought with the assistance of Dennis and Charlotte Stevenson

C.10-2009

On display in room 142

Turner Prize-winning artist Grayson Perry (1960–) regularly examines the subjects of masculinity and transvestism within his artwork. He often appears in public dressed as his female alter-ego Claire and has spoken frankly about his life as a transvestite. In his autobiography *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*, Grayson Perry describes discovering the existence of transvestitism at fifteen by stumbling across a newspaper article. It discussed transvestites and transsexuals and featured a photograph of the former Vogue model, actress and socialite April Ashley.

Born in Liverpool in 1935, April Ashley MBE was one of the first people in the world to undergo pioneering gender reassignment surgery. Her tireless campaigning for transgender equality has made her an icon and inspiration to many. Presenting her on this vase as a personal hero, Perry evokes the tradition of decorating domestic products to celebrate folk-heroes.

Ashley's life is the subject of the exhibition *April Ashley, Portrait of a Lady*, at the Museum of Liverpool, Sept 2013-March 2015.



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Grayson Perry

Tom of Finland stamps
Designed by Timo Berry, offset lithography, 2014
Given by Andrei Korepanov
CD.55:1-2014
On display in room 74A

Tom of Finland (1920–1991) was the creator of some of the most enduring and erotic drawings of gay male life in the 20th century. Since his work burst onto the scene in 1956, it has fuelled the culture, fashions and fantasies of subsequent generations of gay men.

Born Touko Laaksonen, in a small village outside Turku in Finland, he moved to Helsinki aged 19 to attend art school. His studies were almost immediately interrupted by the outbreak of WWII and he joined the army. Plunged into a hyper masculine, uniformed environment, the war years provided him with a lifetime of inspiration.

Eschewing the gay subcultures he discovered for being too effeminate, Touko assumed his famed pseudonym and created a fantasy world of square-jawed bikers, beefy lumberjacks and saucy sailors. Snapped up by *Physique Pictorial*, the leading magazine of its kind, Tom's star never waned. His work, alongside artists like Blade and George Quaintance, was a precursor to the emerging defiant queer subculture, one which rejected homophobia, invisibility, and indignity. In a time when it was still illegal to be gay, Tom's work exuded strength and pride.

These stamps are from a series of three issued by the Finnish postal service in September 2014. Despite opposition to them, first day cover pre-orders sold out, purchased from 178 countries. This particular envelope was sent from Finland to Russia in the midst of diminishing acceptance of homosexuality in Russia.



Find More LGBTQ Objects with Search the Collections

Search the Collections is an online database that provides public access to over 1.1 million catalogue records and over 400,000 images of objects in our collection. You can search here for more information on the objects featured in this guide and to find other LGBTQ-related objects.

We will soon be implementing revised terminology for the cataloguing of our LGBTQ-related material. At the present time, it is advisable to enter the term 'Gender and Sexuality' when searching for such objects. We frequently revisit and reassess our collections to identify further LGBTQ-related objects and so the number of results will increase over time. Some objects are not on permanent display, but can be viewed by making an appointment with the relevant collections department.

Search the Collections: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Contact V&A collection departments:
www.vam.ac.uk/contactus



Stick Handle, carved ivory, Netherlandish, probably ca. 1750. V&A 4714-1859

LGBTQ Histories at the V&A

The V&A offers a range of LGBTQ-focused events and activities throughout the year, such as gallery talks, film screenings and artist performances. Previous events have included: a 3 day film festival 'Classic, Camp, and Cult: Queer Film at the V&A'; gallery talks by artist-performer Bird la Bird; and a day of curator talks and tours to mark the 20th anniversary of the death of filmmaker Derek Jarman. Each February we mark LGBT History Month with a day of free activities.

Find out about future LGBTQ events at:
www.vam.ac.uk/whatson

You can also keep up-to-date with the Museum's LGBTQ Working Group's activities through our blog 'Out in the Museum':
www.vam.ac.uk/blog/section/out-in-the-museum

Comments

We are eager to hear your thoughts and comments.
Please email us at LGBTQ@vam.ac.uk



Costume design for Frank N. Furter in Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Show*, Robert Jones, Great Britain, 1981. V&A S.1093-1982