



PRESS RELEASE

V&A announces plans for new Photography Centre and expansion of its world-leading photography collection

vam.ac.uk | @V_and_A | #vamPhotography

Wednesday 5 April 2017



Today, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) announces the expansion of its vast collection of historic and contemporary photography with the transfer of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection from the Science Museum Group. The addition of over 270,000 photographs, 26,000 publications and 6,000 pieces of camera-related equipment reinforces the V&A's position as one of the most important photography collections in the world.

Through its FuturePlan development project, the V&A will establish a new Photography Centre, creating a new public space to celebrate, appreciate and study photography. Due to open in Autumn 2018, it will be accompanied by a Museum-wide photography festival and a new digital resource for photography enthusiasts around the world.

The creation of the Photography Centre will see the V&A more than double its current photography display area in original nineteenth-century picture galleries by 2018. Designed by David Kohn Architects, it will allow the V&A to display a larger number and range of photographs, negatives, camera technology, books and archival materials than ever before. The Photography Centre will also facilitate exciting events and activities. Phase two of the project will expand the gallery space further and provide a teaching and research space, a browsing library, and a studio and darkroom to enable photographers' residencies.

New purpose-built storage facilities have been created to house the expanded photography collection, and an extensive project to catalogue and digitise the RPS collection is now underway. This digitisation will provide web access and research resources for all audiences and photography lovers around the world. The Museum will also continue its programme of major photographic exhibitions at the V&A and other venues in the UK and overseas.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: *“Photography is set to become one of the defining collections of the 21st century V&A. We have been conserving and interpreting photography since 1852, and we are now delighted to welcome the RPS collection to the Museum. Today, the V&A cares for one of the most important photography collections in the world. We want to share this remarkable resource with audiences and photography enthusiasts on a global scale, both in person and through an unparalleled digital resource.”*

Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photographs at the V&A, said: *“The transfer of the RPS collection is a catalyst for a dramatic reimagining of the way in which photography is presented at the V&A. It will enable a major expansion of spaces, programme and infrastructure, creating a world centre for our visitors to enjoy, as well as an accessible resource for academic research and scholarship. The V&A’s Photography Centre will be one of the few places in the world where a chronological history of the medium illustrated with original photographs, equipment and archive material can always be seen. We want to reach beyond restrictive definitions of photography to embrace the broader cultures of the medium. We have exciting plans for the combined collections that celebrate the fine art of photography alongside its technology and look forward to working closely with the Royal Photographic Society on this.”*

The V&A’s newly combined photography collection charts the invention and international development of photography from the early 19th century to the present. The RPS collection includes:

- 270,000 photographs, including the world’s earliest photographic images made in the 1820s, unique daguerreotypes and pioneering colour photographs
- A mile-long library of books and journals
- Cameras and equipment associated with leading photographers
- Work by British pioneers including William Henry Fox Talbot, Hill & Adamson, Roger Fenton and Julia Margaret Cameron
- Major holdings by international artists such as Alfred Stieglitz, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Gertrude Käsebier, Paul Strand and Ansel Adams
- Contemporary photographs by leading British photographers, such as Sir Don McCullin, Martin Parr and Mark Power

The integration of the RPS collection with the V&A’s photography holdings unites precious objects, such as William Henry Fox Talbot’s first cameras with his handmade prints and 1844 publication, *The Pencil of Nature*. Julia Margaret Cameron’s camera lens joins her entrancing photographic portraits and letters, while Frederick Scott Archer’s glass-plate camera is reunited with the photographer’s prints. The V&A’s new Photography Centre will showcase these historic stories as well as many modern and contemporary images.

When not on display, photographs from the V&A's collection can be accessed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room. Professor Elizabeth Edwards, renowned historian of photography and anthropology, has recently been appointed Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professor at the V&A Research Institute (VARI). In September 2018, the V&A and Royal College of Art (RCA) will launch a new history of photography course as part of the History of Design MA programme.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

About V&A FuturePlan

FuturePlan is an ambitious programme of development which is transforming the V&A. The best contemporary designers are creating exciting new galleries and visitor facilities, while revealing and restoring the beauty of the original building. In the past 15 years, over 85% of the Museum's public spaces have been transformed, improving access and allowing the collections to be more elegantly and intelligently displayed. By introducing bold new architectural interventions, FuturePlan aims to delight and to inspire visitors, and to continue the Museum's tradition of championing new talent.

vam.ac.uk/info/futureplan

About the V&A photography collection

The V&A has collected photographs since it was founded in 1852. In 1977, the collection was designated the National Collection of the Art of Photography in recognition of its significance. Since then, the collection has grown to be one of the largest and most important in the world, comprising around 500,000 works before the transfer of the RPS collection. The collection encompasses the work of the world's leading historic and contemporary photographers.

vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs

About the V&A Prints & Drawings Study Room

In the V&A Prints & Drawings Study Room, visitors can study and enjoy thousands of objects not on display in the V&A's galleries, including photographs, paintings and drawings, designs, prints and computer art. The Study Room is open Tuesday to Friday and access is by appointment.

vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms

About the Royal Photographic Society

The Royal Photographic Society was established in 1853 for 'the promotion of the Art and Science of Photography, by the interchange of thought and experience amongst Photographers'. It started forming a collection from the 1890s which accelerated under J Dudley Johnston its first honorary curator. The Society and its Collection moved from London

to Bath in 1980 where it remained until 2003, when it was acquired by the Science Museum Group with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Art Fund and Yorkshire Forward. The Society is now a registered charity promoting photography and supporting photographers and a membership organisation open to everyone. It realises its objectives through exhibitions and competitions, workshops and courses, a distinctions and qualifications programme, and holds over 500 events across the UK. It also acts as an advocate for photography with the media and government.

rps.org

About David Kohn Architects

David Kohn Architects is a London-based practice working internationally on arts, education and residential projects. Established by David Kohn in 2007, the practice has gained a reputation for the quality of its design winning many awards including Young Architect of the Year, a D&AD Yellow Pencil and World Interior of the Year. Current projects include a new quad for New College, Oxford, and the refurbishment of the ICA.

davidkohn.co.uk

For further PRESS information about the V&A's photography collection and the new Photography Centre, please contact Laura Mitchell in the V&A press office on +44 (0) 20 7942 2503 or email l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk