



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

### **V&A launches global programme exploring reproduction of cultural heritage in digital age**

*International roundtable series to renew Sir Henry Cole convention in 150th anniversary year*

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A) is to spearhead a year of international debate around the reproduction of works of art and cultural heritage. In partnership with the Peri Charitable Foundation, the new programme – ReACH (Reproduction of Art and Cultural Heritage) – will see the global museum and heritage community convene for a series of five roundtables held around the world with contributions from partner institutions including the Louvre Museum, the State Hermitage Museum and The Smithsonian Institution.

Launching at UNESCO HQ in Paris on Thursday 18th May, the project will showcase best practice in the production, storage and dissemination of copies (whether physical or digital), and profile the technologies and techniques that are transforming how objects can be experienced and understood. Key speakers from a wide range of disciplines will be invited to share their professional experience and the many technical, legal, ethical and creative challenges facing practitioners will be openly debated.

The project will also mark the 150th anniversary of the 'International Convention for promoting universally Reproductions of Works of Art', written in 1867 by the V&A's first director, Sir Henry Cole.

His groundbreaking document prompted a period in which the making and sharing of reproductions for educational purposes flourished; museums created copies of great art and architecture from around the world, and the V&A itself opened its acclaimed Cast Courts in 1873. Whilst Cole's inspiring and enduring convention remains at the heart of the V&A's mission, ReACH will publish a new and updated version on the conclusion of the year's roundtables. This will provide practitioners around the world with guidance that reflects the vastly different world in which museums and their staff operate today.

ReACH builds on the V&A's long track record of engagement with this issue. Established as a place where knowledge and the enjoyment of the designed world would be promoted to the widest possible audience, the creation of reproductions including plaster casts, electrotypes and photography was at the core of the Sir Henry Cole's founding mission for the Museum. In 2016, the V&A partnered with La Biennale di Venezia on a special project *A World of Fragile Parts*, an examination of the threats faced by global heritage sites and how the production of copies might aid in the preservation of cultural artefacts.

In Autumn 2018, the Museum will complete its renovation of the Museum's vast, day-lit cast courts with the reopening of the 24-metre gallery containing casts of Trajan's Column and the Pórtico de la Gloria from the Cathedral at Santiago de Compostela in Spain. A new gallery will put the casts in context with a series of displays on the history of reproduction.

Dr Tristram Hunt, director of the V&A said:

*"The V&A's very first director, Sir Henry Cole, was remarkably prescient. He recognised the huge potential of reproductions as tools for global exchange and the sharing of knowledge, and his visionary work on this issue remains at the heart of our mission 150 years on. I am therefore delighted that the Museum is partnering with the Peri Charitable Foundation to launch this timely and vital project.*

*Our cultural heritage is under threat on many fronts, whilst new technologies and research are starting to transform the work of museums and the experience of our visitors. ReACH will allow the fantastic work already happening in this area to be celebrated and shared, and will provide a much-needed platform to debate the many complex challenges that accompany this issue.”*

Professor Bill Sherman, director of research and collections at the V&A said:

*“The technologies of today are reinventing conventional notions of preservation, and challenging the role of museums and those who work in them. We can produce, store, and disseminate objects in ways that no one working in a museum even one generation ago could have ever imagined: the opportunities are clearly huge, but the sector has lacked a clear roadmap. How do we grapple with new digital possibilities, and what legal protocols and standard operating procedures are needed to reflect the contemporary realities we face?*

*By convening the sector on an international stage, bringing together examples of best practice, debating the issues at hand, and drafting a new convention, ReACH can help chart a way forward for museums and bring clarity to an exciting but unwieldy issue. I’m hugely excited by its potential.”*

Ziyavudin Magomedov, founder of the Peri Charitable Foundation said:

*"When I set up the Peri Charitable Foundation I wanted to promote education, latest technologies and cultural heritage. I see our partnership with the V&A in this project as being in line with these goals. Peri Foundation is involved in a number of significant projects keeping cultural heritage alive using the latest technologies and educating young people in their use and importance. The digitization of cultural and historic artefacts can substantially add to the level of interest among young people and the ReACH project can become an important step in the increase of accessibility to cultural heritage for everyone."*

The first roundtable will be held on 19th July 2017 at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, with details of future dates and venues to be announced.

**ENDS**

**For further PRESS information please contact Benjamin Ward  
(benjamin@benjward.com; +44 (0) 7837 134 193)**

### **Notes to Editors**

- **About the V&A**

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 5000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

- **About the Peri Charitable Foundation**

The Peri Charitable Foundation was set up by Russian businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov in 2012 in order to support educational, cultural and social initiatives. Peri creates fresh educational options and provides access to the latest technologies so that young people with initiative and talent can fulfill their maximum potential; encourages and supports new approaches in education; Peri works to keep cultural heritage alive through the use of the latest technologies so that it will remain relevant into the future as a cultural identity and as an enrichment of the cultural and scholarly inheritance for all humanity.

[www.peri-foundation.com](http://www.peri-foundation.com)