



PRESS RELEASE

V&A unveils designs and first major supporter for new Photography Centre

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2 June 2017



Today, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) reveals the first visual of its new, state-of-the-art Photography Centre, and announces its first major supporter for the project – The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation. Designed by David Kohn Architects (DKA), the first phase of the V&A Photography Centre will more than double the display space dedicated to photography by Autumn 2018. It forms part of an ambitious two-phased FuturePlan development project to dramatically reimagine the display of the photographic collection at the V&A.

DKA's design for the Photography Centre will celebrate the original features of the V&A's nineteenth-century picture galleries, while creating a rich variation of atmosphere through the use of lighting, and clever climate control to ensure a stable environment for fragile artworks. A modular system of display cases that can be easily reconfigured will allow for greater flexibility and varied displays of a wide range of objects, from photographs to cameras, publications and archive materials, exploring the relationship between art and technology. DKA were chosen as the successful practice following an invited competition and submissions from a strong shortlist.

The newly released render gives a glimpse into one of the largest galleries within a suite of spectacular rooms to be dedicated to photography at the V&A. Previously referred to as Gallery 100, the original nineteenth-century picture gallery will be renamed 'The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery' in recognition of the generosity of The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation, the first major supporter of the Museum's Photography Centre. The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery will be a pivotal space within the new Centre, featuring a programme of displays showcasing both the greatest historic treasures from the V&A collection and cutting-edge contemporary photography.

David Bickle, Director of Design, Exhibitions and FuturePlan at the V&A, said: *“We were delighted with the quality and inventiveness of DKA’s submission for the V&A Photography Centre, which answered the brief in the most effective and creative way. DKA’s design fuses traditional gallery spaces with new interactive interventions that will completely revolutionise how visitors engage with the V&A’s photography collection. I’d like to thank The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation for its generous donation, which gets us one step closer to realising our ambitions.”*

David Kohn, Architect, said: *“We are delighted to be working with the V&A and their curatorial team on this landmark project, not least because of my personal passion for photography. Our approach has been to offer visitors the widest range of ways to engage with this world-leading collection, framed by the stunning architecture of the refurbished galleries.”*

Bernard Lee Schwartz (1914-1978), known as Bern, took up photography late in life with great dedication and dynamism. A successful American businessman, at the age of sixty he began taking pictures and flourished as a portrait photographer, depicting well-known figures from across the globe. Bern and his wife Ronny were regular visitors to the UK and admirers of Britain’s museums and art galleries. In his short but prolific career, Bern photographed more than two hundred leading political, religious and cultural figures. His varied subjects included artists David Hockney and Henry Moore, dancers Dame Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, and royals Prince Charles and Louis Mountbatten. Bern’s 1978 portrait of Sir Roy Strong, Director of the V&A from 1973 to 1987, has recently entered the Museum as a gift to The American Friends of the V&A through the generosity of The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation.

Michael Schwartz, son of Bern Schwartz and President of The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation commented: *“The V&A has a world-class photography collection and the new Photography Centre, featuring a gallery devoted to the history of photography, will attract a vast international audience. We are delighted to help the Museum share this exceptionally rich resource. My parents considered London to be their second home and would have been thrilled to be a part of this project.”*

Further design details and new visuals for the V&A’s Photography Centre will be released later this year. Photographs from the V&A’s collection can be accessed by visitors in the Prints & Drawings Study Room. In addition to developing the Photography Centre, the Museum has upgraded its storage facilities to better house its photography collection. An extensive project to catalogue and digitise the recently transferred Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection is also underway to provide web access and research resources for audiences around the world. The V&A continues its programme of photographic exhibitions at the Museum, and other venues in the UK and overseas.

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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 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 800,000 works including the recently transferred Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection. The V&A photography collection encompasses the work of the world's leading historic and contemporary photographers.

vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs

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

About The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation

The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation seeks to advance public knowledge and appreciation of photography as an art form. To further this purpose the Foundation has sponsored projects in museums, libraries, schools and universities and donated photographs from its archive. The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation previously supported the V&A exhibition on the career of the photographic pioneer Julia Margaret Cameron (November 2015 - February 2016), whose work was first exhibited by the Museum in the 1860s.

bernschwartz.org

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