



V&A acquires Queen Victoria's sapphire and diamond coronet – a spectacular love token designed by Prince Albert

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Today, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) announces it has acquired one of Queen Victoria's most important jewels. The stunning sapphire and diamond coronet designed by Prince Albert in 1840, the royal couple's wedding year, has been generously gifted to the V&A by William Bollinger. In

2019, the bicentenary year of the birth of both Victoria and Albert, the coronet will go on display as the centre-piece of the Museum's newly-refreshed William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery.

The design of the coronet was based on the Saxon Rautenkranz, or circlet of rue, which is set diagonally across the shield in Prince Albert's coat of arms. It was made by Joseph Kitching, a partner at Kitching and Abud, who were appointed 'Jewellers to the Queen' in 1837. In 1842, the coronet featured in the first and most renowned portrait of the Queen painted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter. The painting depicts Victoria as a figure of youth and beauty, regal, but free of the crown and sceptre, the traditional emblems of monarchy. The image became instantly famous and was shared throughout Europe and the British Empire in a series of replicas, copies and engravings. The coronet also represents a symbol of enduring love. In 1866, on the first occasion when Victoria felt able to attend the state opening of Parliament following Albert's death in 1861, she chose to wear the coronet instead of her crown, which was carried on a cushion.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: *"We are thrilled to have acquired Queen Victoria's sapphire coronet, so lovingly designed by Prince Albert. Representing both the passion of the young royal couple, and a powerful symbol of the widowed queen, it will be of deep fascination to visitors and scholars alike. We are extremely grateful to William Bollinger for his incredible generosity. His gift allows us to display a jewel so intimately associated with Victoria and Albert that it will instantly become part of the identity of the Museum itself."*

Victoria and Albert married in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace on 10 February 1840. The day before their wedding, Albert gifted Victoria a sapphire brooch, and the couple took great pleasure in arranging Victoria's collection of sapphires into a suite of jewels, of which the coronet became the centre-piece. The coronet was inherited by King Edward VII and then by King George V and Queen Mary, who gifted it to their daughter, Princess Mary, on her marriage to Viscount Lascelles in 1922. It was subsequently sold into private hands, and in 2015 became the subject of an application to export it from the UK. This was later withdrawn. When it goes on public display in 2019, the coronet will become one of the star objects in the V&A's world-class jewellery gallery, which tells the story of jewellery in Europe from the ancient world to the present day.

The story of the V&A is inextricably linked to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The Museum's origins lie in the Great Exhibition of 1851, devised and championed by Albert. Following the Exhibition, Albert ensured its profits were used to create a cultural district of museums and colleges in South Kensington devoted to art and science education. The Museum of Ornamental Art, installed in Marlborough House in 1852, was moved to become part of the South Kensington Museum, opened to the public by Victoria and Albert in 1857. In 1866, Victoria described the Museum as 'this most flourishing, interesting and beautiful Institution, which was virtually my beloved one's creation'. In 1899, she proposed that it should be re-named the Albert Museum to commemorate his leading role in its establishment, but conceded that it should become the Victoria and Albert Museum instead.

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Notes to Editors

For further PRESS information please contact the V&A press office on +44 (0) 20 7942 2502 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

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

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.