Year at a glance ......................................................... 4
Chairman’s foreword .................................................. 8
Director’s foreword .................................................... 10

2016–17 exhibitions and displays .................................. 12
Inspiring the next generation ........................................ 18
A national museum .................................................... 22
Keeping it live ......................................................... 26
A website for the 21st-century public ............................... 28
A year of the Museum ................................................. 32
Acquisitions ............................................................... 36
Researching together ................................................... 41
Leading the past into the present ..................................... 44
In the best light: The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries 50
Around the world ......................................................... 52
David Bowie is ... on tour .............................................. 53
International activities .................................................. 54

Financials ................................................................. 58
Support ................................................................. 59
Art Fund Museum of the Year
The V&A was awarded the prestigious Art Fund Museum of the Year prize in July 2016. This was a defining moment in the V&A’s history and cements its place as one of the greatest museums in the world.

You Say You Want a Revolution?
The autumn exhibition You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966–1970, sponsored by Levi’s® with sound experience by Sennheiser, explored the cultural impact of the late 1960s and proved to be one of the V&A’s most popular exhibitions, attracting 243,387 visitors.

Opus Anglicanum
Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery, support generously provided by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts and Hand & Lock, brought some of the world’s finest examples of medieval embroidery to the V&A, marking the first time many of these works had been shown together. This was a once-in-a-generation opportunity as they will never be seen together again.

Reopening The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection
The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection celebrates some of the most beautiful objects ever made, many in precious materials and many on a small scale. They are now redisplayed in a newly refurbished gallery that opened in November 2016.

London Design Festival
99,000 people visited the V&A during the London Design Festival, the eighth year in a row the Museum has been the central hub of the festival.

Fashion in Motion
The V&A was transformed into a showcase of international fashion with three major events this year. Leading designers Christopher Raeburn and House of Holland held live catwalk shows, while a group of Central Saint Martin’s students inspired by Cristóbal Balenciaga took over the ground floor of the V&A.

Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered
Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered at the V&A Museum of Childhood celebrated the joy of playing board games with over 100 iconic objects from the V&A’s collection.

Friday Lates and Weekend Festivals
The V&A hosted a series of popular Friday Lates and weekend festivals. Highlights in 2016–17 included The Revolutions Weekend featuring grime artist Skepta and a takeover by female collective gal-dem.

V&A Research Institute
2016 saw the launch of the V&A Research Institute, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which will create an innovative arena for developing collaborative research that is both collections-based and object-focused.

LGBTQ hub
The V&A was proud to be awarded Hub Status for LGBT History Month. The LGBTQ Tour volunteer guides also won an award at the London Volunteers in Museums Awards for their monthly tours.
YEAR AT A GLANCE

**Wolsey Angels**
This year saw the V&A’s Conservation Department bring the Wolsey Angels back to life. They were purchased with the support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, a gift in memory of Melvin R Seiden, the Friends of the V&A, the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, the American Friends of the V&A, and many other generous donors thanks to a major public appeal in 2014.

**New website**
The V&A launched its redesigned website, attracting 12.6 million visitors for the year.

**Rapid Response**
The V&A’s Rapid Response Collecting, a programme that acquires objects that advance design or become newsworthy, collected a range of works in 2016–17. These included a burkini, the Refugee Nation official flag and an iconic Pussyhat, worn in protest against comments by President Trump during a rally following his election.

**Undressed**
The Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear exhibition, sponsored by Agent Provocateur and Revlon, opened in April 2016. The Museum acquired 60 pieces of underwear for the collection including pants designed by David Beckham.

**Visitor figures**
It was a busy year at the V&A welcoming 3,419,800 visitors to South Kensington and the V&A Museum of Childhood.

**Digital Design Weekend**
The seventh year of the V&A’s Digital Design Weekend saw its highest visitor figures to date, with installations, workshops and talks from over 40 artists and engineers exploring the relationship between design and technology.

**Engineering Season**
The Engineering Season, supported by Volkswagen Group, was the first time a UK museum has dedicated a season to this theme and celebrated creators and shapers from across the world.

**National Loans**
The V&A lent 1,380 objects to temporary exhibitions at 125 UK venues and 1,485 loans as part of permanent displays supporting more partners in the UK than any other national museum. This includes photographs such as Harold Edgerton’s Girl with skipping rope, 1952 (left) given by the Harold and Esther Edgerton Family Foundation to The Dick Institute, Kilmarnock.

**Learning at the V&A**
486,700 children under 16 attended the V&A South Kensington and the Museum of Childhood. This includes the many learning events designed specially for this age group.

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CHAIRMAN’S FOREWORD

The V&A entered this past year as Art Fund Museum of the Year, and ended it with the highly successful unveiling of Amanda Levete’s V&A Exhibition Road Quarter. The Sackler Courtyard, The Sainsbury Gallery and The Blavatnik Hall were officially opened by HRH The Duchess of Cambridge to widespread acclaim from architectural critics, The Friends of the V&A and the general public.

It has been a year of change, hard work and promise. Our new Director, Dr Tristram Hunt, is successfully in place, and the Museum is undertaking numerous new projects. In the past year we have seen the V&A re-evaluate the 1960s in You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-1970, bring together works of unbelievable detail and age in Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery and hold the first season in a UK museum dedicated to engineering, with an exhibition celebrating the contribution of Ove Arup, and a specially commissioned spectacular robotic sculpture in The John Madejski Garden by experimental architect Achim Menges with Moritz Dörstelmann, structural engineer Jan Knippers and climate engineer Thomas Auer. This variety is just one of the qualities that typifies the V&A and that led Art Fund Director, Dr Stephen Deuchar, to declare it had “indisputably become one of the best museums in the world”.

At the V&A it can feel that we are on a project of perpetual self-improvement, and alongside these exhibitions we strive to showcase human ingenuity across the Museum, and to inspire creativity in all our audiences. It is, therefore, particularly pleasing to see the reopening of The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries following their refurbishment. This collection celebrates some of the most beautiful objects ever made, from gold boxes to painted enamels and mosaics, now on display to our audiences in sparkling form.

In another highlight of the past year, the V&A has launched a transformational research initiative that will cultivate new forms of collaboration between experts in curation, conservation and collections, academics and artists. The V&A Research Institute is designed to foster experimentation and innovation, and should ensure that we continue our pioneering work in every aspect of the V&A’s life.

We all feel proud of this relentless activity of the exhibitions and scholarship of the V&A, and of the many different individuals from across the world that make it happen.

I would like to thank the Museum’s Senior Management Team, the keepers, curators and numerous dedicated museum staff and volunteers. Also the philanthropists and supporters upon whose generosity we so frequently rely as well as our Members for their passionate support of the V&A. Let me also acknowledge the work and commitment of our Board of Trustees, who give so freely of their time and expertise, and are involved in every area of the Museum’s activities.

It was with great sadness that we heard the news that Dr Martin Roth had died in August 2017. Martin was an inspirational Director of the V&A and his contribution to the Museum will always be remembered by both those who worked with him and the many visitors who were able to enjoy his sensibility through the exhibitions, activities and partnerships he so triumphantly staged.

Nicholas Coleridge CBE
Chairman, Victoria and Albert Museum
I arrived at the V&A in February 2017 and I haven’t stopped learning since. It has been a privilege to become the Director of a Museum I have known and loved since I was 12 years old. Our critically acclaimed V&A Exhibition Road Quarter, a landmark project in the history of the V&A, marks a new chapter of evolution for the Museum; one which reconnects us with our cultural and educational neighbours, reinvigorates the founding spirit of Albertopolis that binds us together, and revives our original mission to enrich lives and inspire creativity through the lens of science, industry, art and design.

Complementing the V&A’s world-class collections, which span over 5,000 years of human creativity from across the globe, is a strong exhibitions programme which has always been integral to the work of the Museum. Whether blockbuster shows on performance culture like You Say You Want A Revolution? Records and Rebels, 1966-1970, or scholarly investigations into the nature of the Anglo-Indian Arts and Crafts movement such as Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London, all are quintessentially V&A exhibitions which help us to understand design in fresh, rewarding and unexpected ways - and which help us to reach a growing community of audiences.

Nationally and globally, we are experiencing challenging times. Against the backdrop of prevailing uncertainty over Brexit, our obligation to defend those cosmopolitan ideals which first endowed the V&A remains more pronounced than ever. Moreover, it is vital that we support the many European nationals working and living here who add so much value to our culture, economy and society. At the same time, we need to work harder with parts of the UK which are feeling left behind by globalization. With a 42% drop between 2010 and 2017 in the uptake of Design and Technology subjects at GCSE, it is crucial that museums provide support for children and young people’s education so that creative subjects remain fully accessible – and a sector which contributes £87 billion a year to the UK economy continues to flourish. That is why we are using the prize money from the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2016 award to support the new D&T GCSE (starting in Coventry and Blackburn) by linking up with brilliant regional museums, a consortium of secondary schools and local industry.

At the same time, we continue to think and work in a global way, broadening and deepening our family of international partnerships – whether via the V&A Gallery Shkouk, with institutions like the Lahore Museum with whom we collaborated on our recent exhibition on John Lockwood Kipling, or closer to home with the V&A Museum of Design Dundee and the Wedgwood Museum in Stoke-on-Trent. Our national and international relationships are also galvanized by our loans programme, which last year saw us lend 1,380 objects to temporary exhibitions at 125 UK venues and 1,485 loans to support permanent displays; in the UK and 666 objects to 115 sites overseas. Central to our way of working is debating our collections, purpose and ethos against the backdrop of contemporary society and ensuring our work engages with the world in which we live. To quote one of the V&A’s founding fathers, Gottfried Semper, ‘collections and public monuments are true teachers of a free people’.

Dr Martin Roth’s enormous dedication as Director means that I joined the Museum at a moment of remarkable achievement and expansion, it was with great sadness that we heard of his death in August 2017. He will be much missed. I would like to close by expressing my sincere thanks to Tim Reeve and the Senior Management Team, the keepers, curators, Front of House team, supporters, philanthropists and staff and volunteers across the V&A for the extremely warm welcome I have received. My first six months in post have been full, exhausting and exhilarating in equal measure. I feel deeply privileged to lead this great Museum into the next phase of its growth and evolution.

Dr Tristram Hunt
Director, V&A
2016–17 EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS

10 September 2016 – 26 February 2017
In partnership with Levi’s®
Sound experience by Sennheiser

In a trip through seven revolutions in five extraordinary years from 1966 to 1970, You Say You Want a Revolution? explored the era-defining significance and impact of the late 1960s. This major exhibition captured the mood of the period, expressed through some of the greatest music and performances of the 20th century alongside fashion, film, design and political activism.

Curators: Geoffrey Marsh and Victoria Broackes

With additional support from GRoW @ Annenberg, Fenwick and Sassoon

On Their Own: Britain’s Child Migrants
24 October 2015 – 12 June 2016
V&A Museum of Childhood

This exhibition told the heartbreaking true stories of Britain’s child migrants who were sent to Canada, Australia and other Commonwealth countries between 1869 and 1970. It featured detailed first-hand stories, photography and personal items which belonged to child migrants, as well as video and audio which recounted this period of history.

Curators: Gordon Lynch and Esther Lutman

Developed in collaboration between the Australian National Maritime Museum, National Museums Liverpool and V&A Museum of Childhood and supported by additional funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council

Botticelli Reimagined
5 March – 3 July 2016
Sponsored by Societe Generale

This innovative exhibition explored the enduring impact of the Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) from the Pre-Raphaelites to today. It featured over 50 original works by Botticelli, alongside works by artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, René Magritte, Elsa Schiaparelli, Andy Warhol and Cindy Sherman.

Curators: Mark Evans and Ana Debenedetti

Exhibition organised by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Gemäldegalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
The Exhibitions and the Displays

Paul Strand: Photography and Film for the 20th Century
19 March – 3 July 2016
Supported by The American Friends of the V&A
This was a major retrospective of the work of American photographer and film-maker, Paul Strand (1890–1976), one of the greatest and most influential photographers of the 20th century. The first exhibition of his work in the UK since his death, it included what is widely thought to be the first avant-garde film and newly acquired photographs from Strand’s only UK project.

Curators: Peter Barberie, Amanda NBock and Martin Barnes

Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear
16 April 2016 – 12 March 2017
Sponsored by Agent Provocateur and Revlon
This exhibition explored the story of underwear design from the 18th century to the present day. Featuring over 200 objects, it looked at the intimate relationship between underwear and fashion and its role in moulding the body to a fashionable ideal, with cut, fit, fabric and decoration revealing issues of gender, sex and morality.

Curator: Edwina Ehrman

Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered
8 October 2016 – 23 April 2017
V&A Museum of Childhood
Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered celebrated the joy and excitement of playing board games and included some of the most iconic, enthralling and visually striking games from the V&A’s collection. Current family favourites such as Cluedo and Trivial Pursuit were brought alongside traditional board games like chess and historical board games including The Game of the Goose and other beautifully designed games from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Curator: Catherine Howell

Engineering the World: Ove Arup and the Philosophy of Total Design
18 June – 6 November 2016
Supported by Volkswagen Group
The first engineering retrospective the Museum has ever staged, this major exhibition focused on Ove Arup’s philosophy of total design and featured unseen archival materials for projects such as the Sydney Opera House alongside recent prototypes and digital animations by Arup, the global engineering consultancy. Arup was the most influential engineer of the 20th century, and this exhibition, part of the Engineering Season, was the first major retrospective of his work.

Curators: Maria Nicanor and Zofia Trafas
With additional support from Tideway
Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery
1 October 2016 – 5 February 2017
Displaying a selection of the finest English medieval embroidery, this exhibition focused on the craft and context of the exquisite pieces. With surviving examples of needlework from the clerical to the secular, it revealed the artistic skill of the makers and the world in which they were created.
Curators: Clare Browne and Glyn Davies with world in which they were created.
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It’s a Hard World for Little Things
V&A Museum of Childhood
9 January – 17 July 2016

Curtain Up: Celebrating 40 Years of Theatre in London and New York
9 February – 31 August 2016
In partnership with the Society of London Theatre
Organised in collaboration with The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center

Silver Speaks
8 March 2016 – 2 July 2017
With support from Arts Council England in collaboration with the Goldsmiths’ Company

Master Strokes: Dutch and Flemish Drawings from the Golden Age
14 January – 15 November 2016
V&A Illustration Awards 2016
23 May – 21 August 2016
Supported by the Enid Linder Foundation, with additional thanks to the founders of the Morris Gentleman Illustrator of the Year Award

Season’s Greetings: Victorian Christmas Cards
1 December 2016 – 6 January 2017
Another Russia:
Post-Soviet Printmaking
8 December 2016 – 15 August 2017

Ephemeral Architecture
10 December 2016 – 16 April 2017
Collecting Europe
1 February – 7 February 2017
In collaboration with Goethe-Institut London
In partnership with British Council

Printing a new world
3 February 2017 – 30 June 2018
ABC Photography
V&A Museum of Childhood
11 February – 4 June 2017

Searching for Ghosts
V&A Museum of Childhood
11 February 2017 – 31 January 2018

The History of Europe as Told by Its Theatres
23 March – 3 September 2017

Amulets, Talismans and Fortune-telling in the Middle East
1 June – 30 November 2016
The Camera Exposed
23 July 2016 – 8 January 2017
Beatrice Potter’s London
28 July 2016 – 28 April 2017
Glastonbury: Land and Legend
10 September 2016 – 28 February 2017
David Garrick: Book Collector
26 September 2016 – 1 May 2017
Iron and Gold: The Intricate Ornament of the Zuloagas
10 October 2016 – 1 September 2017
Gamutines: Vase Sets from National Trust Houses
11 October 2016 – 20 April 2017
Supported by The Hesleys Trust Organised in collaboration with the National Trust

2016 Christmas: Naples Nativity Crib
4 December 2016 – 6 January 2017

Installation view of Curtain Up: Celebrating 40 Years of Theatre in London and New York
Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Installation view of Opus Anglicanum
Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery
Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Tree of Jesse Cope, 1310–25, conserved with support from the Worshipful Company of Broderers’ Charitable Trust for Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery
Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Support generously provided by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts
Supported by Hand & Lock
Consultant: Prof. Michael Curators: Clare Browne and Glyn Davies with supported by the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts
Consultant: Prof. Michael Curators: Clare Browne and Glyn Davies with

Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London
14 January – 2 April 2017
Supported by the Friends of the V&A
John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911) started his career as an architectural sculptor at the South Kensington Museum (today the V&A), and this exhibition explored the life, work and lasting impact of the influential artist, writer, museum director, teacher and conservationist. It included work from his time in the northern provinces of India, where he documented the processes of local craftsmen, providing a unique record of 19th-century Indian craft customs.
Curators: Julius Bryant and Dr Susan Weber
Supported generously by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts
Consultant: Prof. Michael Curators: Clare Browne and Glyn Davies with
Education, the invaluable process of inspiring creativity through knowledge, has been at the centre of the V&A’s mission since its foundation. For over 150 years, the Museum has made creating space for imagination and learning a priority, offering its resources to professionals and the public alike in order to provide a gateway to the creative sector. Over the past year, the Learning Department has continued this mission, combining established expertise with the latest technology to create a forward-looking programme that can excite, intrigue and engage people both on site and beyond. In 2016–17, 260,000 people took part in Learning Programmes at South Kensington and 134,000 at the Museum of Childhood. Whether it’s bringing Botticelli to Wilderness Festival or hosting a digital classroom on virtual reality, 2016–17 has proved another successful year for the V&A as a learning institution.

**INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION**

LEARNING AT THE V&A IS BRINGING YOUNG PEOPLE CLOSER TO THE CULTURAL SECTOR

**FUN WITH THE FAMILY**

Learning at the V&A often begins with the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green, a branch of the Museum dating back to the 19th century that is devoted exclusively to childhood culture. Staff are continually exploring new ways of engaging visitors with the collection, and 2016 witnessed the launch of its summer Art Camps, two separate weekends of events for children aged 5–8 and 9–12. Packed full of interactive workshops, these weekends brought the stories behind the Museum’s objects to life and offered children the chance to respond to what they discovered through art, craft and film. Rhian Harris, the Director of the V&A Museum of Childhood, explains: “It was about being inspired by objects in the collection. The older groups made movies; they created objects, sometimes vehicles that were the size of a room. They were incredible.”

This passion for engendering fascination and intrigue among the younger generation is not limited to East London. This year, among an abundance of other activities, South Kensington welcomed a total of 71,610 people to its annual Family Art Fun days. These free days out were organised in response to the exhibition programme, international festivals such as Diwali, as well as broader themes such as ‘engineering’. These days were also about enjoyment, and with the help of cultural partners such as the Royal College of Music, the Museum was transformed into a lively hub of activity comprising pop-up performances, interactive tours and hands-on practical sessions. A standout moment came in October, when students from St Thomas CE Primary School worked with the V&A on an interactive rap story, Friends for All. It went on to tour around the UK with support from other arts venues and institutions such as Apples and Snakes, Spread the Word and the University of Bedfordshire.

**LEARNING BY NUMBERS**

- 71,610 people took part in family events across the year
- 260,000 took part in Learning Programmes at V&A South Kensington
- 36 separate events made up the ‘Making It: Careers in Art & Design’ event for 16–24 year olds
- 14,516 visitors came to the Japan Festival on 1 May 2016
STEEPING INTO CREATIVE PRACTICE

As a leading public institution with unparalleled collections in art, design and performance, the V&A has a responsibility to inspire the next generation of artists, designers and performers. As Cara Williams, School Programmes Manager at the V&A, points out, this positions the Museum at a critical point in regards to education: “We are contributing to upskilling people and giving them an insight into the world of design. We’re a sort of conduit or stepping stone between primary school and family engagement but crucially evolves into a vocational secondary schools programme. Vocational learning programmes are increasingly popular with schools and the V&A’s reach for such events extends well beyond London, with schools groups travelling from places such as Wigan, Rutland and Dorset.

One such event is Graphic Gathering, an annual design challenge that sees secondary school students tasked with responding to a real life brief based on a particular area of graphic design from digital to print. Previous briefs have looked at typography, illustration and visual communication. For the latest iteration, which marks the competition’s fifth year, the V&A teamed up with BBC Radio 1, presenting 250 students with the task of creating original artwork for the radio station’s New Music Friday playlist. The V&A brought in designers including Bethan Duve and Studio Hato to help guide the entrants, while Museum staff introduced them to poster and product designs within the V&A’s permanent collection, as well as offering them a look around the bricks and mortar of the Museum, and emphasise the fact that education is multi-faceted. “Some people said ‘Oh we didn’t know the V&A did this sort of thing’, so it was a great way to get out and meet new people.”

DEFINING DIGITAL

Enriching the future of the creative industries relies on a forward-facing approach that fully embraces the new. The V&A has continually excelled in this approach to informing industry practice, as Alex Flowers, Team Leader, Digital Programmes, outlines: “One area in which I feel we really lead the field is that people look to us for our digital learning programmes, which provides people with skills that might help them in the future”.

The V&A has worked closely with digital partners to bring the latest technologies to the forefront of education, and over the course of last year students aged 16–20 experienced the very latest in digital technology through our brand new V&A Samsung Digital Classroom. This houses a series of pop-up workshops focussing on emerging technologies, with subjects covered so far including 3D printed jewellery and GIF animations. A highlight from 2016 saw a virtual reality tutorial run by Rachet Denbyshire from ChroniclesVR, in which students were invited to capture the Museum in 360 degree photographs, take 3D scans of objects, and test their engineering skills by working on a VR app. Having taken a step into unknown territory, participants left with a new understanding of a medium that is sure to play a vital role in the future of cultural institutions.

FURTHER AFIELD

Knowledge is most valuable when it is shared; the V&A is always keen to bring its resources beyond the walls of the institution and into the wider world. Last year saw the Museum’s family programme travel to Wilderness Festival in Oxfordshire, a four day extravaganza of music and theatre, bringing with them a pop-up tent based thematically around the Botticelli Reimagined exhibition. Williams offers an insight into the thinking behind the trip: “When you’re at Wilderness it’s a spring-like idyll, so it was the perfect theme, and we were able to use all of the resources that we worked on for the exhibition.”

At Wilderness V&A staff had the chance to showcase the exhibition’s content in a fresh light, while also bringing an added element of interactivity to the festival’s programme. “We had green screen technology where people can dress up and put themselves into the Primavera and the Birth of Venus.” Such exercises serve as a reminder that the V&A is more than the bricks and mortar of the Museum, and emphasise the fact that education is multi-faceted: “Some people said ‘Oh we didn’t know the V&A did this sort of thing’, so it was a great way to get out and meet new people.”

“This year we had a record 27,000 instances of participation at the Digital Design Weekend in September, which is more than ever before; audiences continue to be fascinated by the here and now of digital design and see the V&A as somewhere to experience it.”

Emmajane Avery, Director of Learning and Visitor Experience
As a national institution, the V&A places great value on sharing its knowledge and resources with organisations around the UK. In 1852, it was founded as a national hub for art and design from around the country, and was the first museum to establish a lending programme of its collection to venues across the nation. Today, the V&A supports cultural life in the UK, lending objects to more national partners than any other museum, touring exhibitions, providing training for a range of museum staff, and exploring new perspectives with projects such as the V&A Museum of Design Dundee.

**NATIONAL STATISTICS**
- Number of objects on short-term loan: 1,380
- Number of objects on long-term loan: 1,485
- Number of UK venues to receive short-term loans: 125
- Number of UK venues to receive long-term loans: 188
- In 2016-17, seven exhibitions toured to seven UK venues, attracting 199,727 visitors.

**SHARING THE COLLECTION**
When people think of the V&A they often think of it as the home of great art, design and performance based in Kensington and Bethnal Green. But at its heart, the V&A is a national museum for everyone, as is clearly demonstrated by its extensive loans and programme of national activity as well as the V&A’s touring programme. The V&A lent objects from its collection to more partners in the UK than any other museum. In the year 2016-17 the V&A lent 2,199 object to 268 venues around the UK, including 19 works to the Fitzwilliam Museum for its exhibition Madonnas and Miracles, which was the culmination of a four-year EU-funded interdisciplinary research project and textiles, photographs, woodcuts and a plaster cast to In a Dream You Saw a Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy, and exhibition at Whitworth Art Gallery curated by artist Elizabeth Price.

**EXPERT OPINIONS**
Alongside curation, V&A staff extend expertise in many different ways, from conservation and formal advice to government bodies, to individual enquiries from regional colleagues, as well as members of the public. In 2016-17, curators gave formal advice to Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund on 1,392 objects.

The V&A has developed a first-class training opportunity for two emerging photography curators, financially supported by the Art Fund and The Foyle Foundation, and arranged in partnership with Nottingham City Museums and Galleries and Museums Sheffield. Each trainee spent six months at the V&A as an assistant curator in the photography section of the Word and Image Department and six months with the regional partner working to catalogue and improve access to each museum’s photography collection.

Alongside the V&A objects on loan, the Museum’s exhibitions travel extensively too. Exhibitions such as War Games, exploring the relationship between conflict and children’s play, and Clangers, Bagpuss & Co, exploring the world of Peter Firmin’s much-loved creations, went beyond the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green to tell their unique stories to 45,000 visitors in Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery and the Burton Art Gallery and Museum.

**NATIONAL MUSEUM**
THE V&A LEADS THE NATION IN SHARING ITS EXPERTISE ACROSS THE COUNTRY


**SHARING THE COLLECTION**

**EXPERIMENT IN ART**

In May 2016, the second trainee began her secondment at Museums Sheffield where she updated and developed the information held on the museum’s contemporary photographs, from which she curated the display Street View: Photographs of Urban Life held at the Graves Gallery in October 2016. The ACE/V&A Purchase Grant Fund also supported Museums Sheffield’s acquisition of the photograph Fountain Fell, Yorkshire Dales, 22nd August 2008, by Simon Roberts, which was a key image in the exhibition.

ACROSS THE NATION

The V&A has also been working with Culture Coventry at Coventry Transport Museum and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, as well as with Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery, on a joint schools programme to increase the number of school pupils visiting museums. Over the four years of the programme it has exceeded the targets set by the funders, the Department for Education. We are working with Culture Coventry on the development of an exhibition to be held at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in October 2017: The Arts of the Punjab to mark the 70th anniversary of partition in India.

Perhaps the strongest symbol of the V&A’s vision to take the story of its collection to the nation as a whole is the construction of V&A Museum of Design Dundee, which will be Scotland’s first museum dedicated to its design heritage. It will also take important international exhibitions from the V&A to Scotland. Due for completion in 2018, construction has proceeded well during the year and plans for the exhibitions and opening are being carefully worked through at the moment. Work with communities across Scotland began in 2014, and the pre-opening programming during 2016-17 included Design Your Own Time Capsule workshops that gave children and their families the chance to work together to become designers of the future. The workshops included activities with designers to design a car, house or fashion item.
The V&A was the first museum to introduce a late opening on Fridays, welcoming a new audience through its doors “after hours” at the V&A South Kensington. Held on the last Friday of every month (except May and December), workshops, performances, talks and installations take over the museum to encourage audiences to interact with the Collection in new ways. By collaborating with a diverse range of artists and partners, the programme brings in a younger and diverse audience.

This year the Friday Late explored topics such as Grow Your Own, questioning the impact of urban farming; Out for Revolution, marking the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality to interrogate how far have we come in the fight for equality and Neo Nipponica, which celebrated the newly-opened Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art. In October the Friday Late collaborated with POC online magazine and collective, gal-dem who invited the public to share a soul food recipe, hear London’s best MCs and question if twerking objectifies or empowers? This Late had a hugely successful impact across social media, with press coverage including BBC World Service, The Guardian, Vice and Dazed Digital.

The V&A is also the only museum to hold exclusive fashion presentations. In 2016-17 the V&A held three Fashion in Motion events focused on distinct designers: innovative British designer Christopher Raeburn, the irreverent and witty House of Holland and the work of Central Saint Martin’s students inspired by Balenciaga.

These are just some of the ways the Museum innovates and reinvents its approach to public interaction to ensure that the widest audience are welcomed through the doors of the South Kensington Museum and inspired to foster the next generation of creative practitioners.

The V&A also hosts the leading lights of the creative field to talk about their involvement with the arts, design and performance. Everyone from Donatella Versace to Heston Blumenthal, from Sir Roy Strong to Michael Crawford, have given talks at the V&A. These talks are open to everybody though one of the many benefits of V&A membership is priority booking before they are opened up to the wider public. They are part of the Museum’s mission to open up access to the arts and invigorate the knowledge around the collections.

KEEPING IT LIVE
FRIDAY LATE, FASHION IN MOTION, AND EVENTS ACROSS THE V&A
A WEBSITE FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY PUBLIC
KATI PRICE OUTLINES THE IDEAS AND JOURNEY BEHIND THE V&A’S NEW WEBSITE

It is a truth universally acknowledged that every 21st-century museum is in need of a 21st-century website. The website is very often the first interaction people have with the Museum so it is essential that it reflects the dynamism of the V&A. Following a complete redesign that was unveiled in 2016, the V&A was delighted to be awarded best website at the International Design Communication Awards in November.

V&A website: ‘From the Collections’ page (detail) © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

THE WEBSITE IN NUMBERS

- 12.6 million visits
- Visitors spend 20% more time on the site following the redesign
- Visitors look at 30% more pages compared with last year
- Over 35,000 objects made available on Search the Collections this year
- 8,000 archive images made available on Search the Collections this year

V&A ONLINE

The V&A website reaches 12.6 million people. That is nearly four times the number of people who come to the Museum in person; for many people the website remains the primary means to experience the V&A. It therefore needs to offer as many resources as possible and be an up-to-date expression of everything the V&A stands for.

The new V&A website was launched in 2016. At that point it was five years old, and we felt it was time for a change. We wanted to bring the V&A to life online, to open up the Museum’s collections, exhibitions, events, people, activities, ideas and experiences. In order to do so, it was important to bring the vibrancy of the V&A’s physical sites into every digital experience, and with this in mind there came a number of key objectives.

BRINGING THE V&A TO LIFE ONLINE

We hoped to inspire more people to visit the V&A in South Kensington or in Bethnal Green through their digital experience. Our aspiration is to offer a seamless transition from browsing your tablet on the sofa at home, or searching on your desktop at work to visiting the Museum. So the goal is to turn more of those 12.6 million visits to our website each year into meaningful engagement with our objects and participation in our programme of events.

We also want to define the V&A brand online. We want to do justice to the collections, the galleries and the people that make the V&A so unique. We now use much larger, richer imagery, so there is a better balance between text and image. There is a bolder use of the brand and logo. And these all make for a more cohesive experience across digital and print.

We created a new content management system (CMS) and a new website from scratch. The new site has been built using open source software by the V&A’s Digital Media team and product innovation consultancy Made by Many, who won a European-wide tender to help transform our digital estate. Unlike most off-the-shelf content management systems, which are based on articles, our bespoke version uses the Museum object as the atomic unit of content. This gives us the freedom to curate objects online in a way that is conceptually similar to how we do it in the Museum itself.

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A WEBSITE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY PUBLIC

TAILORING EVERY EXPERIENCE

An exhibition at the V&A is typically three years in the making. Our last website rebuild took a similar amount of time. But where an exhibition launch is a culmination of many years' work, a website launch is just the beginning.

We aimed to design experiences around our online audience and their needs and behaviours. So we looked at our web analytics, statistics from market research and other sources to build a behavioural segmentation of our online audience. We identified four types of online behaviour: the general visitor, the enthusiast, the researcher and the inspiration seeker (these are not absolute classifications; in one web session you might be a general visitor and in another a researcher). We knew from our analytics that the majority of online visits are from general visitors – those who want to find out what's on and other practical information about the Museum. Given that they make up 70% of the audience, this group became the priority audience for the new website.

WHAT'S NEXT

At the moment the new website exists alongside the old one. But, because we prioritised building the most popular areas of the website, many of our visitors will be served exclusively by the new site.

As with any website redevelopment it continues to evolve and we know there are still lots of important things to do, bugs to fix and features to build. For example, lots of people asked why there isn't a search function on the new site. Since we knew that only 5% of sessions involve a search, designing and building a new search experience was deprioritised for launch, but it is a feature we are working on. A site as content rich as ours needs a search facility.

In the next phases of the V&A website we'll be developing new areas of our digital experience for the enthusiasts, who are the most engaged segment of our online audience, and researchers. We will be looking at our online shop, our calendar and events listings and how you buy tickets. And later in the year we'll be revisiting Search the Collections.
When Martin Roth left the V&A at the end of October 2016, it was halfway through a year of programming at South Kensington, and as importantly beyond South Kensington, which reflected the interests and beliefs that he championed during his five years as Director. It was quintessentially Martin.

The year 2016–17 was bookended by two projects that epitomise this vision: the partnership with the Venice Biennale and the Lockwood Kipling exhibition. The V&A’s collaboration with the Venice Biennale at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition, the world’s largest and most important architectural forum, represented the first “special project” between the Biennale and an international museum. It was opportunistic, innovative, international, and the result of Martin’s years of experience in building international relations. The V&A had the privileged opportunity to curate a pavilion, and through our exhibition A World of Fragile Parts, we were able to explore a subject that has become increasingly important, and not just for the V&A, in recent years: culture in crisis, and the part that museums can play when they are able to influence and advise on the preservation and understanding of global heritage under increasing threat.

The 2016 Venice Biennale was a major highlight of the past year, and we look forward to continuing our relationship over the coming years.

2016–17 ended with the exhibition Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London. Martin and the V&A’s curatorial team saw this as a perfect V&A story, building on Kipling’s love of craft and the V&A’s history with its long-held links to India. To simultaneously hold a forward-looking, highly topical piece of programming, while also accommodating a historical perspective was typical of the way the V&A had evolved over the previous three years.

Then in the middle of the year was the V&A’s Engineering Season. Martin was fascinated with the way things worked, and with technological innovation, and considered this to be an under-appreciated design story that the V&A was uniquely placed to tell. The V&A has been focusing on how to broaden and diversify its programme to reach new audiences, and the Ove Arup exhibition really did bring a new audience to the Museum. It felt like the perfect subject at the perfect moment: contemporary, relevant, dovetailing with what’s going on in the world economically, and the need to attract new talent to the field. The Elytra Filament Pavilion, developed in partnership with the University of Stuttgart’s Institute for Computational Design (ICS) and the Institute of Building Structures and Structural Design (ITKE) was Martin’s favourite installation from his time as Director.

The V&A’s biggest exhibition of 2016–17 was You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966–1970, developed by the Theatre and Performance Department. Martin saw himself as a child of the revolution: it was an important period in his development as a person and his thoughts about, and reaction to, living in post-war East Germany. The V&A was keen to avoid a sentimental and nostalgic exhibition; instead, politically attuned, it became an exhibition about what is going on now, a brilliant narrative of the impact of various protest movements but in a way which resonates with life today.

The V&A is a museum that always prioritises scholarship and new research as the cornerstone of any programme, taking a subject that might not otherwise get the attention it deserves and exploring it with creativity, flair and expertise. This is what happened with Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery, in the category of ‘small but perfectly formed’ a scholarly but visually arresting exhibition, that sits perfectly alongside the more popular shows – each allowing the other to take place.

Botticelli Reimagined was a partnership with the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, supported by Societe Generale. It was the result of collaboration, pooling...
resources and collections, and sharing risk, supporting an international and particularly European outlook. It was a provocative show and Martin wouldn’t have changed it for one second: he liked that provocation against the traditional, and believed this is what museums should do more of.

**AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The past year at the V&A was crucial for another reason, positioning us internationally for the future. I have been leading the V&A’s partnership with the China Merchants Group to establish and open the first design museum in China in Shekou, Shenzhen. It is a vision that Martin and I shared, and spoke to the V&A’s history, seeking inspiration from China as well as India during its very earliest years. It’s a country where we wanted to make a mark, extend the V&A brand, and offer our collections, knowledge and ideas to new audiences in the fastest growing design city in the world.

The V&A’s semi-permanent gallery will tell a story that connects China to the rest of the world through 20th-century and 21st-century design, with V&A objects and acquisitions at the forefront. And the V&A has built strong collaborations and connections with the design community across Shenzhen – objects and ideas from those relationships now sit alongside our China and Asia collections in our galleries in South Kensington.

Design Society is almost complete; the building is finished, and the new V&A gallery is being created, ready to open in early December. It is exactly the sort of thing Martin thought he’d been asked to come here to do.

Dr Martin Roth tragically died on 6 August 2017, aged 62. The V&A will greatly miss Martin, and his loss will be keenly felt in the cultural world and beyond, by staff, friends and visitors.
As the world’s leading Museum of art, design and performance, the V&A is always looking to enhance its collection through new acquisitions. The collections represent the best of historic and contemporary design and reflect changing and diverse societies.

The V&A currently has 2.32 million objects, library items and archive pieces in its collections. In 2016–17, 10,102 items were added to the collection, with a total value of £6 million. Of this, the cost of objects purchased was £1.9 million, made possible by funding largely from external sources, including generous support from the Art Fund, the Friends of the V&A, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and private donors. The value of objects donated, either directly or via the Acceptance in Lieu scheme and Cultural Gifts scheme, was £41 million.

RAPID RESPONSE COLLECTING

The Rapid Response Collecting programme explores how current global events, political changes and pop cultural phenomena affect, or are influenced by, design, art, architecture and technology. As Corinna Gardner, says: “The objects that the V&A collects through its Rapid Response Collecting programme are evidence of social, political, technological and economic change and therefore mean more than their material value. These objects have become newsworthy because they advance what design can do, or because they reveal truths about how we live today.” Typical of the objects acquired for this programme are this burkini and a flag designed for the first ever Refugee team to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games.

The V&A continues to play a significant role in the fight to save key heritage objects for the nation, safeguarding their future in national public collections. The continued acquisition of historical objects adds to the overall understanding of the collections and helps to re-evaluate established interpretations of particular periods, styles or an artist’s or designer’s work.

ACQUISITIONS

The Ahiida Modest-Fit Burkini swimsuit
Hooded top and long trousers, 21st century, Australia, polyester © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

The Green Blocks
Stig Persson, Denmark, 2016, cast glass with shaped ends © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Given by the artist
400 paper peepshows and other optical devices
Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by HM Government from the collections of Jacqueline Gestetner and Jonathan Cestelman and allocated to the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016

Junior Powernet 2000
2000, Designed by Lexmark, c.1997, USA (designed) and China (manufactured), injection-moulded plastic, printed paper. Given by Eric Thelan

Design perspective for 2016 Summer House, Serpentine Gallery
Yona Friedman, 2016, black ink on paper © Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Purchased from the Serpentine Gallery

The Refugee Nation official flag
Designed by Yara Said. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Highlights from across the collection:
Fez worn by Tommy Cooper
Gwen Cooper, c.1944, felt, millinery © The Tommy Cooper Estate. Photograph: Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Given by Hans van Rijs

Bust of Ranieri Tommasi
Michele Enrico van Lint, 1801, Spain (probably), terracotta © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Purchased with the generous support of Derald and Sarah Knott

Place (Village)
Given by Rachel Whiteread

Nonsuch Palace from the South
Joris Hoefnagel, 1568, England, black chalk, pen and ink, with watercolour, heightened with white and gold
Purchased with the support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund (with a contribution from The Wolfson Foundation) and the Michael Marks Charitable Trust

White silk waistcoat
Maker unknown, 1784–85, silk, linen, fustian, silver thread, silk thread, hand-woven, hand-tamboured, hand-sewn

Untitled (woman on a bench holding child, camera beside)
Tosh Matsumoto, c.1950, gelatin silver print © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Given by Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey

Painted enamel plaque from “La Chasse” coffret
Charles Lepes, depicting “Amazon/Diane Sauvage”, 1864, France, copper painted in enamel and gilded over embossed gold and silver foils within silver-gilt mounts © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Purchased with the support of the Captain H.B. Murray and Dr W.L. Hildburgh bequests and Nicholas and Pamela Roditi

50 black and white vernacular photographs
Loaned by the American Friends of the V&A through the generosity of Peter J. Cohen.

Pencil drawing of Jemima Puddle-Duck
Beatrix Potter, probably a study for the cover of The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck, 1908, pencil on paper
Given by Virginia Stowell
RESEARCHING TOGETHER
PIONEERING RESEARCH IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE MUSEUM

Research is at the heart of the V&A’s identity and activity. The past year has seen groundbreaking developments across the Museum as a whole, including the launch of the V&A Research Institute, that herald a new way of working and thinking about research. New research partnerships have been fostered and existing ones strengthened; the Museum has advanced its reputation for expertise; and the history of the V&A has provided inspiration for new avenues of research.

RESEARCH ACROSS THE MUSEUM

The V&A was the first museum in the world to establish a dedicated research department, and is home to the world’s leading postgraduate programme in the history of design and material culture. Today, research remains as central to the culture and ethos of the Museum as ever, and the Research Department works closely with experts from the V&A and external partners across the globe on research projects and publications, as well as exhibitions and events.

Bill Sherman, Director of Research and Collections at the V&A, is keen to stress that research is not confined to the Research Department, however: “We are the Research Department with a capital ‘R’, but research with a small ‘r’ happens in every department.” For a century and a half, research has been embedded in the culture of the V&A, and it continues to inform all of the Museum’s activities.

Staff from every department are constantly researching, in both formal and less formal ways: “Research is happening absolutely everywhere,” explains Sherman, “and without it we wouldn’t be the world leader that we are across a range of academic fields.” The breadth of the V&A’s collection is remarkable: the Asia Department houses the Museum’s oldest object, which is around 5,000 years old, while the Design, Architecture and Digital Department displays a flag from 2016 created to support the first refugee team competing at the Olympic Games. The variety within the collection is reflected in the research undertaken by the Museum’s staff, spanning the fields of art, design, performance, conservation, collections management and object-led learning.

V&A RESEARCH INSTITUTE

2016 saw the launch of a new initiative that typifies the Museum’s engagement with research. The V&A received funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish the V&A Research Institute (VARI), a five-year programme of projects and teaching partnerships that aims to experiment with new ways of collecting, displaying and storing objects.

By experimenting with different approaches to collection and display, including digital access to the collection, VARI seeks to enhance access to the Museum’s collection for all. Sherman sees this process of reflection and experimentation as exemplary of the Museum’s attitude to research: “The Museum is always studying itself, and always pushing for ways to make itself better.” The programme seeks to foster collaboration among experts, academics, artists and administrators, using this as a way to innovate the way the Museum displays its collection.

The research is not, however, confined to display. VARI uniquely brings together diverse groups including students, conservators and makers together to work on each project. The initiative has recently allowed for a careful investigation into the Leman album, an eighteenth-century album of designs on paper owned by weaver and designer James Leman. Comprising 97 individual works, the album is one of the oldest examples of silk decoration in Europe, and work has begun to analyse aspects ranging from the colours used within its pages to its overarching institutional history. It is intended that the results will help to form a digital learning resource, which will be a considerable asset for anyone who is interested in design, textiles, colour pigments and British history.

The Leman album © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

As well as the new collaborations generated by VARI, the V&A has been nurturing partnerships between Museum departments and with external bodies. These include academic institutions, particularly universities, and corporate partners.

During 2016–17, the V&A acquired the collection of the Royal Photographic Society. This acquisition is not just a chance to display some world-class photography in the context of the V&A’s national collection of the art of photography, as well as art, design, fashion and performance, it is also an opportunity to develop a lasting partnership with the institution. For Sherman, this new partnership is tremendously exciting: “They have deep expertise, and are a community of practising photographers as much as anything else.”

This type of partnership also enables the Museum to do things they wouldn’t otherwise be able to. Sherman explains: “We’ve created a new pathway on photography on the longstanding History of Design MA run by the V&A and the Royal College of Art. It now has two new pathways: one in the material culture of performance, and another in the history of photography. So that’s a good example of working in academic partnerships to engage more deeply with this incredible national resource.

Other projects begun in 2016–17 similarly exemplify the V&A’s attitude to collaboration. ICONSERICA, funded by the UK government, is a project based in the Asia Department, and seeks to produce a new kind of lexicon for Asian art. Sherman outlines the idea: “We currently describe art in a standard way so that our catalogues all speak to each other, but the lexicon is very Western. This approach that we use to catalogue our collection doesn’t fit Chinese art, for example. And so Hongxing Zhang, Senior Curator of Chinese Collections at the V&A, is creating a new lexicon more appropriate to cataloguing and understanding our Chinese art collection.”

V&A HISTORY

The V&A’s commitment to progressive curation, collections management and display is directly inspired by its history. The Research Department use the institution’s past to inspire its future.

Sherman outlines one of the key areas where research into the legacy of the Museum has had an impact: “The Museum was created by a government department called the Department of Science and Art, uniting these disciplines. This legacy is showing itself a lot more recently than I think it has for a long time – the exhibition Ove Arup and the Philosophy of Total Design was a really good example.” This approach impacts other major decisions within the Museum, such as the approach they are taking to photography; the focus is as much on cameras and processes as it is on the art that is produced.
From fabrics to plastics, the V&A Conservation Department is ready to tackle almost any material you can think of. For a long time the Department has been recognised as a leader in the field of conservation. It combines expert scientific and practical knowledge with a research programme developed in collaboration with cultural organisations across the world: discovering, sharing and developing knowledge from object preservation to insect-pest management, the work undertaken annually is diverse and wide reaching, reflecting the V&A’s unique range of collections and programming. The influence of the Conservation Department reaches far and wide with education programmes, national outreach programmes and international partnerships. While work on areas of the Museum such as the Cast Courts is ongoing, there are certain projects completed this year that reveal the depth of scholarship and excellence of the Conservation Department.

SAVING GRACE

One of the greatest aspects of being a conservator is bringing a part of history back to life for the public. This year saw the V&A transport 500-year-old objects into the present with the successful conservation of the Wolsey Angels: four rare copper sculptures created in about 1524–29 by Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Rovezzano for a magnificent but never completed tomb commissioned by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Described by conservation lead, Diana Heath, as “supreme examples of English Renaissance sculpture”, the works were purchased by the V&A in 2015 after a campaign raised £5 million with the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, the Friends of the V&A and the general public.

When the angels arrived, two were brown and two green due to being separated from each other at some point in their history and undergoing different lives; the brown angels had been heavily restored and stripped of their original surface. All had lost their wings, suffered damage and severe corrosion due to being displayed outside for at least three centuries. The conservation process for the Wolsey Angels began with the objects being thoroughly cleaned of dust with a vacuum, before the team went to work filling gaps and treating the corrosion with mechanical and chemical techniques. The removal of the unstable accretions, such as soot and birdlime, as well as coatings and complex corrosion layers was carried out using combined methods, from lasers to selected mechanical and chemical techniques. Open cracks were filled, while abraded areas were toned in with paint. Microcrystalline wax was applied for protection from the environment and to enhance the sculptural forms now revealed on each angel. The Angels were X-rayed at the British Museum, offering conservators an insight into structural frailties within each statue.
As part of the Wolsey Angels research project, curators, conservators and scientists at the V&A have been collaborating with colleagues in the UK and abroad to gather as much technical data as possible to understand better how the objects were made, and to investigate their history more fully.

OUT OF THE RUST

Some of the most interesting projects undertaken by the Conservation Department arrive on their doorstep almost by accident. This was the case for the Salisbury Cross (also known as the Skidmore Cross), which was donated to the Museum in 2014 after staff at Salisbury Cathedral came across it when going through their stores. The cross was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, made by Francis Skidmore, and had been erected in 1870 to sit atop the cathedral’s choir screen. In its original state it was a highly decorated object, however when it arrived at the V&A it had lost nearly all of its original decoration through corrosion. Extensive visual examination established the original construction and decorative techniques involved, then cleaning removed the rust and prepared the object for redecoration. The top sections of each arm were left “unconserved” to give future researchers an idea of its condition prior to conservation. An exact match of the original paint colour was applied to the object together with some regilding. The Skidmore Cross now sits in the Ironwork galleries, Room 114c, reflecting how it would have looked when it was made 150 years ago.

Conservators work to a strict code of ethics and undertaking extensive restoration of this kind is only made possible when there is clear evidence of the original decorative schemes and by ensuring that all the modern decoration can be removed. As Sandra Smith, Head of Conservation says: “The conservation work was key to the public understanding of the original beauty and workmanship on this object; the V&A is a Museum of design, sometimes we undertake this type of work in order to be able to show how beautiful objects were, without this work this could not be seen.”
BRINGING THE BODY TO LIFE

So much of conservation is about animating the inanimate, and nowhere is this task more pertinent than when working with textiles. The V&A is a pioneer of presenting costumes and clothing in a way that conveys the object as it would have been seen in life. Sandra Smith, Head of Conservation and Technical Services, explains: “Many of our costumes are bespoke and made for an individual. In order to protect the costume and display it correctly we have to recreate the body shape of the original owner by creating a mannequin to fit the dress. Very few museums are able to do this and our Costume Mounting team are one of the best in the world at achieving this.”

The V&A’s expertise in this area proved vital in the run up to last year’s You Say You Want A Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966–1970 exhibition, which featured an eclectic range of items worn by popular cultural figures such as Mick Jagger, the Beatles and Twiggy. The conservation team and the exhibition designers agreed that the costume mounting should try to be as revolutionary as the show’s subject matter, and so an innovative system was established involving specially made three-dimensional limbs. Using a photoshoot with live models to establish the desired poses for each mannequin, the team used Fosshape, a non-woven fabric made of low-melt polyester that solidifies when heated, wrapped around fiberglass limbs to shrink the materials and mould them into the shape of each pose. The result was a mounting system that brought a sense of vibrancy and character to each outfit within the exhibition, and that highlighted the V&A’s place as a front runner of fashion conservation and display.

BREAKING THE MOULD

One of the key challenges facing conservation is the treatment of and research into plastic objects, a relatively new medium with a limited history of study. Some plastics are stable but others deteriorate rapidly; some discoulour, others crumble and disintegrate and can no longer be handled or displayed. The V&A employs a polymer scientist who is a leader in this area of research and works collaboratively both nationally and internationally to find ways of preserving this material for future generations. She is currently working on a method of quickly identifying some common plastic types in order to help other museums manage their collections.
When looking after works which span 5,000 years of human creativity, you often need to refresh how they are displayed so that they remain alive and accessible to every museum visitor.

Part of doing this is updating the galleries. In 2016–17, the V&A unveiled a new and refreshed suite of rooms to display The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection. The collection contains some of the most beautiful objects ever made and was put together by Sir Arthur Gilbert and his wife Rosalinde. They chose to acquire the finest objets d’art with a focus on precious materials and pieces on a small scale, which led them to create one of the world’s most important and famous collections of gold boxes, painted enamels and pietra dura mosaics.

The refurbishment of the space was undertaken to ensure that each object is displayed at its finest, allowing visitors to experience and understand each of them individually. While the space was being overhauled each of the almost 500 objects also underwent a careful process of conservation to ensure that the virtuoso examples of craftsmanship present in the collection appear exactly as they should.

This is just one example of the ways in which the V&A ensures that the most important collection of decorative arts is available to the nation and that its permanent collection is always viewed in the best light.
AROUND THE WORLD

The Museum’s touring exhibitions are an excellent way of bringing the best of the V&A to audiences around the world, sometimes with record-breaking results. The V&A’s ‘David Bowie is’ continues the trend having been visited by over 1.3 million people internationally. In 2016–17, the V&A sent ten exhibitions to 14 overseas venues in nine countries.

Horst: Photographer of Style
NRW Forum, Dusseldorf
12/02/16 – 22/05/16
36,043 visits

The Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida
02/07/16 – 06/09/16
66,955 visits

Julia Margaret Cameron
Fundación MAPRE, Madrid
17/03/16 – 15/05/16
13,526 visits

Mitsubishi Ichigokan, Tokyo
02/07/16 – 19/09/16
39,235 visits

Five Truths
Theatre Museum, Vienna
21/04/16 – 31/10/16
16,698 visits

Electro-Stanislavsky Theatre, Moscow
26/01/17 – 26/04/17

Small Stories: At Home in a Dolls’ House
National Building Museum, Washington DC
26/09/16 – 22/01/17
65,720 visits

Italian Style: Fashion since 1945
Musée McCord, Montreal
26/05/16 – 25/09/16
36,671 visits

A World of Fragile Parts
La Biennale di Venezia
28/05/16 – 27/11/16

Jameel Prize 4
Pera Museum, Istanbul
08/06/16 – 14/08/16
12,716 visits

Curtain Up: Celebrating 40 Years of Theatre in London and New York
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York
28/10/16 – 31/06/17

Shoes: Pleasure and Pain
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem
19/11/16 – 12/03/17
85,000 visits

The V&A is grateful to sound partner Sennheiser whose support extends to all venues.
When the V&A considers how it can best share its expertise and make the collection accessible to the widest audience it looks to the global opportunities of partnership and exchange. Through international collaborations, the V&A contributes to the development of culture around the world and offers its voice to debates on pertinent issues facing museums today. The past year has seen the V&A lead workshops on cultural preservation, provide training for international partners both at home and abroad, and draw close to the launch of its new museum in Shekou, China.

CULTURE IN CRISIS

“Culture has moved to the front-line of wars and conflicts, both as collateral damage and as a direct target. When armed conflict, intentional destruction and looting damage or destroy cultural heritage, peace and security are simultaneously threatened. Efforts to curb this scourge include elevating the importance of culture, heritage and identity through dialogue and education, preparing in advance to minimise threats, and generating social engagement in valuing and protecting cultural heritage across the globe.” UNESCO declaration, 2016

As an international organisation the V&A is committed to sharing its expertise to help protect cultural artefacts and increase understanding of our shared cultural heritage. Key to the V&A’s plan to protect both cultures and communities is the Culture in Crisis programme which provides a forum for sharing information, inspiring and supporting action and raising public awareness. On 11 April 2016 the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Yale University, in collaboration with the V&A and under the patronage of UNESCO, hosted a satellite event to the UN Global Colloquium of University Presidents at Yale University. This conference, the second annual installment for the Culture in Crisis programme, focused on the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage in North Africa and the Middle East. The workshop informed the discussions at the UN Global Colloquium about gaps in research and training for institutional collaboration to ensure that cultural devastation is reduced.

PROTECTING AGAINST FRAGILITY

In partnership with La Biennale di Venezia, the V&A collaborated on the exhibition A World of Fragile Parts, shown as part of the 15th International Architecture Exhibition in 2016. The exhibition explored the threats facing the preservation of global heritage sites and how the production of copies can aid in the preservation of cultural artefacts against the background of the world’s largest and most important architectural festival. The V&A also launched the first ever La Biennale Summer School, a joint venture with La Biennale di Venezia and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. The inaugural programme, Cognitive Adventures in the Digital Age: The Future of Creation and Preservation invited an international group of participants to investigate the role of robotics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and quantum mechanics in the perception of art, design and architecture. Participants were guided by artists and theorists from various fields in a week-long programme of workshops, tours and presentations, investigating new opportunities for the preservation of cultural heritage using emerging technologies.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

THE V&A CONTINUES TO EXTEND ITS KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES AROUND THE WORLD
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

Sometimes, creating relationships and sharing knowledge on an international scale isn’t solely about work overseas. There are times when the V&A can operate as a hub drawing people to South Kensington to share its expertise and benefit academics, partners and audiences around the world. The Creating Innovative Learning Programmes is such an example. These courses are led by V&A experts and include both talks and hands-on workshops offering unique training opportunities for museum professionals. With delegates attending from all around the world, including Azerbaijan, Australia, Belgium, Finland, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Italy, Oman, Qatar, Singapore, Spain and Switzerland, it is just one example of how the V&A is shaping the museum culture of the world.

THE V&A GALLERY, SHEKOU, AS PART OF DESIGN SOCIETY

One of the V&A’s most exciting endeavours overseas is establishing its first international space, the V&A Gallery, Shekou, dedicated to V&A programming in the Chinese region of Shenzhen as part of Design Society. While Design Society’s public opening is not until December 2017, the project has already started with ongoing research and community outreach in the region. The V&A is the founding partner of the not-for-profit Design Society Foundation, which will be based in the purpose-built Sea World Culture and Arts Center in Shenzhen on the Pearl River Delta across the bay from Hong Kong. Design Society Foundation is a pioneering collaboration between China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK) and the V&A, the first of its kind between a Chinese partner and a UK museum. As part of this collaboration, the V&A has already launched the first designer-in-residence project in Shenzhen as well as developing learning and events programming for schools in China and tailored for children with special needs.

As part of London Design Festival at the V&A in September 2016, ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’ was exhibited following its original presentation at the 2015 Urbanism/Architecture Bi-City Bienale (UABB) in Shenzhen. The content was drawn from the research undertaken during preparation of the V&A Gallery. The exhibition highlighted instances of design intelligence occurring in Shenzhen and the region beyond the conventional notion of the design studio. It demonstrated how in a region of unprecedented growth, which has long served as the factory of the world, design acts can take on unconventional forms and occur in unpredictable places.
The V&A would like to pay special tribute to the following past and present major benefactors for their exceptional support:

- The All Thain Collection
- American Express Foundation*
- The American Friends of the V&A
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Art Fund
- Celia and Edward Atkin CBE
- Hans and Mary Dinehart Schwartz Family Foundation*
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- Mr T. T. Tsui
- Volkswagen Group
- Würtz Group
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

The V&A would like to thank the following for generously supporting the Museum’s ongoing redevelopment in 2016/2017:

- The 20th May 1961 Charitable Trust
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- Blavatnik Family Foundation*
- Mr and Mrs Benjamin Berens
- Leon Brener in memory of his wife Rosalind Brener
- The Ruth Coo Family Foundation*
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- Peter Williams and Heather Action
- Würth Group
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The V&A is most grateful to those who have made a contribution to the Museum’s work through the Director’s Circle.

PLATINUM
- William and Alii Aras
- Stephen and Anne Curran
- Dr Genevieve and Mr Peter Davies
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The V&A is especially grateful for the support of the members of the Young Patrons’ Circle

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The V&A is indebted to those who have made generous gifts to support acquisitions, conservation, learning and other projects.

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- Gao Zhenyu
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

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- The Band Trust
- The Friends of the V&A
- Play-Ooh
- J. A. Renée & Co. Ltd
- Robert Freudus*

The V&A is most grateful to the Trustees of the American Friends of the V&A for their valuable commitment and support

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The V&A would like to pay tribute to all of those who have left a legacy or a gift in memory to the Museum this year:

- Ingeborg Bratman
- Uda Cariara
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- Mr. Christopher Dyer
- Dennis Eracial
- Madeleine Fagandin
- Fay Ellois Hopkins
- Muriel Joan Mainstone
- Elaine Rowley in memory of Fred Slowey
- Stewart Spier in memory of his son Nigel John Spiers
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*Donations marked with an asterisk were made possible by the American Friends of the V&A.

**Donations marked with a double asterisk were made possible by the Canadian Friends of the V&A.
CURRENT AND FUTURE EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

• The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains
  13 May – 1 October 2017
  Presented by Pink Floyd, the V&A and Iconic Entertainment Studios
  Sound Experience by Sennheiser

• Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion
  27 May 2017 – 18 February 2018
  Sponsored by American Express

• Plywood: Material of the Modern World
  15 July – 12 November 2017
  Sponsored by MADE.COM
  Supported by the American Friends of the V&A
  Plywood Installations: Ice-skating shelters
  Generously supported by the American Friends of the V&A

• Opera: Passion, Power and Politics
  30 September 2017 – 25 February 2018
  Sponsored by Société Générale
  Sound partner Bowers & Wilkins
  Generously supported by the Blavatnik Family Foundation and The Taylor Family Foundation
  With further support from Claridge’s @ Annenberg, Bertelli-Bagnardi and Cockayne – Grants for the Arts, a donor-advised fund of the London Community Foundation and Dr Genevieve Davies
  In collaboration with the Royal Opera House

• Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic
  9 December 2017 – 8 April 2018
  With support from the Unwin Charitable Trust
  With additional support from Old Possum’s Practical Trust

• Ocean Liners: Speed & Style
  3 February – 18 June 2018
  Sponsored by Viking Cruises

• Fashioned from Nature
  21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019
  Sponsored by the European Confederation of linen and Hemp – CELC

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