Thank you
As I come to the end of my first year at the V&A I wanted to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for all the support you give to the Museum. I have been truly humbled to hear about the generosity of the Members over the last year, which collectively, has enabled the conservation of the Wolsey Angels for display, the acquisition of Fremiet’s dramatic terracotta sculpture Gorilla defeating a Gladiator, scholarships for students embarking on the joint RCA/V&A History of Design postgraduate programme; and new learning resources and programmes at the Museum of Childhood.

And in 165 years of Museum history, the past year has been one of the most significant in shaping the V&A’s architecture. With Members contributing over £3 million to the V&A Exhibition Road Quarter, we now have a new entrance that is transforming the way people visit the Museum. We have also created a new Members’ Room to provide you with more space in which to relax away from the busy galleries, enjoy refreshments, catch up with friends, and appreciate eye-catching views of the Sackler Courtyard.

This newsletter highlights just a few of the ways your support has contributed to our work. I hope you enjoy reading about these achievements and feel proud that you have directly contributed to these successes.

In 2018, we’ll continue our civic mission to reinstate creative education through DesignLab Nation, showcase the greatest endeavours of human ingenuity, and spur the imaginations of our visitors and creative practitioners. Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to welcoming you to the V&A throughout the coming year.

Dr Tristram Hunt, Director, Victoria and Albert Museum
Members’ Support

PREVIEW

2017/18 – the story so far…

With your help the Museum has been able to make several important acquisitions this year, including three engravings by Stanley Anderson showing rural craftsmen at work, The Basket-Maker, The Purbeck Quarryman and The Hedgecutter. The Hedgecutter has been purchased as an important addition to the V&A’s collection of English watercolour. The Museum is very grateful to the Wolsey Trust for their generous support of this acquisition.

This is one of the most visually arresting sculptures exhibited in mid-19th century Europe. Frémiet, a masterly sculptor of small-scale animals and soldiers, greatly unsettled viewers with his larger depictions of dramatic combat between man and beast. In this example, the wounded gorilla—not the gladiator—is triumphant. At this date Europeans had only recently become aware of gorillas, though traditions and chimeras were already known about, and observational and anthropological studies, by Charles Darwin and others, were redefining the place of humans within the natural world. The first gorilla to be brought alive to Europe lived and died in Scarborough, England, in 1835, as part of Mrs Wombwell’s menagerie. African legends told of the abduction of women by gorillas, a theme echoed in publications by imaginative European writers. In 1839 Frémiet alarmed the Jury of the official Salon exhibition in Paris by submitting a Gorilla carrying off a Negress. It was rejected, but given a last minute reprieve for viewing in the entrance area. Frémiet labelled it simply Gorille Femenne (female), but viewers assumed it was male, and abducting a female, and it caused great controversy.

This V&A Gorilla Defeating a Gladiator was accepted by the Salon Jury in 1876 with its academic title, Rétiaire et Gorille. A Kétarauus was a Roman gladiator equipped for combat only with a trident, a net, and sometimes a shoulder guard and these details are carefully rendered here. The dramatic theatricality of this work is complemented by other renowned combat sculptures in the V&A, such as Giambologna’s Samson Slaying the Philistine, and Bernini’s Neptune and Triton. Yet whereas in these examples the ‘hero’ is clear, here there is considerable ambivalence about who is the true victor. This reflects early debates about how gorillas were treated, although conservation issues only came to the fore decades after this sculpture captured the attention of a public fascinated by this new mammalian discovery.

LEGACY

Remembering Ann Callaway and her generous support

The V&A would like to recognise the tremendous support that long-standing Member Ann Callaway has given to the Museum in her lifetime and with a gift in her Will.

In June last year the V&A received the sad news of Ann Callaway’s death. Ann was very fond of the V&A and the V&A’s collections well into her retirement. Ann’s support enabled the Museum to provide scholarships for students studying at the V&A, present exhibitions such as Constable: The Making of a Master and acquire objects such as the Royal Mantel Clock, The Trustees were therefore touched and extremely grateful to learn of the donation in her Will.

Ann’s gift is a wonderful and thoughtful gesture that will help secure the future stability of the V&A and for that, we are sincerely thankful.

Support

Contributing in more ways than one…

Whether you’re a longstanding Member or new to V&A Membership – we hope hearing how your support contributes to the life and success of the Museum will enhance your experience of being so closely connected to the V&A.

Each year, Members increase their subscription contributions through a variety of different channels. It is probably no surprise to learn that Members are the Museum’s most avid shoppers, spending over £1m a year on a wide range of products inspired by the Museum’s collection – with jewellery and special exhibition merchandise topping the popularity list.

It is always a delight to see such high levels of engagement among Members with our learning activities, particularly the V&A’s renowned short courses on illuminated manuscripts, fashion and jewellery. This year alone over 10k Members have attended evening talks by leaders from across the creative world.

We rely a great deal on your generous support through donations – helping to fund conservation, research, scholarships, access to the arts, and other important projects. In recent years Members have contributed to our annual fundraising appeals in support of projects such as the V&A Exhibition Road Quarter, the acquisition of the Wolsey Angels and the painting of the Château d’Ivry (currently on display in the Europe 1600–1850 galleries). Legacy and in-memoriam gifts, large or small, also continue to make a huge contribution to the life of the Museum. Thank you for your continued support, generosity and engagement – we look forward to being able to welcome you on your next visit.

Contributing Members, who through an enhanced annual donation, allow us to do even more with our world-class collections of art, design and performance, are a small but increasing group. At £500 Contributing Members are a great way of increasing your annual contribution. If you are interested in finding out more about Contributing Membership or to upgrade, please contact us at membership@vam.ac.uk or on 020 7942 2271.

ACQUISITION

Gorilla defeating a Gladiator

Alicia Robinson, Senior Curator, Sculpture, Metalworks, Ceramics and Glass

With your help the Museum has been able to make several important acquisitions this year, including three engravings by Stanley Anderson showing rural craftsmen at work, The Basket-Maker, The Purbeck Quarryman and The Hedgecutter. Also purchased was a watercolour by the important 19th-century portrait painter John Partridge, an artist previously not represented in the V&A collection, and a Minton plate probably designed and made for Prince Albert as it features his full arms and royal insignia. Prince Albert was known to have had a close relationship with Herbert Minton, son of Thomas Minton. Some of you may have already spotted some recent Members’ acquisitions on display. If you visited last year’s Plywood: Material of the Modern World exhibition you will have seen two striking posters, an advertisement for the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair designed by Weimer Pursell, and Wood Flies to War designed for the US Army Bureau of Public Relations during the Second World War. Another poster, this time featuring the Normandie liner designed for Compagnie Générale Transatlantique by Cassandre, will be on show in the upcoming major exhibition Ocean Liners: Speed and Style, sponsored by Viking Cruises – be sure to look out for this when you visit.

Gorilla defeating a Gladiator (‘Rétiaire et Gorille’) by Emmanuel Frémiet (1824–1910) was purchased by the Museum in 1879. Terracotta, cast and modelled Purchased with support from V&A Members, and the Capt. B.B. Murray and Dr W.L. Hildburgh bequests.

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Left: Gorilla defeating a Gladiator ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In keeping with all legacy gifts to The V&A Foundation, members of the Foundation support conservation, curation, exhibitions, education programmes and important acquisitions, thereby ensuring that generations of visitors to come will be able to enjoy the V&A collections just as she did.
Members’ Benefits

A beautiful space dedicated for Members

Occupying a magnificent top-lit gallery, the room offers Members an alternative space to the main Café in which to pause for a drink or dine from the bespoke all-day menu. You can discover the room in a different light each time you visit – whether enjoying a morning coffee, lunch, a cream tea, or dinner and a cocktail on a Friday evening. The room has been designed with a mixed pattern of use in mind, with areas for convivial interaction, dining and both reading and study. There are a selection of books and magazines available throughout the room.

Key characteristics have been drawn from the rich and vibrant material palette seen throughout the V&A. The floor, raised by almost half a metre to give views from the large existing windows, uses reclaimed parquet flooring taken from across the Museum. A monolithic terrazzo bar is undoubtedly the centrepiece of the room and includes a bespoke menu including unique Queen Victoria and Prince Albert cocktails. Other design features include specially commissioned contemporary furniture and lighting by architects Carmody Groarke and a beautiful Alessi tea service, providing a subtle nod to the 20th Century collections on display in the galleries below. Large mirror installations throughout create new perspectives to view the Museum, both inside and out.

Thank you to the more than 30,000 people who have already visited the new Members’ Room, many enjoying repeat visits, and we look forward to welcoming more of you in the year ahead. As with all new ventures we have been collating feedback and will be using any common themes from your comments to inform the evolution of the room.

Please look out for details in our monthly e-newsletter on exclusive out-of-hours events held in the Members’ Room, as well as changing monthly special offers on food and drink.

How do I get there?

The Members’ Room is located on the fifth floor and is accessible via stairs (or Lift F for step-free access) near the Fashion Galleries. For convenience we recommend entering the Museum via The Sackler Courtyard or the Tunnel Entrance.

Who can I bring in with me?

Members can bring in as many guests as their membership type allows and all Members can bring up to four children in with them. If you need to check your level of membership, simply check the back of your Membership Card or ask at any of our Membership Desks.

Can I book a table?

Seating and tables are taken on a first come, first served basis. Members are not currently able to make bookings, though we will be reviewing this later in the year and will notify Members should this change. Please note a ‘Please wait to be seated’ policy may be in operation during peak busy times.

Opening Times

Saturday to Thursday 10.00–17.30 (kitchen closes 16.00), last orders at the bar 17.00.
Friday 10.00–20.30 (kitchen closes 20.30), last orders at the bar 20.15.

Please contact us at membership@vam.ac.uk to sign up for our newsletter. Menu changes seasonally – for a sample menu visit: vam.ac.uk/info/membership

MEMBERS’ ROOM

Unlimited visits to all exhibitions and galleries

We are delighted to announce that Members can now have unlimited visits to all exhibitions and galleries at V&A museums in London. We hope this will encourage you to visit as many times as you like throughout the year. Members’ e-newsletters are now sent out every other month. Please look out for them in your inbox.

Free entry to all exhibitions experience more with unlimited visits and no need to book.

Previews

Be first to see new exhibitions and galleries at exclusive previews the day before they open to the public.

Members’ Room

Encounter a different perspective at the heart of your Museum. (See above for opening hours)

Events

Enjoy priority booking for evening talks, by leaders from across the creative world. Celebrate our experts, the collections and the building itself with other like-minded Members with access to exclusive Members-only tours, curatorial talks and special out-of-hour events.

V&A Magazine

Discover more with your subscription delivered directly to your door three times a year – look out for the next issue in March.

Updates

Delve deeper and stay in the know with our quarterly newsletter and monthly emails – simply email us at membership@vam.ac.uk to sign up to our e-newsletter.

Bringing your family with you

Spark the imagination of the next generation of V&A Members with free access for up to four children (under 18) to all exhibitions and Members’ Previews.

Follow us

#vamMembership

@vamuseum

Victoria and Albert Museum

Members Advisory Group (MAG)

The purpose of the Membership Advisory Group is to represent the interests of Members and provide a forum for discussion. The group is consultative rather than decision making and meet each year in October, February, April and July. Meetings will provide a forum for discussion and a clear channel of communication back to the V&A, a consultation group when deciding terms and benefits offered to V&A Members, and a chance for the Museum to hear Members views regarding areas of support and other matters.

If you would like to propose a topic or question for discussion, please send your request to membership@vam.ac.uk with MAG in the subject field. Any written communications will be considered for future places on the group then please look out for notification in this newsletter or in our monthly e-newsletter. Please email us if you would like to subscribe to our Members’ e-newsletter. Profiles of each member of the MAG can be found on our website.

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