



PRESS RELEASE

V&A to open new Photography Centre this October with commission by Thomas Ruff

The V&A Photography Centre

Opening 12 October 2018

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The world's first photographic experiments, pictures by 20th century greats Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen, recent acquisitions by Linda McCartney gifted by Paul McCartney and his family, and newly commissioned works by Thomas Ruff, will go on display this autumn as part of the V&A's new Photography Centre.

Opening on 12 October, the first phase of the Photography Centre, designed by David Kohn Architects, will more than double the space dedicated to photography at the V&A. The inaugural display will trace a history of photography from the 19th century to the present day through the theme of collectors and collecting. Drawn from the V&A's significantly expanded holdings, following the transfer of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection, the display will show seminal prints and negatives by pioneers William Henry Fox Talbot, Julia Margaret Cameron and Frederick Scott Archer, alongside camera equipment, photographic publications and original documents to tell a broader story of international photography. It will also feature a digital wall to show the most cutting-edge photographic imagery.

To mark the opening, the V&A has commissioned internationally renowned German photographer Thomas Ruff to create a new body of work. Known for taking a critical and conceptual approach to photography, Ruff's new series will be inspired by Linnaeus Tripe's 1850s paper negatives of India and Burma from the V&A's collection.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: *"The transfer of the historic Royal Photographic Society collection provided the catalyst for this dramatic reimagining of photography at the V&A. Our collection - initiated by the V&A's visionary first director Henry Cole - now seamlessly spans the entire history of photography, telling the story of the medium from the daguerreotype to the digital. Our new Photography Centre will provide a world-class facility to re-establish photography as one of our defining collections. In an era when everyone's iPhone makes them a*

photographer, the V&A's Photography Centre explores and explains the medium in a compelling new way."

The entrance to the new Photography Centre will be through a spectacular installation of over 150 cameras. Nearby, an interactive camera handling station will offer visitors an understanding of how photographers view the world through their equipment. Inside the gallery, focused sections will look at a series of collections and collectors. This will include an important group of William Henry Fox Talbot's cameras and prints; Pictorialist photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn's collection of photographs by his predecessors and contemporaries; and a selection of some of the most significant photojournalism of the 20th century collected by Magnum Photos' UK agents, John and Judith Hillelson.

On display will be over 600 objects from across Europe, the US, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The Photography Centre will feature images by early colour photography pioneers, Agnes Warburg, Helen Messinger Murdoch and Nickolas Muray, and recent acquisitions by Hiroshi Sugimoto, Cornelia Parker, Linda McCartney and Mark Cohen. A pioneering botanical cyanotype by Anna Atkins, images by the world's first female museum photographer, Isabel Agnes Cowper, and motion studies by Eadweard Muybridge, will join photographs by some of the world's most influential modern and contemporary photographers, including Eugène Atget, Man Ray, Walker Evans, Cindy Sherman and Martin Parr.

The Photography Centre will feature the 'dark tent', a multimedia projection and lecture space inspired by 19th century photographers' travelling darkrooms. Here, specially commissioned films revealing early photographic processes, including the daguerreotype, calotype and wet collodion process will be screened, along with a slideshow projection of rarely-seen magic lantern slides revealing the first attempts to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1921 and 1922.

The opening of the Photography Centre will be accompanied by a three-week spotlight on photography across the V&A, including a series of talks by leading photographers, screenings, events, courses, workshops and a Friday Late dedicated to photography.

Situated in the V&A's North East Quarter, the Photography Centre will reclaim the beauty of three original 19th-century picture galleries. It is part of the V&A's FuturePlan development programme to revitalise the museum's public spaces through contemporary design and the restoration of original features. A second phase of the Photography Centre, planned to open in 2022, will expand it further, providing a teaching and research space, a browsing library and a studio and darkroom for photographers' residencies. Following the transfer of the Royal Photographic Society collection in 2017, a new purpose-built storage facility has been created

on site. When not on display, photographs can be viewed in the V&A's Prints & Drawings Study Room.

The V&A Photography Centre is supported by The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation and other generous donors. Upon opening, Gallery 100 in the new centre will be known as The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery.

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Notes to Editors

- The first phase of the V&A Photography Centre opens to the public on 12 October 2018. Entrance is FREE
- It is curated by Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photographs; Susanna Brown, Curator of Photographs and Marta Weiss, Curator of Photographs
- The first two titles in *The V&A Photography Library*, a new series of publications in partnership with Thames & Hudson, will accompany the opening
- Photographs not on display can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room
- An extensive programme of digitisation of the collection is ongoing, and can be accessed online at collections.vam.ac.uk
- In September 2018, the V&A and Royal College of Art will launch a world-leading photography pathway as part of the History of Design MA programme. Students will learn about the history of photography through the V&A's collections and expertise: vam.ac.uk/info/history-of-design-postgraduate-programme

About the V&A photography collection

The V&A holds the National Collection of the Art of Photography. The museum has collected photographs since its foundation in 1852 and continues to collect today. The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection was transferred to the V&A by the Science Museum Group in 2017, and was acquired with the generous assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Art Fund. The amalgamation of these world-class collections is the catalyst for the museum's new Photography Centre. The V&A's collection encompasses the work of leading historic and contemporary photographers as well as publications and camera-related equipment. When not on display, photographs from the collection can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room.

vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs

About V&A FuturePlan

FuturePlan is an ambitious programme of development which is transforming the V&A. The best contemporary designers are creating exciting new galleries and visitor facilities, while

revealing and restoring the beauty of the original building. In the past 15 years, over 85% of the museum's public spaces have been transformed, improving access and allowing the collections to be more elegantly and intelligently displayed. By introducing bold new architectural interventions, FuturePlan aims to delight and to inspire visitors, and to continue the museum's tradition of championing new talent.

vam.ac.uk/info/futureplan

About David Kohn Architects

David Kohn Architects is a London-based practice working internationally on arts, education and residential projects. Established by David Kohn in 2007, the practice has gained a reputation for the quality of its design winning many awards including Young Architect of the Year, a D&AD Yellow Pencil and World Interior of the Year. Current projects include a new quad for New College, Oxford, and the refurbishment of the ICA.

davidkohn.co.uk

About The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation

The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation seeks to advance public knowledge and appreciation of photography as an art form. To further this purpose the Foundation has sponsored projects in museums, libraries, schools and universities and donated photographs from its archive. The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation previously supported the V&A exhibition on the photographic pioneer Julia Margaret Cameron (November 2015 - February 2016), whose work was first exhibited by the Museum in the 1860s. Upon opening, Gallery 100 in the new Photography Centre will be known as The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery.

bernschwartz.org

For further PRESS information about the V&A's photography collection and the new Photography Centre, please contact Laura Mitchell in the V&A press office on +44 (0) 20 3949 4509 or email l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

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