



PRESS RELEASE

V&A Photography Centre opens with major new commissions and month-long Photography Spotlight

The V&A Photography Centre

Opening 12 October 2018

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The world's first photographic experiments and earliest cameras. Works by pioneering female photographers, **Julia Margaret Cameron, Agnes Warburg, Madame Yevonde and Cindy Sherman**. Pictures by 20th-century greats **Alfred Stieglitz, Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, Brassai, Cecil Beaton and Irving Penn**. Contemporary works by **Martin Parr, Sian Bonnell, Mary McCartney, Peter Funch, Cornelia Parker and Hiroshi Sugimoto**. All join newly commissioned works by **Thomas Ruff** and **Penelope Umbrico** as the V&A's new Photography Centre opens on Friday 12 October.

Designed by David Kohn Architects, phase one of the Photography Centre more than doubles the space dedicated to photography at the V&A, spanning four new galleries. It opens with the major display *Collecting Photography: From Daguerreotype to Digital*, beginning in the newly named The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery (formerly Gallery 100). The show explores photography as a way of 'collecting the world', from the medium's invention in the 19th century to the present day.

Drawn from the V&A's collection of over 800,000 photographs, the display showcases some of the most exciting contemporary photography being created today. It also shows seminal prints by pioneers **William Henry Fox Talbot, Julia Margaret Cameron and Roger Fenton**, alongside negatives, camera equipment, photographic publications and original documents to tell a broader story about the history of international photography. In The Modern Media Gallery (formerly Gallery 99), a frequently changing selection of new acquisitions, a 'Light Wall' for displaying screen-based photography, and a 'Dark Tent' projection area complete the space.

To mark the opening, the V&A has commissioned two internationally-renowned artists to produce major new works. German photographer **Thomas Ruff**, known for taking a critical and conceptual approach to photography, has created a monumental series inspired by Linnaeus Tripe's 1850s paper negatives of India and Burma, held in the V&A's collection. Digitally reinterpreting photographs made over 160 years ago, Ruff gives Tripe's important and haunting images a new context, emphasising their hidden details and resurrecting them with spectacular new life. Alongside Thomas Ruff's new series, American artist **Penelope Umbrico** has created *171 Clouds from the V&A Online Collection, 1630 - 1885, 2018*, the first work to feature on the Light Wall. Umbrico works mostly with images she finds on the internet, presenting them in ways that reveal the fluidity of digital photography. For this video, she

sifted through the V&A paintings collection online and extracted details of clouds. The work explores the transition from fleeting clouds to material paint, and then from digital code to physical screen.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: *“I’m delighted to open the V&A’s new Photography Centre. The transfer of the historic Royal Photographic Society collection provided the catalyst for this dramatic reimagining of photography at the museum. Our collection – established 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 provides 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.”*

Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photographs at the V&A, said: *“The new Photography Centre brings to life some of the V&A’s most beautiful original picture galleries and provides a permanent home for one of the finest and most inspiring collections of photography in the world. The spaces and facilities allow visitors to access, explore and enjoy photography in its many forms. The Photography Centre encompasses more than a new gallery space. Beyond its walls lies an associated programme of research, digitisation, learning activities, publications, exhibitions, access to items in stores, and collaborations with other UK and international partners. Photography is one of our most powerful forms of global communication, and I’m thrilled that we can contextualise the past and present of this powerful medium in new and exciting ways.”*

Visitors enter the new Photography Centre through a spectacular installation of over 150 cameras spanning 160 years. Nearby, an interactive camera handling station offers visitors an understanding of how photographers view the world through their equipment. Inside the gallery, focused sections look at a series of collections and collectors. This includes an important group of William Henry Fox Talbot’s cameras and prints; 1850s fine art photographs collected by Chauncey Hare Townshend, friend of Charles Dickens; 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. A stereoscope viewer gives an immersive 3-D experience of Crystal Palace alongside some of the first photographs ever taken of Japan.

Over 600 objects made across Europe, the US, Africa, the Middle East and Asia have been brought together for *Collecting Photography: From Daguerreotype to Digital*. The display features images by early colour photography pioneers, **Agnes Warburg, Helen Messinger Murdoch** and **Nickolas Muray**, and recent acquisitions by **Hiroshi Sugimoto, Cornelia Parker, Linda McCartney, Marco Breuer, Pierre Cordier** and **Mark Cohen**. A ground-breaking botanical cyanotype by **Anna Atkins**, images by the world’s first female museum photographer, **Isabel Agnes Cowper**, and motion studies by **Edward Muybridge**, join photographs by some of the world’s most influential modern and contemporary photographers, including **Eugène Atget, Man Ray, Bill Brandt, Walker Evans, Edward Steichen, Cindy Sherman** and **Martin Parr**.

The Photography Centre also features the Dark Tent, a flexible 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, are screened, along with a slideshow of rarely-seen magic lantern slides revealing the first attempts to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1921 and 1922, among other photographic projections.

The opening of the V&A Photography Centre kick-starts a month-long Photography Spotlight across the V&A. Highlights include talks by leading photographers **Mary McCartney, Rankin** and **Chris Levine**; the premiere of the collaborative performance piece *Last Evenings* by artist **Garry Fabian Miller** and musician and composer **Oliver Coates**; a screening of **Lisa Immordino Vreeland's** *Love Cecil*; and special performances, events, courses, workshops and a photography-themed Friday Late on 26 October.

Situated in the V&A's North East Quarter, the Photography Centre reclaims 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, with ambitions to include a teaching and research space, a browsing library and a studio and darkroom for photographers' residencies.

The Photography Centre is supported by The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation, Modern Media, Shao Zhong Art Foundation and many other generous donors.

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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
- The inaugural display *Collecting Photography: From Daguerreotype to Digital* is curated by Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photographs; Susanna Brown, Curator of Photographs; and Marta Weiss, Curator of Photographs
- *Making it Up: Photographic Fictions* and *Cameraless Photography*, the first two titles in The V&A Photography Library, a new series of publications in partnership with Thames & Hudson, accompany the opening
- When not on display, photographs from the V&A's collection can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room
- 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 launched a world-leading photography pathway as part of the History of Design MA programme, giving students access to 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 consolidation of these world-class collections is the catalyst for the

museum's new Photography Centre, phase one of which opens on 12 October 2018. The V&A's collection encompasses the work of leading historic and contemporary photographers as well as publications, cameras and 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. Current projects include a new campus for New College Oxford, an apartment building in Berlin's Mitte district, the Greenwich Design District, and the remodelling of an 18th century beguinage to house the University of Hasselt architecture faculty. Previously, David Kohn Architects has designed galleries for Sothebys, Thomas Dane and the 2017 Turner Prize exhibition for Hull 2017 UK City of Culture. The practice also collaborated with Fiona Banner RA on *A Room For London* on the roof of the Southbank Centre for which it was nominated for the Design Museum's 'Designs of the Year'.

davidkohn.co.uk

About The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation

Named after the portrait photographer, 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's 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

About Modern Media and the Shao Zhong Art Foundation

Established by Thomas Shao in 1993, Modern Media Group is a wide-ranging cross-media communication group covering culture, art, fashion, lifestyle and business. The company publishes some of the most popular titles in China and has a significant online presence, including the newly acquired video platform, Nowness. Internationally-focussed and socially driven, the company recently established Modern Space, a 4300 sqm complex facilitating photography and contemporary art, and is also a shareholder of Photofairs | Shanghai, which was launched in 2014 and is the largest art fair dedicated to photography in Asia.

Shao Zhong Art Foundation was founded by Thomas Shao in 2013. Alongside collecting important works by Chinese and international artists, the foundation aims to support and promote Chinese contemporary art and cultural exchange between China and the wider international community. The foundation believes that art is a key medium in furthering human civilisation and culture and strives to support the creative process of younger artists and the promotion of their works.

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 is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk