

## PRESS RELEASE

# V&A announces new collaboration with The Sir Elton John Photography Collection including major donation

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Today, the V&A announces a new, long-term collaboration with Sir Elton John and David Furnish to revolutionise public access to photography. Comprising a significant donation towards the museum's recently opened Photography Centre, for which gallery 101 will be renamed 'The Sir Elton John and David Furnish Gallery', the partnership will also include a major co-curated temporary exhibition, to be announced in due course.

With a focus on the contemporary, the collaboration will offer opportunities to bring together highlights from the V&A's world-leading photography collection of over 800,000 photographs, alongside The Sir Elton John Photography Collection – one of the greatest private photography collections in the world.

Since 1991, Sir Elton John has developed his love and passion for the photographic medium to amass a collection of over 7,000 photographs. Spanning the early 20th century to the present day, the collection encompasses iconic images by modern masters including Man Ray, André Kertész, Dorothea Lange and Edward Steichen. It also includes photographs by the most exciting contemporary artists working today, from Cindy Sherman to Alec Soth and Alex Prager. Throughout their collecting, Sir Elton John and David Furnish have been keen to share their photography collection with the widest possible audience – a mission shared by the V&A. Their continuous philanthropic support of public institutions, and loan of key works to national and international exhibitions, has created new insights, dialogues and connections to further the study, enjoyment and appreciation of the medium.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: "We are immensely grateful to Sir Elton John and David Furnish for their generosity in supporting our Photography Centre and mission to make historic and contemporary photography available to the widest possible audience. We are united by a deep commitment to the medium, and there are huge synergies between our collections, particularly around 20th century modernist and contemporary colour photography. The Sir Elton John Photography Collection was a major lender to our 2014 exhibition, *Horst: Photographer of Style*. I very much look forward strengthening our collaboration with Sir Elton, David and their team and seeing our collections in dialogue in a new and revelatory photography exhibition."

Sir Elton John said: “The V&A is known for its dedication to teaching, public research facilities and learning-based exhibitions focused on the mechanics and history of the photographic arts. For David and I, this commitment to education and mission to celebrate the medium, presents a perfect partnership. The new Photography Centre, along with the 2022 extension, will not only elevate photography but it will help foster new artists, patrons and collectors, like myself. We are delighted to be part of this exciting moment and we hope that audiences will walk away with the same excitement and appreciation for photography, as I did when I first started collecting.”

Sir Elton John and David Furnish’s generous donation enables the V&A to realise its ambitions of showcasing highlights from its extensive photography holdings, with a series of temporary displays, new acquisitions and annual contemporary commissions. Opened to the public in October 2018, the V&A’s new Photography Centre is situated in the museum’s North East Quarter, reclaiming a series of beautiful original 19th-century picture galleries. Designed to revolutionise the way in which visitors engage with photography, it displays vintage prints, negatives and contact sheets, alongside photographic equipment and archive material to tell broader stories around the history of photography. A new extension scheduled to open in 2022 will expand the V&A’s Photography Centre further to include a teaching and research space, a browsing library, an historic darkroom, and a studio for photographers’ residencies, offering new and exciting ways for visitors to encounter this diverse and dynamic art form.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

- The first phase of the V&A Photography Centre opened 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
- 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](https://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](https://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 opened on 12 October 2018, with phase two scheduled to open in 2022. 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](https://vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs)

**About The Sir Elton John Photography Collection**

Sir Elton John began collecting photographs in 1991 and his collection is now regarded as one of the leading private photography collections in the world, distinguished by its exceptional quality and remarkable range and depth. From major vintage 20th century modernist works to cutting-edge contemporary images, the collection now holds over 7,000 fine art photographs. To make this collaboration possible, the V&A has worked closely with Rocket Entertainment along with Newell Harbin, Director of the Sir Elton John Photography Collection.

**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](http://vam.ac.uk/info/futureplan)

**For further PRESS information about the V&A's photography collection and 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](mailto: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](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)**