

NEWS RELEASE

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World of Wedgwood and the V&A establish partnership to promote and conserve the historic Wedgwood Collection

The V&A and World of Wedgwood have today unveiled a new future for the historic Wedgwood Collection. Following a major public appeal led by Art Fund, the collection was saved for the nation and gifted to the V&A five years ago. It comprises over 80,000 works of art, ceramics, manuscripts and photographs and is one of the most important industrial collections in the world forming a unique record of over 260 years of British ceramic production.

Since 2014 the collection has been on long-term loan to Wedgwood Museum. A new partnership between the two institutions will cement this important national collection's future in Barlaston, near Stoke-on-Trent, and enable access to unparalleled expertise and resource from the V&A. The Wedgwood Museum will be renamed 'V&A Collection at World of Wedgwood', and a new Chief Curator will be appointed by the V&A. They will devise and lead a reimagined public programme that will celebrate the diversity, creativity and depth of the collection, within its local context of North Staffordshire and the Potteries – the world's capital of ceramics. The Chief Curator will join the V&A's Department of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass and be based in Barlaston.

In addition, Gaye Blake-Roberts, leading academic on Wedgwood and long-standing curator of the Wedgwood Museum, has been appointed as an Honorary Senior Research Fellow with the V&A Research Institute. She and the V&A will support the new Chief Curator on a strategy to fully catalogue and digitise the Collection so that it can be enjoyed and studied by academics, researchers, students and fans of pottery around the world.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: *"My journey towards becoming Director of the V&A began – as a Stoke-on-Trent MP – with helping to save the Wedgwood Collection from being dispersed. This exciting new partnership between the V&A and World of Wedgwood is a way for South Kensington to honour the craft, creativity and design brilliance of the Wedgwood Collection and the people of Stoke-on-Trent who made it. We look forward to opening up this phenomenal archive, museum and visitor attraction to new audiences; curating new exhibitions; and to building a lasting and transformative education programme for the communities of North Staffordshire."*

Christian Bachler, Senior Vice President, Wedgwood, said: *“This is an exciting milestone in the history of the Wedgwood Collection. We are looking forward to developing the World of Wedgwood site as a creative hub for the area, working closely with the V&A to celebrate and develop the potential of this world-class ceramics collection.”*

Gaye Blake-Roberts, Wedgwood Museum Curator, says: *“I am greatly honoured and thrilled to be nominated for an Honorary Senior Research Fellowship affiliated to the V&A Research Institute and the great opportunity that comes with this appointment. This position provides a platform for closer collaboration with the V&A and the extended Wedgwood collections, continuing my association with all my colleagues at Barlaston, as well as the chance to participate in many of the exciting projects and exhibitions planned over the next few years.”*

Encyclopaedic and global in scope, the V&A’s ceramics collections chart the history of ceramic production from the third millennium BC to the present day. The partnership comes at a time of significant investment in the V&A’s ceramic collections - particularly British and international contemporary ceramics, including the recruitment of a new curator of 17th and 18th ceramics and glass, which will begin later this summer.

Alongside this project, the V&A has been working with the Potteries Museum since 2018 on its flagship national educational initiative to support the new D&T GCSE, DesignLab Nation. The programme links schools with partner institutions and local industry – complemented by loans from the V&A’s collection – to support the teaching of art, design and technology in secondary schools. The programme launched in 2017. Since 2018, DesignLab Nation has been working in five regions across the country: Sheffield, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Blackburn and Coventry.

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Notes to editors:

- The Wedgwood Collection was saved for the nation in 2014 thanks to the outstanding leadership of Art Fund and generosity of thousands of individuals, companies and grant-making foundations, including significant support from the Heritage Fund and Art Fund. Further information about Art Fund’s appeal to save the Wedgwood Collection in 2014 can be found [here](#).
- DesignLab Nation is generously supported by Art Fund, The Foyle Foundation, Sarah Nichols, The Staples Trust, The Zochonis Charitable Trust, Outset Contemporary Art Fund and other kind supporters.

About the V&A

The V&A is the world’s leading museum of art, design and performance, with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A’s collections, which span

over 5000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

vam.ac.uk

V&A Collection at World of Wedgwood

Around 8,000 objects are currently on display at the V&A Collection at World of Wedgwood, including iconic Jasperware vases, black basalt vases and ornaments, bone china tea-sets and vases inspired by Robert Adam, testifying both to Josiah Wedgwood's creative genius and the company's productivity. The museum showcases both the commercial and aesthetic history of ceramics, including earthenware, creamware, jasper and basalt production as well as charting the changing fashions of rococo and neo-classical pottery.

The factory was founded by the British potter and entrepreneur Josiah Wedgwood in 1759, who transformed English pottery from a cottage craft into an art form and an international industry. The Wedgwood family and business had a keen sense of its place in history and in 1906 the firm opened the first museum. It documents production up to the present day, showcasing developments in taste and fashion over three centuries.