

News Release
1 October 2019



V&A to mark 500th anniversary of Raphael's death with refreshed gallery and enhanced interpretation of iconic Raphael Cartoons

The Raphael Court
Opening late 2020

vam.ac.uk/raphael-cartoons | [#RaphaelCartoons](https://twitter.com/RaphaelCartoons)

In 2020, the V&A will mark the 500th anniversary of Raphael's death by transforming the way museum visitors experience the iconic Raphael Cartoons, loaned to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen.

The Raphael Court – home to the Cartoons – will be refurbished from 27 January 2020 until late 2020 when it will reopen as a revitalised space. The V&A has appointed award-winning practice Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios as the 3D designers for the refurbishment, and lighting designers ZNA who will create an innovative new lighting scheme. State-of-the-art LED lighting will reduce reflections on the glass and produce a marked increase in visibility of the works. Following an extensive photography project, enhanced gallery interpretation will also reveal in-depth stories about the production and history of the Raphael Cartoons. High-definition images, infra-red and 3D scans of the Cartoons will be available in the gallery as well as online, enabling the public to explore the Cartoons in unprecedented detail and deepening access to these unique and monumental works of art.

The Raphael Cartoons are considered among the greatest treasures of the Renaissance. In 1515, Pope Leo X commissioned Raphael to create a set of ten full-scale designs for a series of tapestries for the Vatican's Sistine Chapel, illustrating scenes from the lives of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Once complete, the Cartoons – each measuring around 5 metres wide and 3.5 metres high – were sent to the workshop of merchant-weaver Pieter van Aelst in Brussels, which transformed the monumental designs into tapestries. Seven of the Cartoons survive to this day, brought to Britain in the 17th century by the Prince of Wales, later Charles I. They remained in the Royal Collection and were loaned to the South Kensington Museum – now the V&A – by Queen Victoria in 1865 in memory of Prince Albert, where they have been on public display ever since.

New interpretation will explore the significance and status of the Cartoons – their function as full-scale tapestry designs for the Sistine Chapel, the ingenuity of Raphael and his workshop,

the rescue, life and status of the Cartoons in England in the 17th century, and the fascination they have provoked since then up to the present day. The original set of tapestries for the Sistine Chapel is still on view in the Vatican palace in Rome, while an example of a later tapestry made in the 17th century in England after Raphael's design – *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, on loan from the Duke of Buccleuch – is on display in the Raphael Court.

In August 2019, the V&A and Royal Collection Trust worked with Factum Foundation and Momart to carry out the extensive photography project, supported by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. This involved unframing each Cartoon to capture three-dimensional scans, infra-red and high resolution panoramic photography, while also carrying out conservation checks, and glass and frame cleaning. Each 3D image took over 95 hours to capture and they reveal the Cartoons' unique surface texture. The resulting high-definition images will be available both in the gallery and online, allowing visitors to uncover the complex process of their making and zoom in to view and appreciate composition details and the paper's intricate surface up close.

Dr Ana Debenedetti, Lead Curator of the Raphael Project and Curator of Paintings at the V&A said: *"The set of seven surviving tapestry Cartoons by Raphael comprise a unique Renaissance treasure, both in terms of aesthetic value and technical achievement. The new pioneering photography project will provide the means to visually reveal the hidden process behind the making of the Cartoons, from the extraordinary assemblages of nearly 200 sheets of paper to the underdrawing and final painting stage. The outcome is one of the greatest examples of artistic collaboration and team work executed by a number of highly gifted assistants, which would not be possible without the guidance of such a visionary mind as Raphael's."*

One of the V&A's largest and most dramatic galleries, the Raphael Court is almost identical in proportions to the Sistine Chapel and was last refurbished from 1992 to 1996. A full redecoration of the space in 2020 as part of the V&A's FuturePlan programme will highlight the Raphael Cartoons within the space, using a darker colour paint on the walls to help focus the eye on the Cartoons' vibrant palette. Accompanied by new furniture, together with enhanced lighting and graphic and digital interpretation, the refreshed space will heighten our visitors' viewing experience and their enjoyment of these iconic works of art.

The refurbishment of The Raphael Court is supported by Lydia and Manfred Gorvy, Julia and Hans Rausing, American Express, the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation, the American Friends of the V&A, and many other generous donors.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- The Raphael Court will close for refurbishment from 27 January 2020 until late 2020.
- The Raphael Cartoons are loaned to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen.
- Entrance to The Raphael Court is free.

Social Media

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @VictoriaandalbertMuseum

V&A FuturePlan

FuturePlan is an established programme of design-led initiatives which are continually reinventing the V&A across multiple locations. Over the past 15 years, approximately 85% of the Museum's spaces at South Kensington have been transformed, resulting in a trebling of visitor numbers and an enhanced public engagement with the collections. Under FuturePlan the V&A strives to ensure that visitors feel welcome and enfranchised, collections are made relevant and inspiring, and our buildings are enhanced and celebrated.

vam.ac.uk/info/futureplan

Royal Collection Trust

Royal Collection Trust, a department of the Royal Household, is responsible for the care of the Royal Collection and manages the public opening of the official residences of The Queen. Income generated from admissions and from associated commercial activities contributes directly to The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity. The aims of The Trust are the care and conservation of the Royal Collection, and the promotion of access and enjoyment through exhibitions, publications, loans and educational programmes. Royal Collection Trust's work is undertaken without public funding of any kind.

www.rct.uk

Royal Collection

The Royal Collection is among the largest and most important art collections in the world, and one of the last great European royal collections to remain intact. It comprises almost all aspects of the fine and decorative arts, and is spread among some 15 royal residences and former residences across the UK, most of which are regularly open to the public. The Royal Collection is held in trust by the Sovereign for her successors and the nation, and is not owned by The Queen as a private individual.

At The Queen's Galleries in London and Edinburgh aspects of the Collection are displayed in a programme of temporary exhibitions. Many works from the Collection are on long-term loan to institutions throughout the UK, and short-term loans are frequently made to exhibitions around the world as part of a commitment to public access and to show the Collection in new contexts.

Explore the Royal Collection at www.rct.uk/collection

Factum Foundation

Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2009 in Madrid by Adam Lowe. It works alongside its sister company, Factum Arte, a multidisciplinary workshop in Madrid dedicated to digital mediation and physical transformation in contemporary art and the production of facsimiles. The Foundation was established to demonstrate the importance of documenting, monitoring, studying, recreating and disseminating the world's cultural heritage through the rigorous development of high-resolution recording and rematerialisation techniques. The Foundation's activities include: building digital archives for preservation and further study, creating and organising touring exhibitions, setting up training centres for locals to learn the different technologies developed by the Foundation to record their own cultural heritage, and producing exact facsimiles as part of a new approach to conservation and restoration.

www.factumfoundation.org

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios [FCBStudios] have experience in designing for education, housing, masterplanning and urban design as well as places for art and the creative reuse of historic buildings.

The practice started small 40 years ago and has grown to over 200 staff. Committed to social and humanistic values in their work, FCBStudios are proud to have won the RIBA Stirling Prize for Accordia, a scheme which is widely regarded as setting a new benchmark for housing in the UK and to have recently collected RIBA National Awards for the restoration and renovation of Southbank Centre's brutalist buildings and Alexandra Palace's East Wing and Victorian Theatre.

With a strong track record the practice are well placed to face the challenges of the future: growing & fractured cities; climate change; massive shifts in the delivery of education; increased localism; embracing the pace of technological change. The face of architecture is changing and FCBStudios continue to pioneer imaginative and inclusive ways to create exceptional buildings.

fcbstudios.com | Twitter: @FCBStudios | Instagram: @fcbstudios | [LinkedIn](#)

Momart

Established in 1972, Momart Ltd is a globally-respected art logistics company focussed exclusively on the movement, protection, storage and installation of fine art, ranging from paintings to sculptures to complex installations. Our clients encompass those working in the contemporary and modern fields to specialists in classical antiquities and Renaissance masterpieces.

With over 40 years of experience and expertise in handling, transport and storage of art, Momart offers a highly efficient, individually tailored, and discreet specialist service to galleries,

artists and collectors worldwide. We are a trusted partner to respected museums, renowned auction houses and art institutions around the world.

<https://www.momart.com/>

ZNA

Studio ZNA is an award-winning lighting design practice, founded by director Zerlina Hughes in 2006. The company is comprised of a team of talented designers specialising in museum, gallery and architectural lighting.

Studio ZNA has completed successful projects in all the major National institutions including the National Gallery, V&A Museum, British Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Design Museum, Royal Academy. They are currently working on a new build museum in Odense Denmark for the Hans Christian Andersen Museum. They have designed the lighting for commercial galleries, Marian Goodman Gallery with David Adjaye Associates, David Zwirner Gallery with Annabelle Selldorf Architects. They worked with Studio Gardere for the Royal Academy's new Permanent Collections Gallery. They are pleased to have just completed a beautiful new build Maggie's Centre at the Royal Marsden Hospital with designers Ab Rogers Studio.

<https://www.studiozna.com/>

For further PRESS information about the Raphael Court and the Raphael Cartoons please contact Sophie Steel on s.steel@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 7942 2279 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk