



PRESS RELEASE

Under strict embargo until 09.15 Friday 8 November 2019

V&A appoints Gus Casely-Hayford as director of V&A East

The V&A has today announced the appointment of **Gus Casely-Hayford** as the inaugural director of V&A East. Internationally renowned as a museum director, cultural historian, writer, curator and broadcaster, he will take up the newly created role at the helm of the V&A's most ambitious expansion project in spring 2020.

Casely-Hayford is currently director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. On his return to London, he will be responsible for the creative strategy and programming across V&A East's two new public venues in east London, both now under construction in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. He will report to V&A Director, Tristram Hunt, and the V&A's Deputy Director, Chief Operating Officer and V&A East project lead, Tim Reeve, who welcomed the appointment:

"I'm delighted that Gus is joining the V&A to lead and launch V&A East. This is a hugely ambitious project – for east London, for the UK and for international cultural exchange. It offers us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform how we engage young, diverse audiences, and to revolutionise how our collections are accessed and experienced. We cast the net wide to find a creative leader of the highest standing, and with his prestigious career and background, Gus is perfectly placed to lead V&A East's growing team and to develop its new identity, purpose and programme."

V&A East is one of the most significant and ambitious developments in the museum's history. A five-storey museum (designed by O'Donnell + Tuomey) at Stratford Waterfront will sit alongside UAL's London College of Fashion, a new venue for Sadler's Wells, and new BBC studios. As its centrepiece, the museum will host a pioneering UK-US partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, spanning the arts, humanities, science and nature, and uniting two of the world's greatest museum collections to tell relevant, topical and powerful stories about the world in which we live.

Ten minutes' walk away at Here East, a new collection and research centre (designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro) will unite more than 250,000 objects, 350,000 books, and 1,000 archives in a new purpose-built facility that will reinvent the idea of a museum store as visitor experience.

Both sites will open in 2023 as part of East Bank, a new powerhouse of culture, education, innovation and growth taking shape in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as part of the London 2012 Olympic legacy.

Gus Casely-Hayford, said: *“I feel enormously privileged to be asked to become part of the fantastic V&A team. It has long been the arts institution that I have looked to for innovation and inspiration. And what a brief – working to deliver a new museum for east London. And what a collection – the most thrilling single body of material culture I have ever encountered.*

The V&A is a museum with the appetite and ambition to really shift the way that museums work and engage. I cannot wait to share the magic of V&A East with new audiences and our old friends. We are going to craft dynamic and compelling ways for our audiences to get close to the extraordinary, to be transported across time and geography by the most beautiful and intriguing things. We want to give you the tools to tell and retell your own stories through objects that move you – and to change the way that we think about ourselves and the world.”

Casely-Hayford will join the V&A’s Executive Board and assume management responsibility for V&A East’s curatorial and project teams.

The appointment comes as the V&A continues its expansion beyond its historic home at South Kensington, with a major transformation underway at the V&A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green, and new V&A galleries now open in both Dundee and Shenzhen.

Gus Casely-Hayford, OBE Biography

Gus Casely-Hayford OBE is a renowned British curator, cultural historian, broadcaster and lecturer. He is currently Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. He is a Fellow of the Cultural Institute at King’s College London, Honorary Fellow of SOAS, and a Clore Fellow. He has sat on the boards of many arts institutions including the National Trust, the Caine Prize for African Writing, London’s National Portrait Gallery and has been a member of the Blue Plaque Group.

Casely-Hayford PhD has lectured widely, advised organisations from Tate (Tate Britain Council) to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC Hamlet 2016), has worked on a British Library exhibition focused on African intellectual tradition, and consulted on numerous exhibitions, including Tate Britain’s exhibition *Artist and Empire*, alongside other creative projects.

A celebrated writer and broadcaster, Casely-Hayford’s presenter credits include two series of *Tate Britain’s Great British Walks* (2017-2018) for Sky Arts, BBC Two’s *The Culture Show* and two series of *Lost Kingdoms of Africa* (2010-2012) for BBC Four, for which he also wrote the companion book. In 2017 he gave a TEDGlobal Talk entitled *The Powerful Stories that Shaped Africa* and in 2018 was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to arts and culture.

-ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS

- **The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A)** is the world’s leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of human creativity. It was established in 1852 to make works of

art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, its purpose is to champion creative industry, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination.

- **East Bank** is a new powerhouse of culture, education, innovation and growth being built on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, East London. It will be spread across three sites – UCL East (UCL's new campus), Stratford Waterfront (BBC, the V&A including a partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, Sadler's Wells and UAL's London College of Fashion) and Here East (the V&A's new collection and research centre, and an existing space for UCL).

East Bank will build on the area's existing creative credentials, and East Bank partners have been building relationships and delivering projects with the thriving arts, fashion and community organisations based in the area, including the artistic community in Hackney Wick, East London Dance, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Studio Wayne McGregor and many more.

Social Media

#EastBank

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

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For further PRESS information about V&A East please contact Laura Mitchell on l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 4509 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk