



24 September 2020

V&A announces November reopening of The Raphael Court

The Raphael Court

Reopening 14 November 2020

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

On 14 November 2020 the V&A's Raphael Court – home to the Raphael Cartoons – will reopen following a nine-month refurbishment to mark the 500th anniversary of Raphael's death. The refreshed gallery and its new interpretive approach will transform the way museum visitors experience the Cartoons, lent to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen.

The Raphael Cartoons are among the greatest treasures of the Renaissance in the UK. Shortly after his election in 1513, Pope Leo X commissioned Raphael to create a set of ten full-scale designs for a series of tapestries for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Palace, 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 early 17th century by the Prince of Wales, later Charles I. They remained in the Royal Collection and were lent to the South Kensington Museum – now the V&A – by Queen Victoria in 1865 in memory of Prince Albert, and have been on public display in the museum ever since.

Working with architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and lighting designers Studio ZNA, we are introducing a new decorative scheme and infrastructure in the Raphael Court to reveal the Cartoons' extraordinary details and vibrant palette. Acoustic panelling will help to create a calmer environment, and bespoke furniture gives new opportunities to sit and enjoy the works at leisure. 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 high-resolution recording project carried out by Factum Foundation, graphics by Polimekanos and digital gallery interpretation by Spiral Productions will also reveal in-depth stories about the creation and history of the Cartoons, available to visitors in the gallery and online.

The refurbished gallery's new interpretive approach will provide the public with a deeper level of access to the Raphael Cartoons, enhancing our understanding of these monumental works of art. In August 2019, the V&A and Royal Collection Trust worked with Factum Foundation and Momart to carry out a high-resolution recording project, supported by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. This involved unframing each Cartoon to capture high-resolution three-dimensional data of the surface, and panoramic composite photography to record the colour and gather infra-red data. It also provided an opportunity to carry out conservation checks, glass cleaning and frame cleaning.

Each 3D image took over 95 hours to capture with four of Factum's Lucida 3D Scanners mounted on scaffold towers. The resulting images reveal the Cartoons' unique surface texture, showing the composite sheets of paper that make up each Cartoon; evidence of the process of duplicating the Cartoons by 'pouncing' the paper – a series of minute holes used by the tapestry weavers to transfer the designs; and the marks of previous restorations.

The images captured will be crucial for the study and future care of the Cartoons, as well as in enhancing the gallery interpretation in an unprecedented way. Imagery and a suite of new interactive interpretation will be available online, accessed in the gallery via QR codes, allowing visitors to engage with the interpretation on site using their own devices. Visitors will be able to zoom in and discover the design and making of the Cartoons and Raphael's extraordinary creative process through detailed imagery and interactive features that highlight the significance and status of the Cartoons in multiple ways. Stories told will include the Cartoons' function as full-scale tapestry designs for the Sistine Chapel, the ingenuity of Raphael and his workshop and their design process, the rescue, life and status of the Cartoons in England from their arrival in the 17th century, and the fascination they have provoked since then up to the present day. A new publication, edited by Dr Ana Debenedetti, will further contextualise the creation and afterlife of the Cartoons, shedding light on Raphael's artistic practice and the organisation of his large workshop, the fate of the tapestries made for the Sistine Chapel, and the rediscovery and reception of the Cartoons, especially in Britain.

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. Cutting-edge technology, provided by Factum Foundation, offered non-invasive methods of studying such canonical works of art by allowing us to look beneath the visible layers of paint and discover Raphael's creative process. It is a feast for the eye to be able to enjoy the extraordinary beauty of these monumental drawings which are over 500 years old. We look forward to sharing this enhanced experience with our visitors when the gallery reopens in November to mark Raphael's 500th anniversary.*

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. Combined with enhanced interpretation, the new scheme – with its darker colour palette, state-of-the-art lighting, refreshed furniture, new graphics and on-site digital experience – will heighten our visitors' viewing experience and their enjoyment of these works of art.

The Raphael Court is also home to other works, including 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 & Queensberry KT KBE, and The Trustees of the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust. The original set of tapestries for the Sistine Chapel is on view in the Vatican Palace in Rome. Other important Renaissance works in The Raphael Court include a marble singing gallery from Florence – likely seen by Raphael – and a detached fresco by Perugino, Raphael's master. On display in the Court apse, a monumental altarpiece from Valencia, Spain, is a rare example of the Gothic International Style and illustrates a founding event of the city under the protection of Saint George.

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

In November the V&A will also open *Renaissance Watercolours*, a new free display coinciding with the reopening of The Raphael Court as part of a wider celebration of the Renaissance across the museum. Showcasing highlights from the V&A's collection of watercolours from the Renaissance period, the display is a reimagining of the exhibition *Renaissance Watercolours: from Dürer to Van Dyck*, which was planned for May 2020 but was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- The Raphael Cartoons are lent to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen.
- Entrance to The Raphael Court is free.
- The reopening of The Raphael Court will be marked by a new V&A publication edited by Dr Ana Debenedetti, retailing at £9.99. With contributions from Alessandra Rodolfo (Vatican Museums) and Brett Dolman (Historic Royal Palaces), it will shed fresh light on Raphael's artistic practice and the Cartoons convoluted history up to the present day.
- The refurbishment design team includes FCBstudios as the architects, Studio ZNA as the lighting designers, Quinn London Ltd as the contractors, Polimekanos as the graphic designers, and Spiral Productions as the gallery digital interactive designers.
- The new gallery interpretation will be available on visitors' mobiles, accessed online via QR codes in the gallery. The V&A website will also host complimentary in-depth content allowing visitors to explore the Cartoons from afar.
- The new free display *Renaissance Watercolours* will open on 12 November 2020, coinciding with the reopening of Raphael Court.

Social Media

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @VictoriaandAlbertMuseum

V&A FuturePlan

FuturePlan is a programme of innovative capital projects to transform the museum's galleries and provide an outstanding experience for all our visitors. Working with the best contemporary designers and engineers, approximately 85% of the Museum's spaces at South Kensington have been transformed over the past 20 years, introducing new audiences to our extraordinary collections and trebling visitor numbers. Our ambition is to make our visitors feel welcome and enfranchised, show our collections in ways that are relevant and inspiring, and to reveal and celebrate our buildings.

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 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.

In 2020 Factum Arte used the data recorded by Factum Foundation to produce the exact facsimile of Raphael's cartoon *The Sacrifice at Lystra*. The facsimile was presented alongside the corresponding tapestry at the exhibition *Raphael (1520-1483)* at the Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome, and demonstrates what can be achieved when merging new technologies and traditional craft skills for the dissemination of cultural heritage.

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/>

Polimekanos

Polimekanos is a graphic design practice based in London and Vienna, which was founded in 2001 by artist and designer Stefan Kraus and Joseph Kohlmaier. The studio works across a variety of media, from visual identity, book design, exhibition design and websites, to wayfinding and public realm work. Polimekanos has a reputation for an unusual working method that is research-led, allowing place, history and the immediate context to inform the design process, and at the same time idiosyncratic, open to interdisciplinary and contemporary discourses.

In the public realm Polimekanos is extremely proud of projects such as the Low Line concept in Borough, London, and the Walthamstow Wetlands, where their interventions reflect an insightful, enthusiastic, strategic and artistic approach. In a similar way Polimekanos worked with cultural institutions and creative practices to create unique and timeless identities, like for the Arnolfini in Bristol, UP Projects (Art commissions for public spaces) and Adam Khan Architects. Finally Polimekanos is known for their beautiful and sensitive exhibition designs for cultural institutions such as the Southbank Centre, Horniman Museum and Laban Centre in New Cross.

Quinn London

Quinn London was formed by our Managing Director, Seamus Quinn, with the aim to deliver quality, construction, solutions, across London and the South of England. Built upon this ethos and led by Seamus, Quinn London has excelled through the years to become an award-winning contractor and celebrated 20 years in business this year.

Quinn London's award-winning Heritage Division has been delivering quality conservation solutions across London and the South East of England since 2015. Our team has the ideal balance of specialist heritage experience, strong programming skills and commercial acumen to support our Clients and professional teams in delivering conservation, restoration projects and managing heritage assets to sustain and, where appropriate, enhance its significance. It is our overarching aim that every project that

we work on is conserved to be appreciated by future generations, whilst providing a sustainable asset that can be utilised by the surrounding society.

<https://www.quinnlondon.co.uk/heritage> | [Twitter: @quinnlondonltd](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Spiral Productions

Spiral Productions are a digital media agency with over twenty-five years' experience designing and producing digital media for museums and cultural centres all around the world. Their projects include interactive media - single player and multiplayer games, information kiosks and databases delivered on touchscreens, tablets or via projection. They also produce moving image media in many forms – single screen and multiscreen immersive shows, animation (2D and 3D), motion graphics and documentary films. Spiral have produced successful projects for the Science Museum, National Museums of Scotland, National Horseracing Museum, Tate Modern, National Museum of Qatar, the RAF Museum and the Mary Rose Museum amongst many others.

Studio ZNA

Studio ZNA is an award-winning creative 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 and live art lighting. They use light as a narrative tool, to animate space, and create bespoke choreography of luminance, texture and tone - to understand and celebrate space, it's functionality and its occupants.

Studio ZNA has completed successful projects in all the major National institutions including the National Gallery, V&A, British Museum, National Portrait Gallery, Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Design Museum, and Royal Academy. They have designed the lighting schemes for commercial galleries, Marian Goodman Gallery with David Adjaye Associates, and David Zwirner Gallery with Selldorf Architects, New York. 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 Ab Rogers Design. They recently opened a bespoke new Gallery for National Library of Norway, Oslo, with Nissen Richards Studio. Current projects include a new build Hans Christian Anderson Museum in Odense, Denmark, the refurbishment of the Courtauld Gallery in London, and with AOC architects, the exhibition design for the re-imagined V&A Museum of Childhood.

<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