



PRESS RELEASE

V&A to reopen on 19 May with three major exhibitions, new displays, and the transformed Raphael Court

Following a year of stop-start closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the V&A is delighted to announce that it will reopen its doors to visitors on Wednesday 19 May 2021, pending final confirmation from the government.

With over 200,000 objects, six floors and seven miles of gallery space, all of the museum's collection galleries will once again be open for the public to explore. The reopening of the V&A will also mark the unveiling of two major new exhibitions – *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser*, and *Epic Iran* – alongside the return of *Bags: Inside Out*, as well as the first time that the public will be able to visit the newly refurbished Raphael Court, home to the Raphael Cartoons.

Within the first two weeks of reopening, the V&A will open the highly anticipated exhibitions *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser*, opening 22 May, and *Epic Iran*, opening 29 May.

Exploring its origins, adaptations and reinventions over 158 years, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* will offer an immersive and mind-bending trip down the rabbit hole, exploring the cultural impact of Alice in Wonderland across film, performance, fashion, art, music and photography.

Epic Iran will transport visitors through time to explore over 5,000 years of culture through over 300 objects, telling the story of Iranian art and design from 3000 BC to the present day, providing an insight into a culture often seen through a different lens in the media.

After a short-lived opening back in December, *Bags: Inside Out* will also reopen on 19 May. From Winston Churchill's dispatch box to celebrity 'it' handbags, *Bags: Inside Out* takes visitors through the style, craft and seduction of the ultimate accessory.

The Raphael Cartoons are among the greatest treasures of the Renaissance in the UK, and are lent to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen. The museum's iconic Raphael Court has been reconceived to reveal the Cartoons' extraordinary details and vibrant palette, which – together with a new interactive interpretation in the gallery – will transform the way museum visitors experience these monumental works of art.

A number of free-to-visit displays will also be available to discover. In our Painting Galleries, *Renaissance Watercolours* presents a series of rare gems from the museum's collections to explore the pivotal role of this often under-appreciated art form. In our Theatre and Performance galleries, *On Point: Royal Academy of Dance at 100* is ready to take visitors through a century of dance history from costumes and sets to performances and films. New display *Katerina Jebb/Elizabeth Parker* features a large-scale photomontage by Jebb,

spotlighting a rare 19th-century sampler which narrates the hardships of its young female creator, Elizabeth Parker.

Director of the V&A, Tristram Hunt said *"We are delighted to be reopening the V&A with three spectacular new exhibitions. Only at the V&A can you explore the wonders of ancient Persia, jump down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, before swinging by a fashion paradise in Bags: Inside Out and finish your day in the Renaissance serenity of the Raphael Court – and that's even before you discover our seven miles of permanent galleries. After many months of screen-time, our free galleries are ready for the public to enjoy, explore and question once again. The past year has been one of the most challenging that the museum has ever faced but our reopening programme captures the excitement and curiosity that the museum stands for. We have an abundance of space for social distancing and thousands of objects to inspire. Come and discover your V&A."*

A number of measures are in place across the V&A to ensure that the museum is a safe, relaxing and inspiring place for visitors, staff and volunteers. Free timed tickets to visit the museum's collection galleries are released every two months and enable visitors to freely explore and discover the wonders of the V&A's collection within a socially distanced environment. Further details on the range of safety measures that are in place, from screens to sanitiser stations, can be found on the V&A website.

The new Design: 1900–Now gallery on the museum's second floor, will open in June 2021, and feature over a century of works from the V&A's world-leading collection of modern and contemporary design including Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir's iconic British Road Sign and the Mae West lips sofa by Salvador Dalí. The gallery will explore the history of design and its impact on how we live, work, travel, communicate and consume as well as providing a new home for the museum's celebrated Rapid Response Collection.

Also in June, the V&A together with the London Festival of Architecture (LFA) and Discover South Kensington are commissioning a series of architectural installations on Exhibition Road, exploring the subject of ecology. On display throughout the summer until October, in the lead up to COP26 in November 2021, we are inviting emerging architecture and design practitioners to submit a design proposal for an installation that celebrates and demonstrates how biodiversity and ecology can be embedded into the public realm, while also showcasing the role design has to play in the multifaceted challenge of climate change.

Looking further ahead, *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* will open 18 September. Focusing on contemporary design inspired by Islamic tradition, it will showcase work by the eight finalists, Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Ajlan Gharem, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi, and Bushra Waqas Khan. *Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution* will open 20 November, the first major exhibition devoted to the international prominence of the legendary Russian goldsmith and the importance of his little-known London branch.

For those unable to visit in person, over 1.2 million objects are now available to explore at home on the V&A's new *Explore the Collections* website. For the first time, *Explore the Collections* brings together data, stories, images and content about the museum's vast and fascinating collection in one place. With a completely redesigned user experience, it provides a new, fluid and story-led approach, where audiences can search for specific objects or allow the site to recommend content based on their interests.

V&A Academy courses are also available online and bring together the museum's outstanding collections with world-leading experts to present thoughtful and inspiring courses that can be taken anywhere in the world.

– ENDS –

Notes to editors:

For further PRESS information about the exhibition, contact the Press Office on 020 7942 2502 or press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Opening hours:

From 19 May, the V&A will be open Wednesday to Sunday each week from 10am to 5:45pm. Free timed tickets to visit the museum's collection will be released every two months. Keep in touch with us on social media or check our website for the latest information.

Bags: Inside Out

Until 16 January 2022

Sponsored by Mulberry

The UK's most comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the ultimate accessory. From designer handbags to despatch boxes, vanity cases to military rucksacks, the exhibition will explore our longstanding fascination with the bag. Featuring innovative designs from Mulberry to Karl Lagerfeld, bags carried by Vivien Leigh to Sarah Jessica Parker, the heritage of Hermès to the streetwear of Off-White, and an exclusive look inside the world of the factory and atelier; *Bags: Inside Out* provides an unprecedented look at this global obsession.

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Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser

22 May – 31 December 2021

Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser will celebrate one of the most iconic, imaginative and inspiring stories of all time. Offering an immersive and mind-bending journey down the rabbit hole, this fantastical exhibition will explore Alice in Wonderland's origins, adaptations and reinventions over 158 years, charting its evolution from manuscript to a global phenomenon beloved by all ages. Through over 300 objects, across five Alice-inspired worlds arranged thematically – spanning film, performance, fashion, art, music and photography – the V&A will be the first museum to fully explore the cultural impact of Alice in Wonderland and its ongoing inspiration for leading creatives, from Salvador Dalí and Yayoi Kusama, to The Beatles, Vivienne Westwood and Little Simz.

The exhibition is supported by HTC Vive Arts with further support from Unwin Charitable Trust.



Epic Iran

29 May – 12 September 2021

Epic Iran will explore 5000 years of art, design and culture, bringing together over 300 objects from ancient, Islamic and contemporary Iran. It will be the UK's first major exhibition on Iranian art and culture in 90 years that presents an overarching narrative from 3000 BC to the present day. From sculpture, ceramics and carpets, to textiles, photography and film, the exhibition will comprise rarely seen objects from the V&A alongside international loans and significant private collections, including The Sarikhani Collection. *Epic Iran* will shine a light on one of the greatest historic civilisations, its journey into the 21st century and its monumental artistic achievements, which remain unknown to many.

Organised by the V&A with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with The Sarikhani Collection. With support from The Godwin Family, Darioush Winery, Cockayne – Grants for the Arts, a donor-advised fund of The London Community Foundation, The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, The Soudavar Memorial Foundation, The Arah Foundation, Dr Amir Ali Farman-Farma and The Altajir Trust.

With thanks to:



THE
SARIKHANI
COLLECTION

With support from:

DARIOUSH
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The London
Community
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COCKAYNE



The Raphael Court

Reopening 19 May

The Raphael Cartoons are lent to the V&A from the Royal Collection by Her Majesty The Queen. The redevelopment 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, Sir Michael and Lady Hintze, the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation, the American Friends of the V&A, and many other generous donors.

Katerina Jebb/Elizabeth Parker

Opening 19 May

Sponsored by Burberry

Jebb's large-scale photomontage spotlights a rare 19th century embroidery sampler from the V&A collection, which narrates the incredible hardships of its young female creator, Elizabeth Parker, who was born in 1813. This installation, records and re-frames the sampler

providing visitors with a larger-than-life representation of the work fitting of the magnitude of its words. The original sampler – which will also be on show in the V&A’s fashion gallery during the display’s run – features a deeply personal account by Elizabeth Parker. It highlights the realities of life for many women in the 19th century, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and its words still strongly resonate today. Katerina Jebb amplifies Elizabeth Parker’s voice through her unique creative practice of digital scanning, which involves producing multiple high-resolution scans of an object before assembling them together to create a photomontage of the original object. The high resolution of the image – as well as the size of the work – means that Parker’s stitched words are now accessible for visitors to read and contemplate like never before.

Sponsored by:

BURBERRY

Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics

18 September – 28 November 2021

Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics will showcase the work of eight designers shortlisted from over 400 applications for the Jameel Prize, the world’s leading award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition. A collaboration between the V&A and Art Jameel, the Prize was founded in 2009 and is now in its sixth edition. This year’s iteration focuses on contemporary design, and the finalists for the £25,000 prize are Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Ajlan Gharem, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi, and Bushra Waqas Khan. The works in the exhibition will address global events and lived realities, and the legacies of language, architecture and craft.



Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution

20 November 2021 – 8 May 2022

Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution is the first major exhibition devoted to the international prominence of the legendary Russian goldsmith and the importance of his little-known London branch. With a focus on Fabergé’s Edwardian high society clientele, it will shine a light on his triumphs in Britain as well as a global fascination with the joyful opulence of his creations. Showcasing over 200 objects across three main sections, the exhibition will tell the story of Carl Fabergé, the man, and his internationally recognised firm that symbolised Russian craftsmanship and elegance. Unknown to many, it will explore the Anglo-Russian nature of his enterprise with his only branch outside of Russia opening in London in 1903.

With additional support from Pan Pacific

