



News Release
8 September 2021

V&A announces The Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project, a new curatorial programme to support women in photography

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Today, the V&A announces The Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project, a major new curatorial programme to support women in photography. The Project, funded by Ms. Ruth Monicka Parasol and the Parasol Foundation Trust, encompasses a new curatorial post alongside acquisitions, research, education and public displays, aiming to foreground and sustain women's practice in contemporary photography and highlight the role women have played throughout the history of the medium.

The Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography – a new curatorial position, endowed for 25 years – will lead the Project's activities. Recruitment for the role begins today.

The Project furthers the V&A's mission to nurture contemporary artists and share the museum's collections, knowledge, and expertise in photography. Through commissioning women to create new work, acquiring photography by women artists, devising women-led displays, and organising talks, educational programmes and events, the Project's ambition is to support contemporary women artists, develop programming, and investigate the roles of women photographers within the V&A collection. International in scope, there will be a particular emphasis on digital art, and the digital distribution of resources and information via social media. The Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography will also develop a significant online presence for the Project, including a dedicated Instagram account to highlight works by women artists, which will launch in early 2022.

The Project is made possible through a major gift from Ms. Ruth Monicka Parasol and the Parasol Foundation Trust, a philanthropic trust established in 2004 that supports educational, health, culture and heritage initiatives. In addition to the Trust's support of the Project, Gallery 97 at the V&A will be named The Parasol Foundation Gallery. This gallery, a space for displaying contemporary photography, is part of the V&A Photography Centre Phase Two development.

Duncan Forbes, Head of Photography at the V&A, said: “We are thrilled to launch this programme in support of women photographers at the V&A. It allows us to focus resources over a sustained period and to celebrate the creativity of women artists across the photography collections. The opportunity to bring work by contemporary photographers into dialogue with the V&A's rich historical archive is particularly exciting. The programme arrives at an energizing moment for photography at the museum with the forthcoming expansion of the Photography Centre in 2023. We are very grateful to the Parasol Foundation Trust for its enlightened support.”

Ms. Ruth Monicka Parasol said: “I’m delighted to be working with the V&A to create the Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project. We’re aiming to celebrate the achievements of women in photography and inspire the next generation of women photographers to fully express their creativity and achieve their potential. Our focus on digital art and social media will open up participation and help us connect with the widest possible audience.”

The V&A was the first museum in the world to collect photographs, beginning with its founding in 1852, and continues to collect and commission new work today. Phase One of the V&A Photography Centre opened to critical acclaim in 2018, sharing the breadth of the V&A’s world-leading photography collection, and Phase Two – with four new gallery spaces – will open in 2023.

The next 18 months will be a busy time for photography at the V&A. On 6 November 2021 the existing Photography Centre will be entirely rehung with two new displays. *Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime* will open in Room 100, The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery, and next-door, *Known and Strange: Photographs from the Collection* in Room 101, The Sir Elton John and David Furnish Gallery. The V&A will also be recruiting the second Curatorial Fellow in Photography, supported by The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation in 2022.

Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime will showcase the late photographer’s dramatic photographs of mid-century British and foreign industry, capturing factories and their workers in an era of rapid transition. From shipyards to papermills, textiles to food production, and atomic power stations to car manufacture, Broomfield emphasized the heroic, sublime, futuristic and sometimes surreal qualities of industry. The display will feature over 40 original prints, drawn from Broomfield’s extensive archive housed at the V&A. These will be shown alongside a selection of Broomfield’s cameras – lent from the private collection of his son, the renowned documentary film maker Nick Broomfield – as well as other contextual items which have never been exhibited before, including historic film footage, audio recordings, press cuttings, contact prints, negatives, trade publications and pages from his job reference books, shining a light onto the photographer’s working processes. To accompany the display, the V&A will publish a new book on Maurice Broomfield, written by V&A Senior Curator Martin Barnes and with a foreword by Nick Broomfield.

Known and Strange: Photographs from the Collection will highlight photography’s power to transform the familiar into the unfamiliar, and the ordinary into the extraordinary. Since its

invention, photography has changed the way we see the world by inviting us to interpret reality in our own way. This display focuses on its creative capacity to blur fact with fiction. *Known and Strange* will showcase over 50 recent contemporary acquisitions by established and emerging photographers, including Andy Sewell, Tereza Zelenkova, Dafna Talmor, Zanele Muholi, Rinko Kawauchi and Mitch Epstein.

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For further PRESS information please contact Sophie Steel on s.steel@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 2502 (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Social Media

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @victoriaandalbertmuseum

Notes to Editors

- For more information on The Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project, please see here.
- Recruitment for The Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography is now underway.
- The displays *Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime* and *Known and Strange: Photographs from the Collection* run from 6 November 2021 – 6 November 2022.
- The display *Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime* will be accompanied by a new V&A publication by Martin Barnes, with a foreword by Nick Broomfield. RRP £25.

About the V&A photography collection

The V&A holds the National Collection of the Art of Photography. The museum has collected photographs since its foundation in 1852 and continues to collect today, with new acquisitions supported by the V&A Photographs Acquisition Group and other generous donors. The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) collection was transferred to the V&A by the Science Museum Group in 2017 and was acquired with the generous assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Art Fund. The consolidation of these world-class collections is the catalyst for the museum's new Photography Centre, phase one of which opened in October 2018, with phase two scheduled to open in 2023. The V&A's collection encompasses the work of leading historic and contemporary photographers as well as publications, cameras and related equipment. When not on display, photographs from the collection can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room.
vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs

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, 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.

About the Parasol Foundation Trust

The Parasol Foundation Trust is the philanthropic division of Parasol International and Ruth Parasol and family.

The Trust was established in Gibraltar in 2004 and since then it has given over £30,000,000 for health, heritage and education grants in Gibraltar, UK, Israel, India, US, Spain and elsewhere.

Ruth Parasol is known as its Principal Benefactress giving much of her time as a Trustee Director, guiding grant making, continuing to fund the Trust with her additional money and her private family office providing administrative and investment support.

<https://parasolfoundation.org/>