

# V&A



THE REED AND RONNY SCHWARTZ GALLERY

**Photographs  
Acquisition  
Group**





## Join Us in Building an Incredible Collection

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Photography has always been at the heart of our collections. We were the first museum to collect photography beginning in 1852, just a few years after its invention, and in 1858 we were the first UK museum to hold a photography exhibition, pictured opposite. Since then, collectors, philanthropists and, most recently, the Photographs Acquisition Group have all helped us to expand the collection with brilliant works for everyone to enjoy.

We continually strive to acquire the latest outstanding examples of contemporary photography to ensure it reflects how photographers are expanding the medium in dynamic ways. And although the collection is large, there are significant gaps, such as works made on camera phones and photography from the Indian subcontinent.

Meanwhile, the price of photography continues to rise. From 2000 to 2015, the market price for photography grew by 48%. We therefore increasingly rely on philanthropic support to fund important acquisitions. These donations ensure that we have not been priced out of the ever-growing photography market and can continue enhancing our collection for future generations.



Angus Peter MacIntyre, South Uist, Hebrides, Paul Strand, 1954. Museum no. E.82-2015. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



## The Photographs Acquisition Group

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You can help us to purchase new works for the collection by joining the Photographs Acquisition Group. This small and engaged group of collectors and photography enthusiasts plays a major role in broadening the collection with contemporary photography.

We ask each member to donate at least £10,000 annually, forming a vital acquisition fund. Members are closely involved with the acquisition process. They meet with our curators twice a year to discuss which photographs the museum will acquire with the fund, in accordance with our collecting strategy, and join the curators on studio visits, private tours of exhibitions and international trips to photography festivals.

Since 2011, the group has enabled over 40 bodies of work, totalling more than 500 prints, to be purchased. By joining this group of philanthropists, you will help to develop an encyclopaedic resource of outstanding creativity for the benefit of the public, researchers and photographers, that sparks the imagination and generates new ideas.



'Time after Time, Untitled No.28', by Ori Gersht, 2006. Museum no. E.258-2013. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Ori Gersht



'Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 14.00 hours', by Yinka Shonibare, 2012. Museum no. E.236-2013. Purchased with the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Photographs Acquisition Group. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Yinka Shonibare

## Photography at the V&A

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The V&A's photography collection is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections in the world. We now look after over 800,000 incredible objects, covering a broad range of styles and techniques, from fashion to photojournalism, daguerreotype to digital.

Some of the earliest objects belonged to the inventors of photography, such as William Henry Fox Talbot's "mousetrap" cameras made in the 1830s, the origin of all modern cameras today, as well as his prints, negatives, notebooks and publications.

The Photographs Acquisition Group and other supporters help us to collect contemporary photographers' work, such as Chris Levine, Garry Fabian Miller, Vera Lutter, Martin Parr, Cindy Sherman, Susan Derges, and Richard Learoyd, as well as important works by lesser known artists.

The rest of our collection has been built up through donations and purchases funded by our supporters. It includes many of the greatest figures in photography, such as the early Victorian pioneers Anna Atkins and Julia Margaret Cameron, and pictorialists such as Alvin Langdon Coburn and Alfred Stieglitz. We also have significant collections of key 20th-century photographers, such as Paul Strand, Dorothea Lange, Cecil Beaton, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Bill Brandt.

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) Collection forms a major part of our holdings. It illuminates a rich and varied history from the 1820s to 2000s, and includes over 270,000 photographs, a mile-long collection of photobooks, 6,000 pieces of camera equipment and important photographers' letters.

Several other small but important collections have also been donated to the V&A, such as the John and Judith Hillelson Collection which includes some of the most significant works of photojournalism from the 20th century, or Chauncy Hare Townshend's early photography collection, donated in 1868, which ranges from images made by his contemporaries of political, military and contemporary events to a striking group of French fine art photographs.



'More or Less Obvious Forms', by Darren Harvey-Regan, 2012. Museum no. E.260-2013. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Darren Harvey-Regan



# The Photography Centre

Photographs purchased with the support of the Photographs Acquisition Group are regularly displayed in our Photography Centre, one of the few places where visitors can enjoy works from the medium's invention in the 19th century to the present day.

The first phase of the Centre opened in October 2018. Covering 384m<sup>2</sup>, it has more than doubled the permanent space dedicated to photography. These elegant new galleries allow us to take full advantage of the collection's breadth, sparking visitors' imaginations with captivating stories.

A suite of bespoke showcases display unique mirror-like daguerreotypes, rare books, albums and magazines alongside glass negatives on light boxes, stereographs seen in 3-D, original notebooks and camera equipment.

The Centre also has a Project Space which shows contemporary commissions and thematic displays. For the first installation, the Photographs Acquisition Group funded a specially commissioned project by Thomas Ruff, who worked with 1850s paper negatives in our collection by Captain Linnaeus Tripe to create an exciting new body of work, three of which were acquired for our collection.

Elsewhere in the Photography Centre lies the Dark Tent, a flexible projection and lecture space inspired by 19th-century photographers' travelling darkrooms. Here visitors can enjoy specially commissioned films revealing early photographic processes, including the daguerreotype, calotype and wet collodion process, along with a slideshow of rarely-seen magic lantern slides and 35mm slideshows. Nearby, a Light Wall shows the best 'born digital' photography on a grid of screens, allowing us to display some of the art form's latest innovations.

The second phase of this project is planned to open in 2022 and will double the size of the Photography Centre again to create even more space for visitors to enjoy.







## Support Acquisitions for Publications and Exhibitions

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The Photographs Acquisition Group enables us to purchase important photographs that form the backbone of our exhibitions and publications.

Our critically-acclaimed headline shows often use photographs acquired with the Group's support to celebrate the brilliance and skill of talented photographers such as Paul Strand, Horst P. Horst, Tim Walker and Julia Margaret Cameron.

Several works purchased with the Group's support have been featured in our *Photography Library* series of books, giving audiences another way to study and enjoy photographs in our collection. Smaller displays also use them to illuminate different styles, themes and movements, such as:

- *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less Photography*
- *Into the Woods: Trees in Photography*
- *Signs of a Struggle: Photography in the Wake of Postmodernism*



This page: Paul Strand exhibition © Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
Previous page: 'Pine Forest in Le Barroux, Vaucluse', by Simone Nieweg, 2012. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. Museum no. E.689-2017. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Simone Nieweg



## Support Object-Based Learning

At the V&A we champion object-based learning, using our collection, including prints purchased with the Group's support, to tell the story of photography to people of all ages.

Our workshops, study days and courses use the collection to offer curious minds a huge variety of ways to discover photography, gain hands-on experience and explore new skills. Led by talented artists, makers and curators, participants can enjoy topics as diverse as fashion photography, cyanotypes or videogames photography.

Researchers can also request to view almost any photograph in the collection in our Prints and Drawings Study Room, including recent purchases supported by the Group, making it the most publicly available photography collection in the world. Since 2010 this free service has given over 45,000 visitors access to an encyclopaedic photography collection, to learn and make new discoveries for the future.



This page: Friday Late event, curator talk in the Photography Centre, October 2018 © Hydar Dewachi; Facing page: Friday Late event, photography discussion in Europe 1600 – 1815, Room 4, The Globe, October 2018 © Hydar Dewachi







## Support Contemporary Photographers

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For photographers, having their work included in the V&A collection makes a hugely positive impact. It can help to enhance their reputations amongst museums, gallerists and collectors, and support the sale of further work. It can also develop their creative practice, through discussions and feedback from our curators, strengthening their creative confidence and leading to new ideas. And many photographers value the opportunity to have their work publicly visible and accessible, stored in our collection for future generations to enjoy.

### Valérie Belin

“It is very important for artists like me that their work becomes part of a collection such as the V&A’s, as it represents an official recognition by institutions, professionals and donors and enhances their reputation. The project which the V&A also commissioned me to create, funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group, has also been a great source of inspiration. It has allowed me to discover works in the V&A collection that I was previously unaware of, which has reinvigorated my own work.”

### Darren Harvey-Regan

“Being part of a world-renowned collection that is known to span such a rich and diverse history embeds my work into one of the deepest cultural veins the world has to offer. It is an incredible privilege to me and one I feel so honoured by every time I visit the collection. It has unquestionably raised my profile and encouraged collectors to acquire more of my work.”



**Mark Cohen**

“The display of my photographs in the V&A Photography Centre is an impressive way for an artist to say, ‘my work is here’, added to the V&A collection, and sets a level of seriousness that is distinct. The book, ‘Autofocus: Cars in Photography’, by Dr Marta Weiss, will be another way to see two of these pictures in a more intimate and focused setting.”

**Jem Southam**

“I cannot imagine a more rewarding outcome in making ‘Rockfalls’ than its acquisition into the National Collection of the Art of Photography at the V&A. Furthermore, to see them on public display in the new Photography Centre is particularly satisfying. The interest shown in this work by the V&A has reignited my desire to finally resolve this set of studies which began in 1993. As a result, I will be seeking to make more visits to photograph, find new opportunities to exhibit, and to edit and publish a book of the series.”

**Thomas Ruff**

“It is a great honour to have my work added to one of the most stunning photography collections in the world. During the project commissioned by the V&A, I was able to survey and work with a unique archive of 19th-century photography, which has been particularly beneficial to my recent work. I had been hoping to research works by the photographer Linnaeus Tripe for many years and it was amazing not only to see his original negatives at the V&A, but also to use them to create new work and develop a new artistic perspective. I am deeply grateful to have had this opportunity, funded and supported by the Photographs Acquisition Group.”





## Get Closer to Photography at the V&A

By partnering with us to expand the collection, you can enjoy a close involvement with our photography activities:

- Meet our talented curators, view potential acquisitions and discuss which photographs will be acquired.
- Visit leading photographers to learn about their practice.
- Gain an in-depth understanding of our photography collecting strategy.
- Enjoy curators' tours and attend two opening night parties per year of our critically-acclaimed exhibitions.
- Get behind the scenes at international festivals, private collections and other museums on the Group's annual overseas trip.
- Receive free entry to all V&A exhibitions, our award-winning Members' Room and a free subscription to the V&A magazine.
- Be invited to join *Travel with the V&A*, a global programme of cultural tours, designed and led by V&A curators.

Please be aware that your entire donation will go towards purchasing photography, and that members of the Group pay to participate on some external events to help cover their costs.



To donate and join the Photographs Acquisition Group, or for more information, please contact:

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Front Cover: V&A Photography Centre, Room 100, The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery © Will Pryce; Inside Cover: 'Exhibition of the Photographic Society of London and the Société Française de Photographie at the South Kensington Museum', by Charles Thurston Thompson, 1858, Museum no. 2715-1913, Given by Alan S. Cole © Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Back Cover: V&A Photography Centre, Room 101, The Sir Elton John and David Furnish Gallery, Linda McCartney and Mary McCartney bespoke case © Will Pryce



