

# V&A Annual Review 2021–22

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# Chairman's foreword

This has been a year of significant rebuilding and recovery for the V&A and we continue to work to mitigate the lingering effects of Covid-19. Yet the V&A's remobilisation is an extraordinary milestone to celebrate. After so many false starts and delays, it was such a joy last May to welcome visitors back for the first time since 2020 to all seven miles of galleries across the museum, and to a vibrant programme of events and exhibitions. While we utilised every opportunity to maximise our digital offerings during lockdown, it felt even more exciting to be back in real life.

The V&A has seldom looked better too. Our transformed Raphael Court is receiving the attention it deserves; the refurbished Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries boast Canova's *The Three Graces* as a new resident; the new Design 1900 – Now gallery is open to visitors to explore the story of 20th-century design; and a suite of ambitious and enchanting exhibitions await.

The past year has shown the breadth of the V&A's programming with the museum in South Kensington hosting a remarkable six exhibitions spanning the cultural heritage of Iran, the curious world of *Alice in Wonderland* and centuries of masculine gender expression in *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*. Alongside our exhibition programme, the galleries have held a number of displays that have unpacked stories from ceramics to industrial photography, celebrated 100 years of the Royal Academy of Dance and explored the drawings of Sir James Thornhill.

Without our collections, none of this would be possible. Despite the financial challenges of the pandemic, we have been able to make some important acquisitions: from the career-spanning archives of industrial designer Sir Kenneth Grange, which will be accessible in the forthcoming V&A East Storehouse, to the 19th-century statuette, *The Death of Cleopatra* by Henry de Triqueti, a masterpiece saved for the nation following an export ban. A living museum is an acquiring museum and the collection's development is essential to ensuring the relevance and ongoing evolution of the V&A.

It has been truly wonderful to see development across our portfolio of sites this year. We announced the name and vision of Young V&A (formerly the V&A Museum of Childhood), setting out this ambitious museum's intention to be a powerhouse of creativity for children aged 0-14, and we look forward to its opening in 2023. Meanwhile, V&A East Storehouse was introduced as the new home of our collections – one in which visitors can immerse themselves to learn more about conservation, research and collections care. And, a short walk across the Olympic Park, the magnificent V&A East Museum has topped out and is standing proud among its East Bank partners. We look forward to sharing more details about the opening in due course.

We are extremely grateful to the museum staff who have worked so hard across all departments to engage with visitors both on site and online. We have loved welcoming everyone back and extend thanks to our loyal members, patrons and donors for their support throughout the year.

Sir Nicholas Coleridge

# Director's foreword

Liberated from Covid-19 apps and timed tickets, life has returned to the V&A in all its vitality and immediacy as our seven-day public opening and pre-pandemic programming were restored. Entering through the redesigned Grand Entrance from Cromwell Road, visitors can again delight in the full spectrum of museum-wide activity.

Over the past two years, critical questions about the role and place of museums within public life have taken on new urgency – whether in the fight against climate change or challenging social inequity. We have placed our own practices in the spotlight, renewing our commitment to embed sustainability across the institution – across collecting, exhibition programming and ways of working. A comprehensive three-year plan, published in September 2021, announced our priorities as we work towards the ambition of net zero emissions by 2035. Actions are also underway to achieve our strategic commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles. Being an actively anti-racist institution requires an organisation-wide effort and we are grateful to be guided on this journey with the appointment of a dedicated V&A EDI Lead.

We also welcomed the opportunity to reinvigorate and build enduring transcultural partnerships around the world this year. I visited Ghana to begin conversations about a renewable cultural partnership centred around the V&A collection of Asante court regalia, which entered the collection following the looting of Kumasi in 1874. We are optimistic that a new partnership model can forge a potential pathway for these important artefacts to be on display in Ghana in the coming years.

Meanwhile, the Gilbert Trust for the Arts, guardian of the collection that is on long-term loan to the V&A, achieved the remarkable feat of returning a 4,250-year-old gold Anatolian ewer to Turkey. A major provenance research project revealed that Arthur Gilbert had unknowingly acquired the ewer from a dealer involved in the trade of illicit antiquities. It is now placed in the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations alongside other artefacts from the Hattian Civilisation, and a spectacular commission by the metalsmith Adi Toch has been created as a counter piece to commemorate the ewer.

Design as a catalyst for change is also at the core of our flagship learning programme. DesignLab Nation has expanded to three new regions, while the Upstart Creative Careers Festival launched to help young people explore creative career pathways. In the third year of V&A Innovate, nearly 2,000 students took part, from schools across 19 counties in England. We were thrilled that V&A Innovate won a €50,000 Art Explora – Académie des beaux-arts European Award, commending those that reach new and wider audiences in innovative ways.

From Sunderland to Plymouth, Doncaster to Blackburn, we want to inspire people wherever they live: through sites from V&A Dundee to the V&A Wedgwood Collection in Barlaston, our extensive loans to UK-wide venues, and long-nurtured regional partnerships. As a national museum, we hold a truly national mandate.

In a world continuing to emerge from a pandemic, we are also laying the foundations for the V&A's future as an international museum, more committed than ever in its aim to showcase the very best of art, design, performance and creativity.

Tristram Hunt

# A year in highlights

## **A bumper year of programming**

A remarkable six major exhibitions are staged in one year including the critically-acclaimed *Epic Iran* and the immersive *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser*.

## **V&A Wedgwood Collection explores abolition**

Josiah Wedgwood's anti-slavery medallion *Am I not a Man and a Brother* inspires a research project with the local community in Stoke-on-Trent.

## **A refresh to the Grand Entrance on Cromwell Road**

Sam Jacob Studio provides a streamlined new lobby, updating the arrival experience for visitors and event-goers.

## **V&A Innovate wins funding**

The V&A's flagship National Schools Challenge, designed to support Key Stage 3 design students and educators, receives a €50,000 Art Explora – Académie des Beaux-Arts award.

## **Fabergé in London sells out**

Over 80,000 people visit *Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution*, the largest exhibition of works by Carl Fabergé in a generation, featuring 15 of his famed Imperial eggs.

## **Grinling Gibbons: Centuries in the Making**

The V&A lends important works to Compton Verney in Warwickshire for a major exhibition, seen by 18,500 visitors, and plans a two-day conference at the V&A in 2022, all part of a year-long celebration of the great carver's tercentenary.

## **Major project launches to foreground sustainable forestry**

A 10-year research and display programme supported by John Makepeace OBE, *Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures*, aims to explore renewable, natural materials in connection to design and architecture.

## **Roadmap to net zero emissions unveiled**

The V&A launches its most comprehensive Sustainability Action Plan to date, laying out museum-wide, structural changes and the steps needed to reach net zero emissions by 2035.

## **V&A supports UK museums**

The Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund helps 54 collections UK-wide to acquire new objects, from a vessel by Dame Magdalene Odundo for The Hepworth Wakefield to a 17th-century cabinet for Norton Priory, Cheshire.

## **Enriching the collections**

Highlights among the acquisitions made possible with support from generous donors this year include the archives of industrial designer Sir Kenneth Grange, *Portrait of Melissa Thompson*, 2020, by Kehinde Wiley, garments for the exhibition *Africa Fashion*, and *The Death of Cleopatra*, 1859, by Henri de Triqueti, a masterpiece in ivory and bronze, saved for the nation following an export ban.

## **Welcoming back Fashion in Motion**

The first live V&A catwalk event in two years features gender fluid garments by the acclaimed designer Harris Reed and music by Years & Years.

*Fashion in Motion is supported by Libbie Scher Mugrabi*

## **V&A Publishing**

The V&A publishes 19 titles ranging from a research monograph on Huguenot culture to landmark titles in partnership with Thames & Hudson, covering William Morris and ornamental patterns.

## **Theaster Gates becomes VARI x V&A East Emeritus Fellow**

The acclaimed artist explores ceramics, global trade, colonialism and slavery with a display at the V&A, a headline exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery featuring objects from the V&A collection, and a series of creative workshops with communities in Newham.

## **British mosque architecture in Venice**

The V&A collaborates with La Biennale di Venezia for the fifth year in a row to present *Three British Mosques*, a look at the self-built, often undocumented world of adapted mosques, with author and architect Shahed Saleem.

*Three British Mosques was supported by Volkswagen Group and Donors to the Venice Architecture Biennale Fund in memory of Dr Martin Roth*

## **Design 1900 – Now opens**

This new permanent gallery explores how design shapes and is shaped by how we live, work, travel, communicate and consume, featuring acquisitions from the V&A's Rapid Response Collecting initiative.

## **V&A Friday Lates return**

Diverse artists reinterpret museum spaces in a series of digital-only commissions before live events begin again in September 2021.

### **Sharing the collection**

The V&A lends 549 objects to temporary UK exhibitions, with 1,440 long-term loaned objects supporting permanent displays at 121 UK venues.

### **Secrets of the Museum continues**

Nearly 7.6 million people view the second series of the BBC Two programme celebrating stories of creativity from across the V&A, and filming begins on series three.

### **Cutting-edge design explores the climate crisis**

Emerging practice Nebbia Works installs *Between Forests and Skies* in the John Madejski Garden, a pavilion constructed from the lowest-carbon aluminium yet produced, as part of the London Design Festival 2021.

### **Sculpture galleries redecorated**

The ground-floor Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries, among the museum's busiest, undergo a full refurbishment, with UV protection installed on windows to help preserve artworks.

# Exhibitions and displays

## 2021–22 exhibitions

“Confronting and celebratory, it leaves you wanting more” – *The Independent* on *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*

### **Bags: Inside Out**

12 December 2020–16 January 2022

*Sponsored by Mulberry*

This versatile and fascinating accessory received its most comprehensive UK exhibition to date, ranging from the 16th century to the present and spanning covetable fashion objects, exquisitely made purses and luggage created for international travel. Featuring iconic pieces including Winston Churchill’s red despatch box and the first ever Birkin bag, this in-depth exploration touched on craftsmanship, function, identity and desire.

Curator: Lucia Savi

### **Epic Iran**

29 May–12 September 2021

*Organised by the V&A with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with The Sarikhani Collection*

The V&A explored one of the greatest and most enduring civilisations in the world. Spanning 5,000 years of art, design and culture, the show brought together over 300 objects from ancient, Islamic and contemporary Iran.

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.

Curators: John Curtis and Tim Stanley; Associate Curator: Ina Sarikhani Sandmann

### **Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser**

22 May–31 December 2021

The V&A became the first museum to fully explore the cultural impact of Alice in Wonderland and its ongoing inspiration for leading creatives. This immersive, fantastical journey down the rabbit hole featured work by artists from the Surrealist Salvador Dalí to rapper Little Simz and fashion designer Iris van Herpen.

Supported by HTC VIVE



With support from Unwin Charitable Trust and Old Possum's Practical Trust

Curator: Kate Bailey

### **Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics**

18 September–28 November 2021

The sixth edition of the world's leading award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition – presented by V&A and Art Jameel – inaugurated a thematic focus on contemporary design. It featured work by eight finalists: Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Aylan Ghareem, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi and Bushra Waqas Khan. Aylan Ghareem was announced as the winner in an online ceremony on 15 September.

Curators: Rachel Dedman and Tim Stanley

### **Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution**

20 November 2021–18 May 2022

*With thanks to Dr Genevieve Davies*

The first major exhibition devoted to the international prominence of the legendary Russian goldsmith also explored his little-known London branch, and delved into his Edwardian clientele. Objects reunited for the first time since the Russian Revolution joined pieces never before seen in the UK.

Supported by Pan Pacific London

Curators: Kieran McCarthy and Hanne Faurby

### **Prix Pictet**

16 December 2021–9 January 2022

"Fire" was the theme for the ninth cycle of Prix Pictet, the global award dedicated to photography and sustainability, and this exhibition featured work by the 12 shortlisted photographers: Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Rinko Kawauchi, Sally Mann, Christian Marclay, Fabrice Monteiro, Lisa Oppenheim, Mak Remissa, Carla Rippey, Mark Ruwedel, Brent Stirton, David Uzochukwu and Daisuke Yokota.

V&A Curatorial Lead: Duncan Forbes

### **Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear**

19 March–6 November 2022

*In partnership with Gucci*

The first major V&A exhibition to celebrate the power, artistry and diversity of masculine attire and appearance across the centuries. Garments are displayed alongside paintings, sculptures, photographs, film and performance work, as the show takes in courtly Europeans, Savile Row, Harry Styles and more.

With support from American Express®

Curators: Claire Wilcox and Rosalind McKever

**Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature**

12 February 2022–8 January 2023

*Supported by Kathryn Uhde*

Staged in collaboration with the National Trust, this enlightening exploration of the beloved children's book author and illustrator spotlights her skills of observation and her work in scientific research and conservation. Placing Potter's fascination with the natural world centre stage, it features more than 200 objects.

With support from Unwin Charitable Trust

Curators: Annemarie Billclough and Helen Antrobus

## 2021–22 displays

“A fascinating show” – *Evening Standard* on *Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime*

### **Japanese Enamels: A Suggestion of Endless Patience**

5 September 2019 – 31 August 2021

### **Asante Goldweights**

18 October 2019 – 31 October 2021

### **Valérie Belin/Reflection**

19 October 2019 – 27 September 2021

*Supported by the V&A Photographs Acquisitions Group*

### **Landscape and Language in Artists' Books**

5 November 2019 – 8 May 2022

### **Dress to Impress**

5 March 2020 – 28 February 2022

### **Renaissance Watercolours**

2 December 2020 – 8 August 2021

*Supported by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten GRoW @ Annenberg*

### **On Point: Royal Academy of Dance at 100**

3 December 2020 – 1 May 2022

### **Katerina Jebb/Elizabeth Parker**

8 March – 29 August 2021

### **Contemporary Korean Craft and Design**

April – October 2021

### **Contemporary Ceramics from the Middle East**

19 May – 17 October 2021

*Supported by The Headley Trust*

**Four Cities Through Cresswell's Lens: Cairo, Jerusalem, Aleppo and Baghdad**

21 May 2021 – 29 May 2022

*Supported by The Barakat Trust*

**Exploring Lines: the Drawings of Sir James Thornhill**

22 July 2021 – 22 July 2022

**Fragmented Illuminations: Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Cuttings at the V&A**

8 September 2021 – 8 May 2022

**Theaster Gates: Slight Intervention #5**

18 September 2021 – 9 January 2022

**Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime**

6 November 2021 – 6 November 2022

**Known and Strange: Photographs from the Collection**

6 November 2021 – 6 November 2022

**Richard Batterham: Studio Potter**

26 November 2021 – 26 September 2022

*Supported by The Headley Trust*

*With thanks to the Joanna Bird Foundation*

# Strategic priorities

## V&A East

“We want to amplify the role museums play as a platform for discovery, hope and conversation in our rapidly changing world” – Gus Casely-Hawford

The names and curatorial vision for two new V&A sites as part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park were unveiled this year. V&A East Museum opens in 2025 on the Stratford Waterfront and V&A East Storehouse opens in 2024. Together they will:

- Celebrate global creativity
- Provide unprecedented access to the V&A’s collections
- Empower young people
- Be truly rooted in the local community

First acquisitions include the monumental *Portrait of Melissa Thompson*, 2020, by Kehinde Wiley, generously supported by Art Fund and a legacy gift from Dr Philip da Costa, and a glazed ceramic frieze, *Auntie, Mum and Me Talking About My Fabric Collection*, 2016, by Mawuena Kattah.

20,000+ local people and creatives have been consulted to date, ensuring V&A East is created with and for east Londoners.

### “Topped out”

V&A East Museum reached a major construction milestone, with the shell reaching its full height. The Japanese concept of “Ma” or “the space between” influenced architects O’Donnell + Tuomey’s vision for the museum’s faceted appearance.

250,000 objects have now been made ready to move to V&A East Storehouse from Blythe House, alongside 350,000 library books and 1,000 archives.

## Young V&A

Details of the full-scale transformation of the former V&A Museum of Childhood and its new name were announced this year. The first project of its kind will see the museum designed with – and for – the young.

Construction begins on the transformation of the museum’s 150-year-old home, creating three new permanent galleries titled Imagine, Play and Design; a temporary exhibition gallery, an expanded learning centre, and a transformed visitor experience throughout. Young V&A will open to visitors in 2023.

A host of new acquisitions for Young V&A range from the 3D printed prosthetic Hero Arm by UK-based company Open Bionics and garments by sustainable fashion designer Bethany Williams inspired by the V&A's National Childhood Collection.

30,000+ collection items have temporarily moved from the museum's Bethnal Green site to storage in South Kensington. Most will end up in V&A East Storehouse.

The first Young V&A Designer in Residence Maraid Mcewan joined the team in February 2022 with a focus on creativity and mindfulness.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

### Industry support

V&A East collaborated with British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA on the 2021 Frieze x Deutsche Bank Emerging Curators Fellowship, an initiative that supports emerging Black and POC curators. The V&A East curatorial fellow will join the museum in 2022.

### Lead appointment

One of the key recommendations proposed by the V&A's Anti Racism Taskforce, established in 2020, was the recruitment of a Lead role for Equality Diversity and Inclusion. In November 2021, Ali Jafarey was recruited within the People and Change team as an EDI Lead.

### Training

EDI Lead Ali Jafarey has supported the Talent and Skills team in building and implementing a mandatory programme for all employees.

- Online webinars focusing on unconscious bias and the impact on the workplace launched in January 2022 and have been attended by more than 150 employees so far
- A bespoke eLearning course, Unconscious Bias at Work, was introduced for all new employees as part of their corporate induction programme
- Workshops on Inclusive Leadership have also been delivered to the Executive and Trustee boards

### Public-facing initiatives

The global scope of the V&A's fashion collections have been broadened through the development of the *Africa Fashion* exhibition, which has also been an opportunity to consider how best to attract, welcome and retain a wider audience.

An expanded, diverse range of creatives has been sought this year to work with the museum on V&A Friday Late and Fashion in Motion programmes.

# Learning

The V&A has continued to expand its support for schools, design professionals and adult learners, with a mission to develop and inspire people around the UK using the museum's expertise and unique collections.

## V&A Innovate

The V&A's national design challenge for secondary students aims to inspire the next generation of artists, designers and innovators, and to advocate for the vital need for creative education. It was enriched by the opening of the V&A's new permanent gallery this year, Design 1900 – Now, featuring key collection objects and new acquisitions. Created to support Design and Technology at Key Stage 3, V&A Innovate aims to forge connections between in-school learning and what's on display.

€50,000 Art Explora – Académie des Beaux-Arts European Award was received to support V&A Innovate in 2022–23, as it completed a third successful year focused on the themes Renew, Connect, and Move.

Nearly 2,000 students took part in lessons, after-school clubs and off-timetable enrichment days, and 119 teams entered ideas from 26 schools.

## DesignLab Nation

The V&A's national secondary schools programme, developed in partnership with regional museums, designers and schools to expand the reach of the V&A's collection and expertise outside of London, supports the teaching of the Design and Technology GCSE.

Three new regional partners have joined the scheme. Secondary school students in Ipswich, Blackpool and Plymouth now have access to the V&A's groundbreaking programme.

# Digital and media innovation

A new e-commerce platform offers improved security and a frictionless retail space, securing the V&A's future digital commercial growth and driving new membership sales online. Online visitors can now purchase tickets, merchandise and membership – and make museum donations – in a single online transaction, with a choice of multiple payment options.

## @vamuseum on TikTok

The V&A's TikTok channel launched in April 2021, aimed at engaging a younger demographic. The V&A has partnered with TikTok specifically to produce educational content, drawing on funding from #LearnOnTikTok bursary and bespoke advice and platform support.

24,000 fans gained for the museum's account. Its videos received some 2 million views and 185,000 engagements, making the V&A the second most popular UK museum on the platform.

## **Alice in cinemas**

The V&A filmed an exclusive, 80-minute preview of the immersive exhibition Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser for the big screen. It featured close-ups of key objects and interviews with Peter Blake and Ralph Steadman.

122 cinemas nationwide screened the film to over 2,000 people, and it was broadcast nationally on Sky Arts.

# **Community engagement**

## **Young V&A**

Co-creation is at the heart of Young V&A. Ahead of its opening in 2023, ongoing learning and engagement work has spanned early year sensory play sessions and creative programming for schools.

## **Young V&A Collective**

Launched in September 2021, the Young V&A Collective is a group of 11–14-year-olds who have helped develop content, reaching from soundscapes to sustainable fashion design, to inform the new galleries at the centre of the transformed museum.

## **V&A East**

V&A East has been working with a wide variety of community groups in east London to create opportunities for young people, engage with diverse voices and highlight new forms of creative excellence.

V&A East Youth Collective is a paid rolling advisory opportunity for local people aged 16–25 to directly shape the new institution, and this year welcomed its second cohort.

## **Youth Workers in Residence**

Working as VARI x V&A East's first Youth Workers in Residence, the design collective RESOLVE worked with organisations across the Olympic boroughs (Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest) to run creative workshops exploring young people's connection to their local area.

## **A Vibe Called Tech**

As part of a three-month creative residency supported by Google Arts and Culture, this agency collaborated with young people on digital content experiments.



# Support and thanks

**The V&A would like to pay special tribute to the following past and present major benefactors for their exceptional support**

- The Al Thani Collection Foundation
- American Express\*
- Lisa Shaffer Anderson and Dudley Buist Anderson\*
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Gregory and Regina Annenberg Weingarten
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- Celia and Edward Atkin CBE
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- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
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- Peter Williams and Heather Acton
- The Wolfson Foundation
- Würth Group
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

## **The V&A would like to thank the following for generously supporting the museum's ongoing redevelopment in 2021–22**

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- Roderick and Elizabeth Jack
- Sir Elton John and David Furnish
- Margaret and Richard Merrell Foundation
- Paul Nicholls\*
- Oak Foundation
- The Options Fund
- Parasol Foundation Trust
- PF Charitable Trust
- Professor Richard Portes CBE FBA
- The Prudence Trust
- Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation\*
- The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation

- Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851
- Ruth Covo Family Foundation\*
- The Selz Foundation\*
- Chris and Nicky Thom\*
- The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
- V&A Americas Foundation\*
- The William Brake Foundation
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

## **The V&A is very grateful to those who have made a contribution to the museum's work through the Director's Circle**

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- Kathryn Uhde
- Peter Williams and Heather Acton
- Peter and Jan Winslow
- Lucy Winslow
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

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29 May–12 September 2021

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