

Victoria and Albert Museum Annual Review 2022 – 23

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Chairman's foreword

There have been so many highlights at the V&A in the past year that it feels more like a decade-long review than an annual one.

After the lacuna of the pandemic, the museum has more than made up for lost time; many of the most ambitious plans, forged pre-lockdown, are hurtling towards completion and a multi-site future.

Young V&A in Bethnal Green, entirely reimagined and rebranded, was poised to open on time and on budget at year end, and will surely provide a wonderful boost for both Tower Hamlets and the Bethnal Green community.

The two globally significant new V&A East projects, part of the new East Bank cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, began to be fitted out for collections to be installed. They should make a profound impact on residents and scholars alike, in an area of London that is underprovided with cultural resource.

A suite of new galleries in South Kensington are ready to be unveiled, marking the completion of the Photography Centre. This will add an important dimension to the museum, positioning the V&A as the pre-eminent institution for photographic studies.

The sheer range of exhibitions and ambition is surely wider and deeper at the V&A than at almost any other museum. The vastly significant acquisition of the David Bowie Archive, an aspiration for many years, came to glorious and successful fruition. How remarkable it is that the V&A is an institution that can acquire a Canaletto, rare pre-Reformation prayer books, troves of Lucian Freud etchings and hundreds of stage costumes and handwritten lyrics, spanning Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane to Young Americans, all in one year.

It has also been a year for great strides in the museum's ambition to reach its net zero target – no easy task in a building largely conceived in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, with seven miles of corridors, and rooftops matching several city blocks in dimension.

The V&A has a notably strong Executive Board at the moment, and a highly engaged Board of Trustees. This will be my final letter in an Annual Review, as my eight-year term as Chair draws to a close. It has been the greatest privilege, responsibility and fun to work alongside so many talented and delightful people, as well as with our government supporters at DCMS, and our most generous donors, philanthropists and Members. The V&A is surely one of the most glistening jewels in the UK's cultural crown.

Sir Nicholas Coleridge

Director's foreword

It was only 12 months ago that Covid-era restrictions finally lifted, and the V&A reopened its doors to the public seven days a week. With the pandemic's impact slowly receding, the V&A has returned to strength over the past year, enjoying many notable successes: we joined the top 15 most-visited museums worldwide and recently achieved some of the largest weekend visitor figures since 2020.

Our reopening campaign focused on a call to rebuild creativity, particularly among those who lost so much learning and cultural stimulation during the pandemic. With its 'Creativity – it's what makes us' strapline, the campaign centred on a short film by award-winning director Georgia Hudson, taking viewers on a whirlwind journey around the museum, through the eyes of an unexpected visitor. It reached an audience of more than two million.

At a time when creative education is too often downgraded in schools, the museum has continued its campaign to support design and technology. DesignLab Nation links secondary schools with creative practitioners and local museums across the country, now engaging more students than ever before. V&A Innovate offers free resources for lessons, after-school clubs, and off-timetable enrichment days to every state-funded secondary school.

Above all, our colleagues' incredible hard work in transforming the V&A Museum of Childhood into Young V&A speaks to our mission to use museum collections to nurture play, imagination and design – critical skills in the 21st century – for a new generation. When the museum first opens its doors on 1 July, our joyful Bethnal Green site, entirely dedicated to children, becomes another vital component in supporting young people's creativity.

Over the course of the year, we have worked hard to diversify our programmes and acquisitions to encourage new audiences. From *Africa Fashion* and *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* to Osman Yousefzada's culture-bridging installations and the inaugural Ramadan Pavilion, we have broadened the representation of global practitioners and narratives at the V&A.

As the world has opened up, so has our international outreach. *Africa Fashion* began its global tour at the Brooklyn Museum and objects from the Gilbert Collection attracted nearly 700,000 people across a seven-venue tour of China.

We are also engaged in thinking how – within the museum's legislative constraints – items in the V&A's care can be appreciated beyond South Kensington through Renewable Cultural Partnerships: long-term loans of artefacts to source nations that incorporate programmes of knowledge-sharing, conservation and partnership. Last year, we secured the return of the Head of Eros – a third-century marble carving – to Turkey.

Museums are about objects: their care, interpretation and curation. At the V&A, we focus on the ways these artefacts shed light on the history of art, design and performance to inspire the creative pioneers of tomorrow. Within this era of AI and synthetic reality, the tangible wonder of the museum and the material power of the object has never been more important. With our ambitious future as a multi-site museum, we continue to activate the V&A's collection to nurture creativity for everyone.

Tristram Hunt

A year in highlights

Young V&A construction completes

Object installation begins at Young V&A following a £13m transformation into a new museum designed with and for young people, ahead of the opening on 1 July 2023.

A major Osman Yousefzada installation

What Is Seen and What Is Not by the British-Pakistani interdisciplinary artist includes three site-specific works that respond to the 75th anniversary of Pakistan's independence and explore migration and climate change.

Communities engaged in east London

More than 13,000 people participate in Young V&A activities ahead of its reopening, including the Reinvent Festival, a year-long event marking 150 years of the Museum's heritage in Bethnal Green with 150 ways to be creative. The V&A East team takes collections into local schools for the first time in the museum's history.

UK programming firsts

Africa Fashion is the UK's first major exploration of 20th-century style across Africa and the diaspora, joined by *Hallyu! The Korean Wave*, the first major focus on the global impact of post-war Korean creativity.

The V&A Parasol Foundation Prize for Women in Photography launches

A new prize for global talent attracts nearly 1,400 submissions. The inaugural winners are Anya Tsaruk, Vân-Nhi Nguyễn, Gohar Dashti, Priyadarshini Ravichandran and Cynthia MaiWa Sitei.

Fashioning Masculinities attracts more than 150,000

A celebration of the power, artistry and diversity of masculine attire and appearance is the UK's most popular ticketed exhibition in 2022.

The Head of Eros returns to Turkey

A life-size marble carving dating to the third century AD is returned to the Roman Sidamara sarcophagus after more than a century at the V&A, following a joint conservation and restoration project as part of a Renewable Cultural Partnership with the Ministry of Culture & Tourism in Turkey and Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

More than 100 new acquisitions from Africa and the diaspora

Ongoing efforts to improve equality within the national collections include acquiring the first objects from Rwanda and Eswatini, in addition to pieces by the British-Nigerian sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp and work that refers to global ceramic traditions by the Spanish artist Bisila Noha.

The David Bowie Centre for the Study of Performing Arts is announced

Following the support of the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Warner Music Group to acquire the performer's archive of 80,000 items, the V&A announces the creation of a new study centre at V&A East Storehouse to open in 2025.

A new Head of Sustainability

Melissa Painter is appointed to lead on delivering the V&A's ambition to reach net zero emissions by 2035.

Milestones reached at V&A East

Construction of V&A East Museum and V&A East Storehouse nears practical completion.

An interactive website for 10 – 14-year-olds

The V&A receives generous funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture to create a digital content platform and website for young people.

A public campaign connects with young people

The film *Creativity. It's what makes us* launches, advocating for the importance of creativity for all. It reaches 2.1 million 16 – 34 year olds and boosts the number of younger visitors to V&A South Kensington.

The first major UK exhibition on Donatello in 40 years

Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance is also the result of a significant European partnership: part of a collaboration with the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, and the Staatliche Museen Zu in Berlin.

Contemporary Programmes engage more than 100,000 people

Special events – including the London Design Festival and monthly V&A Friday Lates – reach new audiences.

The inaugural Ramadan Pavilion

A purpose-built architectural installation celebrating Ramadan is presented with the Ramadan Tent Project and hosts multiple events and activities over four weeks in the Exhibition Road Courtyard.

Audiences grow on social media

TikTok views reach nearly 29.4 million, while the V&A maintains its spot as the 10th most-followed museum worldwide across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok.

Nationwide support for museums

The Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund helps 76 organisations acquire objects for their collections. Overall, 91 grants are awarded to institutions from Leeds to Lincolnshire and from Norwich to Cornwall supporting £3.3m worth of acquisitions. Highlights include the 2022 installation *Open Code* by British artist Mac Collins for Harewood House and *Portrait of Elizabeth, Viscountess Dunbar* by Sir Godfrey Kneller for Fairfax House, York.

Conserving material heritage on the West Bank

The V&A collaborates with The Palestinian Museum and the international alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH) to set up the first studio to meet textile conservation needs in Palestine.

A Royal visit to Africa Fashion

King Charles III and The Queen Consort visited *Africa Fashion* in November 2022, ahead of a State Visit by the President of The Republic of South Africa. Their Majesties were given a tour by the exhibition curators and met featured designers.

Exhibitions and displays

2022 – 23 exhibitions

"This kaleidoscopic collection is impossible not to smile at" – *The Telegraph* on *Fabergé: Romance to Revolution*

"To see African fashion amplified in this way... and to have such an iconic institution to give it pride of place in the museum was just beautiful" – Juanita Rosenoir, BBC London Radio, on *Africa Fashion*

"The V&A's installation in a single bright, open-plan gallery is spectacular... immersive, modern" – *The Financial Times* on *Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance*

Fabergé: 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 explores his little-known London branch and Edwardian high society clientele. Objects that have been reunited for the first time since the revolution are on display alongside works that have never before been shown in the UK.

Supported by Pan Pacific London

Curators: Kieran McCarthy and Hanne Faurby

Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature

12 February 2022 – 8 January 2023

Supported by Kathryn Uhde and Unwin Charitable Trust

A collaborative exhibition with the National Trust tells the complete life story of the beloved children's book author and illustrator Beatrix Potter, shedding light on her work as a scientist and conservationist. Over 200 personal and rarely seen objects including her illustrations, manuscripts, letters and photographs are on display in the immersive show.

Curator: Annemarie Billclough and Helen Antrobus

Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear

19 March – 6 November 2022

In partnership with Gucci

This exhibition explores how designers, tailors and artists – and their clients and sitters – have constructed and performed masculinity through time. Historical and contemporary fashions are shown alongside a collection of paintings, sculptures, photographs, film and performance in the survey on menswear and gender expression that takes in courtly Europeans, Savile Row, Harry Styles and more.

With support from American Express

Curators: Claire Wilcox and Rosalind McKeever

Africa Fashion

2 July 2022 – 16 April 2023

Supported by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRow @ Annenberg

A landmark exhibition celebrating the creativity, ingenuity and unstoppable global impact of contemporary African fashions. It was the UK's most extensive exhibition of African fashion to date, celebrating the vitality and innovation of this vibrant scene, as dynamic and varied as the continent itself.

With additional support from Bank of America and Merchants on Long

Curator: Dr Christine Checinska

Hallyu! The Korean Wave

24 September 2022 – 25 June 2023

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism - Republic of Korea and Genesis

The first exhibition of its kind celebrates the colourful and dynamic popular culture of South Korea, following its early origins in the 1990s to its place on the global stage today. Spans K-pop costumes to K-drama and cinema props and posters, alongside photography, sculpture, fashion, video and pop culture ephemera.

With additional support from the Bagri Foundation, LG, Netmarble Healer.B and YouTube Shorts

Curators: Rosalie Kim and Yoojin Choi

Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance

11 February – 11 June 2023

Developed as part of a collaborative partnership with Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, and the Staatliche Museen in Berlin. Supported by Rocco Forte Hotels

The first major UK exhibition to explore the exceptional talents of the Renaissance master offers a fresh vision of the artist and his impact on the cultural and artistic development of this crucial time in the history of art.

With further support from Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, Daniel Katz Ltd, Kathryn Uhde, Henry Moore Foundation, Tavolozza Foundation, and the Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance Exhibition Supporters' Circle

Curators: Peta Motture and Whitney Kerr-Lewis

2022 – 23 displays

Landscape and Language in Artists' Books

5 November 2019 – 8 May 2022

On Point: Royal Academy of Dance at 100

2 December 2020 – 29 August 2022

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

21 May 2021 – 29 May 2022

Supported by the Barakat Trust

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

8 September 2021 – 26 June 2022

Maurice Broomfield: Industrial Sublime

6 November 2021 – 5 February 2023

Known and Strange: Photographs from the Collection

6 November 2021 – 5 February 2023

Richard Batterham: Studio Potter

26 November 2021 – 30 October 2022

Supported by The Headley Trust with thanks to the Joanna Bird Foundation

Place to Place by Adi Toch

1 December 2021 – 1 December 2024

Portrait of Melissa Thompson by Kehinde Wiley

4 October 2021 – 26 October 2023

Purchased with support from Art Fund and a legacy donation from Dr Philip da Costa

Pewter Live

28 May – 31 July 2022

Supported by The Pewterers' Company, London

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Emblem

1 June – 15 June 2022

Beguiling Beni: Safflower Red in Japanese Fashion

11

6 June 2022 – 31 March 2024

North African Fashion

2 July 2022 – 16 April 2023

Europe Supported by Africa and America by Sokari Douglas Camp

2 July 2022 – 14 May 2023

Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures – From The Forest

7 July – 31 October 2022

Supported by John Makepeace OBE

Exploring Lines: the Drawings of Sir James Thornhill

23 July – 13 August 2022

V&A Illustration Awards

25 July – 9 October 2022

Beatrix Potter and 'Aesop in the Shadows'

15 August 2022 – 13 August 2023

Supported by The Linder Foundation and Frederick Warne & Co.

Paul Nash and the Art of the Book

27 October 2022 – 13 August 2023

Re:Imagining Musicals

15 October 2022 – 27 November 2023 (closed for renovations May – August 2023)

Supported by Rexton S Bunnett

Print and Prejudice: British Women Printmakers 1700 – 1930

1 November 2022 – 7 May 2023

The Artistic Home: British Art Pottery from the Ian and Rita Smythe Collection

8 December 2022 – 25 September 2023

Supported by The Headley Trust

OSPAAAL: Solidarity and Design

17 September 2022 – 31 March 2023

Metalworking Now

23 March 2023 – 31 Dec 2024

Strategic priorities

National learning

DesignLab Nation

Brings together secondary schools in partnership with regional museums, designers and industry. New partners joined the programme's 'stage two' phase including Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool; Ipswich Museum; and Cartwright Hall, Bradford.

Artist in residence

The ceramicist Florence Dwyer responded to experimentation in the V&A Wedgwood Collection, and helped create a teaching resource to support the Key Stages 3 – 4 curriculum for Design & Technology.

V&A Innovate

The V&A's annual National Schools Challenge for Key Stage 3 invites students to find solutions to real-world problems. Finalists this year included schools in Suffolk, Skegness, Coventry and Merseyside who explored the themes of Adapt, Care and Disrupt.

2,700 students took part in V&A Innovate lessons, after-school clubs, and off-timetable enrichment days.

271 teams entered design ideas from 42 schools.

50 finalist students from 10 participating schools across the UK pitched ideas in March 2023, to a panel of design industry experts: Seetal Solanki, Selasi Setufe and Michael Omotosho.

V&A Wedgwood Collection

A first Producer of Families, Schools and Young People joined in January 2023, and the V&A Wedgwood Collection became a DesignLab Nation partner. An academic partnership with the University of Keele also led to a first joint Collaborative Doctoral Award exploring transatlantic abolition.

Reaching new audiences

V&A East

V&A collection objects were taken into schools for the first time in the museum's history, including an Asante cast gold badge and a 17th-century silver scent pomander, worn to protect against disease.

70+ students attended bespoke V&A East workshops on self-employed arts businesses at East Careers Week led by the London Legacy Development Corporation.

V&A East launches on Instagram. Inaugural content aims to reflect the values of a shared and open institution, with content made with Nourishment, a collective of local Black creatives; the global youth culture and travel platform Trippin'; streetwear collective The Basement; and the Muslim Sisterhood.

Young V&A

Every school in Tower Hamlets engaged. Young V&A reaches students from its local borough with learning and co-design projects.

275 activities were held across the year ahead of opening in July 2023.

50% of people recruited for Young V&A are from its four local boroughs.

Community-led programmes

Popular events included Wash Day, celebrating Afro hair, and an Africa Fashion Salon series. The inaugural Ramadan Pavilion, with COSARAF and the Ramadan Tent Project, hosted an Open Iftar for all faiths with 800 attendees in spring 2023.

Digital innovation

18.5% rise in YouTube subscribers

The museum doubled its growth target, and two films for the display *Re:Imagining Musicals* attracted nearly 800,000 views.

New multisite homepage

A consistent visual identity rolled out the V&A's new Masterbrand identity across its digital estate, encompassing V&A South Kensington, V&A Dundee, Young V&A, V&A East and V&A Wedgwood Collection, with a dedicated "venue hub" for each.

A K-pop dance challenge

A collaboration with Google Arts & Culture used innovative technology to enable visitors to *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* to learn choreography by BBTrippin for PSY's single *That That*, featuring SUGA. Visitors' performances were shown in the exhibition.

Social media partnerships

A preview for 60 TikTok creators was held at *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* with Gucci and digital magazine *Culted*.

70% of the V&A's social media audience was under the age of 24.

62.2 million views were achieved for Instagram films.

Increasing equity

The V&A is committed to promoting an inclusive and anti-racist culture, as it works to diversify its people, practice, programmes and governance to better reflect and respond to the public it serves.

Inclusivity Forum launched

Representatives from all staff groups and networks came together to share their experiences and develop new working practices.

An inaugural curator for diaspora jewellery

The Ghanaian-born jeweller Emefa Cole was appointed to a new role, supported by Elizabeth Gage, focused on increasing the representation of artists and makers from Africa and the diaspora in the collection.

International programmes help diversify audiences

V&A South Kensington welcomed new demographics for *Hallyu! The Korean Wave*. A third (33%) of visits to *Africa Fashion* were by people from Black backgrounds and 45% of visitors had a connection to Africa.

Funding awarded to improve the visibility of trans identities

Zorian Clayton, assistant curator of Prints, won an Art Fund Collecting Award to acquire works by trans and non-binary artists for the V&A.

Global acquisitions

Works entering the collection reflected the V&A's strategy to increase representation of artists and makers from beyond Europe. These included a langa frame bag from 2021 by the Eswatini-based accessories brand Khokho, in materials including hand-spun sisal fibre; photographs from Poulomi Basu's series, *Centralia*, documenting conflict in India; and works by Ghanaian photographer James Barnor.

Support and thanks

*Donations marked with an asterisk were made possible by the V&A Americas Foundation

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

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- John Makepeace OBE
- The McLain Foundation
- Meta Media 超媒体
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- N. Sethia Foundation
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- Swarovski
- Toshiba
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- Warner Music Group*
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And others who wish to remain anonymous

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- Unwin Charitable Trust
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- Wolfson Foundation

And others who wish to remain anonymous

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