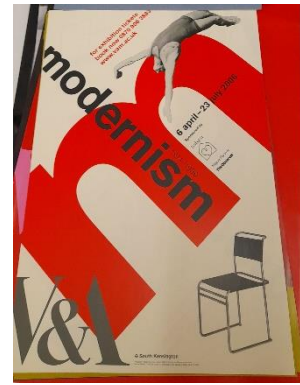


V&A Archive Research Guide
Ephemera Collection

V&A



From left to right: MA/23/37; MA/52/5/9; and MA/24/450. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

What are Ephemera?

The word 'ephemeral' means something temporary, which is not designed to last for the long term. Ephemera, in archive terms, refers to publications created for a specific event, such as leaflets and posters. Unlike most other archive material, ephemera are not unique, as they are mass produced.

Why is it Collected?

- ❖ It is archived to record a snapshot of what the V&A was producing in a particular year.
- ❖ Ephemera are actively collected from creating departments to ensure they are preserved for posterity.
- ❖ Only material published by the V&A for its South Kensington, Young V&A, and Dundee sites is collected. V&A Wedgwood material is collected by its own archive.

Which Types of Ephemera Does the V&A Collect?

We actively collect ephemera produced by the V&A as this provides a snapshot of the activities of the museum. Only objects, posters and magazines are itemised - all other records are catalogued to file level (the contents are not described). If you are looking for an item which is not listed on the catalogue, please email archive@vam.ac.uk, and we can check the archive for you. For more details about the ephemera collection, please visit the V&A's [Search the Archives](#) webpage.

The ephemera collection consists of:

MA/23 - MA/27: Posters which have been arranged chronologically, although later accessions have been added to the end of the sequence irrespective of their date. Different designs for the same exhibition/campaign are given the same number, then divided into /1, /2 etc.

- **MA/23:** General publicity posters (1950-ongoing). These posters advertise general events, free admission, membership, new gallery openings, gallery redisplays, Fashion in Motion, and publicity campaigns such as Saatchi & Saatchi's 'Ace Caff' and the appeal to save for the nation Canova's The Three Graces. Also included are general publicity posters for Apsley House, Ham House and Osterley Park.
- **MA/24:** Exhibition publicity posters (1954-ongoing). These posters advertise exhibitions and displays at the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- **MA/25:** Circulation Department posters (1949-1983). These posters advertise touring exhibitions generated by the V&A's Circulation Department.
- **MA/26:** Bethnal Green Museum posters (1964-ongoing). These posters advertise exhibitions and activities at the Bethnal Green Museum.

- **MA/27:** Theatre Museum posters (1972-2016). These posters advertise exhibitions and displays, and the relocation of the Theatre Museum to Covent Garden.

MA/51: Press releases and Press Office publications (1947-ongoing), please note there are some gaps c.2019. The press notices and releases were produced to provide information to the press in advance of events. The press view invitations were sent to members of the press to invite them to early showings of exhibitions and displays or to briefings on activities and events in the Museum. The press and media packs were produced to be given to members of the press at press views and briefings to provide them with detailed information on forthcoming exhibitions and activities in the Museum.

- **MA/51/1:** Press notices and releases (1947-ongoing).

- **MA/51/2:** Press View invitations (1950-ongoing).

- **MA/51/3:** Press and media packs (1970-ongoing).

MA/52: Publicity and marketing ephemera (1947-ongoing). Publicity and marketing ephemera produced for events held at the V&A; educational courses; and general publicity. The collection includes both paper material (leaflets; postcards; maps of the Museum) and objects (such as badges; lanyards; and T-shirts).

- **MA/52/1:** Mixed paper ephemera arranged by year (1947-2018).

- **MA/52/2:** General Publicity paper ephemera such as maps; leaflets about becoming a member of the V&A (1978-ongoing).

- **MA/52/3:** Exhibitions and Events paper ephemera such as leaflets created for V&A exhibitions, or events such as Friday Lates (1975-ongoing).

- **MA/52/4:** Education paper ephemera such as leaflets advertising talks and courses; learning trails for children; and resources for teachers (1975-ongoing).

- **MA/52/5:** Ephemera objects created for various V&A exhibitions or events (1990-ongoing).

MA/53: Internal newsletters and notices sent to V&A staff and volunteers (1954-ongoing). Please note that we may need to review these files before making them accessible to the public.

- **MA/53/1:** Museum Notices (1954-2014).

- **MA/53/2:** Team Brief (1996-2014).

- **MA/53/2:** V&A News (1988-2006).

- **MA/53/4:** "V&A Colleague News Download" (Oct 2022 onwards).

MA/54: Private View invitations and preview, opening and reception invitations (1954–ongoing).

- **MA/54/1:** Exhibition Private View Invites (1950–ongoing).

- **MA/54/2:** Exhibition Preview, opening and reception invites (1970–ongoing).

MA/55: What's On, V&A In-View magazines and V&A Magazine (1988-ongoing). These magazines were available to the public including Members and contains news and features on the collections, new acquisitions, exhibitions, displays, publications and general topics relating to the V&A. They also include the public programme calendar, including events for Members. Issues published after 2022 are in digital format only.

[MA/61: V&A E-newsletters](#) (2003-ongoing). These newsletters were distributed to members of the public from V&A South Kensington, the V&A Shop and Young V&A (formerly the Museum of Childhood) to share news on exhibitions, displays, activities, events and V&A Shop stock and promotions.

What Can the Ephemera Collection Tell Me About the V&A?

Research subjects include:

- The design of posters, leaflets, and objects.
- Materials used to produce ephemera objects (e.g. single use plastics).
- The types of exhibitions and events held by the V&A, and their target audience.
- The types of ephemera and objects the V&A produces for events.

Access to the V&A Archive

You can search the catalogue of the V&A Archive [online](#).

Access to the V&A Archive is available by appointment on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11.00–16.30 in the National Art Library at the V&A. We recommend providing a minimum of two weeks' notice when booking your appointment.

If you have any questions about the V&A Archive or would like to make an appointment to see material in the archive, please [contact us](#).