

Photographs  
Acquisition Group



V&A



## The V&A

The V&A was founded after the Great Exhibition of 1851 with a vision to inspire and educate the designers and makers of the future. Its collections span the cultures of Europe, Asia, parts of Africa and the Americas. Ranging from ancient times to the present day, these collections include sculpture, metalwork, ceramics, furniture, glass, jewellery, paintings, prints, photographs, fashion and textiles.

As a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity, the V&A enriches people's lives by increasing knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of both the designed world and related cultural history. Alongside its spectacular permanent displays, the Museum delivers outstanding exhibitions and innovative educational programmes for a wide international audience which includes families, adults, young people, schools, colleges, universities, creative industry professionals and community groups.

Today, the V&A is a family of museums comprising V&A South Kensington, Young V&A, V&A Dundee, V&A Wedgwood Collection in Stoke-on-Trent, and two new sites in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, east London: V&A East Storehouse and V&A East Museum.



Facing page: V&A Photography Centre, Room 98, The Kusuma Gallery © Thomas Adank  
Above: V&A South Kensington, Cromwell Road Entrance



## Join Us in Building an Extraordinary Collection

Photography has always been at the heart of the V&A. The South Kensington Museum (as the V&A was then called) was the first museum to collect photography, with the earliest acquisition in 1852. A few years later, it was the first museum to stage a photography exhibition, pictured below. Since then, collectors, philanthropists and from 2010, the Photographs Acquisition Group, have helped curators to expand the collection with outstanding objects for everyone to enjoy.

Although the V&A's collection is large, the acquisition of contemporary photography is a key priority to diversify the collection and fill strategic gaps. The Photographs Acquisition Group supports the latest, most innovative work; it drives dialogue with artists and encourages audience engagement; and it helps curators to think in a contemporary way about the past. As the photography market becomes increasingly competitive, the V&A relies on philanthropic support to fund important acquisitions. This support allows the V&A to enhance its collection for future generations.



Facing page: 'The Cathedral Church of St Michael Coventry', from the series 'The English Cathedral', by Peter Marlow, 2008-2011, Museum no. E.1159:11-2019. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. Above: '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



## The Photographs Acquisition Group

You can help the V&A purchase new works for the collection by joining the Photographs Acquisition Group. Each supporter donates at least £12,500 annually, all of which goes towards building a vital purchase fund for acquiring contemporary photography. Donors are closely involved with the acquisition process, meeting with the curatorial team twice a year to discuss which photographs the V&A will buy in accordance with its collecting strategy. Throughout the year, they are also invited to join curators at various opportunities, at the museum and beyond, to see the impact and importance of their support.

Over the last 14 years, the Photographs Acquisition Group has raised over £1 million to acquire photographs for the V&A. Through this generous support, over 80 bodies of work, totalling more than 1250 prints, have been purchased for the collection. By joining the group, you can support contemporary photographers, extend public access and help build one of the greatest photography collections in the world.



Facing page: 'Untitled #15', from the series 'Speak the Wind', by Hoda Afshar, 2020, Museum no. PH.1223-2022. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. Above: '#2', from the series 'Centralia', by Poulomi Basu, 2010, Museum no. PH. 2012-2022. Purchased funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group

## Photography at the V&A

The V&A's photography collection is one of the best and broadest in the world. It comprises over 800,000 photographs, covering an exceptional range of processes, styles and genres, from fashion photography to photojournalism, documentary photography to conceptual art and daguerreotypes to digital practice.

The collection contains some of the oldest photographs in the history of the medium, including works by William Henry Fox Talbot, Anna Atkins and Nicéphore Niépce. The V&A's nineteenth-century holdings are some of the richest in the world, with large bodies of work by Julia Margaret Cameron, Lady Clementina Hawarden and Roger Fenton. The museum also has a significant collection of twentieth-century material, including photographs by Paul Strand, Dorothea Lange, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Bill Brandt.

Acquired in 2017, the Royal Photographic Society Collection has formed a major part of the V&A's holdings. It includes over 270,000 photographs, a library of 26,000 photographic books and periodicals, more than 6,000 cameras and pieces of related equipment, and an important archive of documents and letters. The museum continues to attract significant collections, such as the John and Judith Hillelson collection of photojournalism and the Colin Axon collection of early colour photography.

The V&A is also home to the V&A Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project, an endowed curatorial programme dedicated to supporting women in photography. The Project encompasses a permanent curatorial post within the Photography Section and an ambitious programme of activity which spans acquisitions, commissions, research, education, displays and events, including the annual V&A Parasol Foundation Prize for Women in Photography.

The Photographs Acquisition Group builds on the V&A's extraordinary legacy and commitment to photography, concentrating on mid-career artists and major names missing from the collection. Recent contemporary acquisitions include photographs by Richard Learoyd, Vera Lutter, Susan Derges, Sammy Baloji and Sunil Gupta, as well as important works by emerging artists.



'Radio Telescope, Effelsberg XV: September 12, 2013', by Vera Lutter, 2013. Museum no, PH.430-2021.  
Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group

## The Photography Centre

Photographs purchased with the support of the Photographs Acquisition Group are regularly displayed in the Photography Centre at V&A South Kensington, a suite of galleries housing the permanent collection and showing the development of photography from the 1820s to the present day. The first phase of the Centre was opened to critical acclaim by the V&A's Patron, HRH The Princess of Wales, followed by the second and final phase which was completed in May 2023. At over 1000m<sup>2</sup>, it is now the largest space for a permanent photography collection in the UK.

The Photography Centre is an international destination for the exhibition, collection, conservation and research of photography. Free to access, it offers visitors the opportunity to experience photography in new ways and to explore its impact on their lives, across 7 striking galleries. Two galleries, The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery (Room 100) and The Sir Elton John and David Furnish Gallery (Room 101) are dedicated to the historic collection, displaying objects from across the entire history of the medium. The Photography Centre is also home to two spectacular rooms devoted to contemporary photography, including The Parasol Foundation Gallery (Room 97), as well as a space which showcases innovative digital practice, called The Meta Media Gallery (Room 99). At the heart of the Centre, The Kusuma Gallery (Room 98) focuses on photography and the book, visibly storing the Royal Photographic Society Library and an additional room explores the history of cameras, featuring a walk-in camera obscura.

The support of the Photographs Acquisition Group is crucial to the Photography Centre, enabling a lively programme of rotating contemporary displays.





'A view from Le Gras, Saint-Loup-de-Vareennes, France', from the series 'View from the Laboratory', by Daido Moriyama, 2008, Museum no. PH.383-2023. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group

## Support Acquisitions for Publications and Exhibitions

The Photographs Acquisition Group acquires photographs that contribute to museum publications and exhibitions beyond the Photography Centre at V&A South Kensington. Our headline shows often feature photographs acquired through the group, including most recently in the *Paul Strand: Photography and Film for the 20th Century* and *Africa Fashion* exhibitions.

Acquisitions also feature in our critically-acclaimed publications, including *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less Photography*, *Making it Up: Photographic Fictions* and *Calling the Shots: A Queer History of Photography*.



'Sick-Hagemeyer shop assistant with bottles, taken as a colour guide, Accra', by James Barnor, 1971, Museum no. PH.387-2021. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group



'La femme, la photo et Pentax', from the series 'Women with Cameras', by Anne Collier, 2013, Museum no. PH.444-2024. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group

## Support Object-Based Learning

The V&A champions object-based learning, using the collection, including photographs purchased with donors' support, to tell the story of photography to visitors of all ages. Workshops, study days and courses utilise the collection so curious minds can gain hands-on experience of photography and learn new skills. Led by makers and curators, participants enjoy topics such as fashion photography, early photographic techniques and digital practices of all kinds.

Researchers can also request to view photographs from the collection in the Prints and Drawings Study Room at V&A South Kensington, including recent acquisitions supported by the group. Since 2010, this free service has received over 45,000 visitors, making the V&A's collection one of the most publicly accessible in the world.



V&A Friday Late - We Face Forward, talk in the Prints and Drawing Study Room, V&A South Kensington © Hydar Dewachi;  
Facing page: V&A Friday Late - 'Tyler Mitchell: Indelible Images', display in the National Art Library, V&A South Kensington  
© Hydar Dewachi





## Support Contemporary Photographers

For photographers, having their work added to the V&A collection enhances their reputation and encourages the sale of further work. The engagement with curators, visitors and donors sparks new ideas and fosters creativity. Many photographers value having their work exhibited and accessible to the public and specialists alike, safe in the knowledge that it will be retained for future generations.

### **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 commissioned me to create, funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group, has also been a great source of inspiration. It allowed me to discover works in the V&A collection that I was previously unaware of, which has reinvigorated my own work.”

### **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 nineteenth-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 the V&A to build the collection you will enjoy a close relationship with the V&A's Photography Section and wider museum.

The Photographs Acquisition Group meets with the curatorial team twice a year to view potential acquisitions and discuss which works are to be acquired for the permanent collection, gaining an in-depth understanding of the museum's engagement with photography. In addition, members of the group are invited to many other wonderful opportunities which demonstrate the impact of their generosity, joining curators as they meet leading photographers to learn about their practice, tour private collections, and visit other museums and photography fairs and festivals, both in the UK and abroad.

Your entire donation towards the Photographs Acquisition Group will support purchasing photography for the collection. Supporters of the group may make additional payments to participate in some events, to cover the associated costs.

## Your Support

### UK taxpayers

You may increase the value of your support by enabling us to claim Gift Aid on your donation. For every £1 you donate, we can claim 25p from HM Revenue and Customs at no extra cost to you.

### Non-UK taxpayers

American taxpayers may wish to give their donation to the V&A Americas Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organisation which traditionally supports the work of the V&A. Donations to the V&AAF are deductible for US tax purposes to the extent permitted by law. If you would like to make your donation this way, please contact us for further details.

### Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), Charitable Trust or Foundation payments

CAF payments, or payments from your charitable trust or foundation can be accepted for your donation.

'Longing for Love, 2018', from the series 'A Myth of Two Souls', by Vasantha Yoganathan, 2013-2019, Museum no. PH.355-2021.  
Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group





To donate and join the Photographs Acquisition Group,  
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'No.11', from the series '70s Lifestyle Series', by Samuel Fosso, 1974-1978, Museum no. PH.1245-2022. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group. Cover Image: 'Untitled #1', from the series 'Speak the Wind', by Hoda Afshar, 2020, Museum no. PH.1223-2022. Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group  
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