

V&A Academy

Spotlight on Nigeria at the V&A: Culture, Creativity, and Design

**V&A South Kensington
Friday 2 October 2026**



Pair of Boots, 19th Century, Nigeria. V&A Mus. no. AP.15-1876

Details

Friday 2 October 2026, 12.00 – 18.00, in person at V&A South Kensington, Learning Centre, Hochhauser Auditorium.

Overview

Join us as we explore how Nigerian design and culture are represented, celebrated and interpreted across the V&A collections. We honour the spirit of creativity and cultural pride that defines Nigeria's rich artistic legacy.

Through curator insights, artist conversations and gallery journeys, delve into the stories behind textiles, ceramics, costume, art, sculpture, posters, print and photography, and more. Discover the bold creativity of traditional craft practices alongside the powerful narratives embedded in both historic and contemporary works. This event invites you to experience the collections through current and contemporary perspectives, uncovering connections between past and present, local and global, heritage and innovation.

This event forms part of the V&A Academy's celebration marking Nigeria's Independence.

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice.

Schedule

11.30 - 12.00 (30 min)

Arrival, Registration, and Refreshments.

Learning Centre, Lobby 2, Level 1

12.00 - 12.15 (15 min)

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions, Janz Browne Senior Producer Africa and Diaspora, V&A Academy.

Hochhauser Auditorium, Learning Centre, Level 1

12.15 - 13.00 (45 min)

Bound Together: Leather From Northern Nigeria, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Hochhauser Auditorium, Learning Centre, Level 1

Dr Eva Namusoke presents an exploration of the creative and technical artistry of Nigerian leatherwork, revealing the skilled labour behind some of the world's finest leather goods. For centuries, Nigerian leather, renowned for its quality and craftsmanship, has been used in everything from bookbinding's and footwear to bags and decorative objects. Drawing on historic and contemporary examples, she examines the interconnected histories of craft, trade, empire and labour. Her presentation also considers how the expertise and contributions of Nigerian leatherworkers have often remained overlooked despite their enduring influence on global design, luxury goods, and fashion production.

13.00 - 13.15 (15 min)

Audience Q&A with Eva Namusoke.

13.15 - 13.30 (15 mins)

Ticket Holders - Selecting Your Next Activity

Use this time to select your next activity from the list of THREE options below:

13.30 - 14.45 (75 mins)

Please select ONE of the following activities from the sign-up sheets. Places are limited to 20 participants per activity and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To view prints, posters and photographs, coats and bags must be left with Security in the P&D Study Room foyer before entry. Some activities repeat later in the day.

1.

Adire: Yoruba Art in Cloth

Seminar Room 2, Learning Centre, Level 1

With **Jessica Harpley** explore the indigo resist-dyed textile, adire. More than just a textile, adire is an artform and storytelling medium –an expression of Yoruba culture, creativity, and ingenuity. Learn the techniques behind adire's creation and discover how it has adapted to shifting social and economic forces to become a cornerstone of contemporary Nigerian fashion and identity. The session will consider how and why adire has been collected and displayed by the V&A, with the opportunity to view examples up close.

2.

Nigerian Prints, Drawings, & Photographs Held in the V&A Collection

Prints and Drawings Study Room, Learning Centre, Level 3

With Curators Ella Ravillious and Isaac Huxtable

Isaac will be presenting various Nigerian photographs and photographic works kept in the V&A Photography collection. Collecting since the 1850s, these pieces span from early Victorian society portraits to contemporary moving image artworks. He will explore how each of these objects came to the museum, why they are here, and how we select new artworks to add to our ongoing acquisitions. **Ella** will present 20th century prints made by Nigerian artists such as Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Jimoh Akolo and Tayo Quaye.

3.

Nigeria On Tour Across the Museum

Meet in the Learning Centre Reception, Street Level

Tour of Nigerian Objects across the V&A galleries, including Ceramics, Silver, and Design 1900 - Now with **Nadia Denton**, African Heritage Tour Guide, V&A.

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14.45 - 15.15 (30 mins)

Comfort Break

Bring a packed lunch. Beverages will be available.

Learning Centre, Lobby 2, Level 1

15.15 – 15.25 (10 min)

Welcome back and afternoon introductions with Janz Browne Senior Producer Africa and Diaspora, V&A Academy.

Hochhauser Auditorium, Learning Centre, Level 1

15.25 - 16.10 (45 min)

At the Threshold: When Gods and Mortals Dance

With Oliver Enwonwu and Nike Awoyinka in Conversation

Hochhauser Auditorium, Learning Centre, Level 1

Oliver Enwonwu presents selected works from his ongoing liminality series, exploring thresholds between physical and metaphysical experience through ritual, movement, memory and ancestral presence. In conversation with curator and cultural strategist Nike Awoyinka, he reflects on the ideas shaping his evolving practice, alongside questions of identity, belonging and artistic inheritance. Their discussion considers the creative dialogue between his work and the legacy of his father, Ben Enwonwu, and the development of an independent and distinctive artistic voice.

16.10- 16.25 (15 min)

Audience Q&A with Oliver Enwonwu & Nike Awoyinka.

16.30 - 17.45 (75 min)

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1.

Bridging Generations: Staying Power, Memory, and Creative Practice

Seminar Room 2, Learning Centre, Level 1

Michael Akuagwu reflects on his year as part of the Adobe Creative Residency, tracing the artistic journey that shaped his research and creative development throughout the programme. Focusing on Staying Power, the V&A project documenting the Black British experience through photography from the 1950s to the 1990s, he explores how these images and their accompanying histories inspired him to build on the legacy of the photographers who came before him and forge connections across generations. Responding to what Sonia Boyce has described as "systemic amnesia", Michael considers how the themes emerging from this research informed his programming, artistic practice, and the new body of work created for his residency display. Through this process, he reflects on the role of photography, memory and creative expression in preserving histories, amplifying lived experience, and extending cultural legacies into the present.

2.

Nigerian Prints, Drawings, & Photographs Held in the V&A Collection

Prints and Drawings Study Room, Learning Centre, Level 3

With Curators Ella Ravillious and Isaac Huxtable

Isaac will present various Nigerian photographs and photographic works kept in the V&A Photography collection. Collecting since the 1850s, these pieces span from early Victorian society portraits to contemporary moving image artworks. He will explore how each of these objects came to the museum, why they are here, and how we select new artworks to add to our ongoing acquisitions. **Ella** will present 20th century prints made by Nigerian artists such as Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Jimoh Akolo and Tayo Quaye.

3.

Nigerian Art: From Ancient Traditions to Global Impact - Nigeria on Tour Across the Museum

Meet in the Learning Centre Reception, Street Level

Tour of Nigerian Objects across the V&A galleries, including Ceramics, Silver, and Design 1900 - Now with **Stella-Kemi Akintan** African Heritage Tour Guide, V&A.

Please select ONE of the above activities from the sign-up sheets. Places are limited to 20 participants per activity and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To view prints, posters and photographs, coats and bags must be left with Security in the P&D Study Room foyer before entry.

17.45 - 18.00 (15 min)

Learning Centre Reception, Street Level

Concluding thoughts from the organisers, vote of thanks, audience feedback and exhibition tickets for Schiaparelli and Rising Voices.

Biographies

Stella Kemi Akintan is an African and Caribbean history enthusiast and has studied it in a community setting for many years. She is as an African Heritage Guide at the V&A. Her background is in local government policy development. She enjoys travel and spending time with family and friends.

Michael Akuagwu is a London-born and London-based multimedia artist and designer whose work invites contemplation on society and culture through photography, design and film. Beginning with surrealist self-portraits to explore questions of race, mental health and faith, his practice became an avenue for expressing his ideas about the world around him. Since then, his work has expanded to embrace objects, photographic processes and mixed media, using photography as a starting point to push stories further and explore new ways of making meaning. Michael recently completed the 2025 Adobe Creative Residency, creating new work inspired by *Staying Power*, the V&A's landmark collection documenting Black British photography. Exploring themes of systemic amnesia and the formation of artistic and design canons, he also produced the short film *Reference Point*, which brings together the reflections of Black designers across the Diaspora and their relationships to Western design. His works *Reference Point* and *Through The Lens* are currently on display at the V&A as part of *Adobe Creative Residents on Display*, running until November 2026.

Nike Awoyinka is the Founder of Refounding, a cultural venture that develops conversations, partnerships, and projects that sit at the intersection of culture, creative education and international strategy. Over almost two decades, Nike has held senior leadership and consultancy roles across some of the UK and Europe's leading creative education institutions, including Ravensbourne University London, Sotheby's Institute of Art, BIMM University, Vogue College of Fashion and NABA (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti). She is currently working with NABA to establish its first international campus in London, leading the strategy for student recruitment, market development, and enrolment for the new campus. Alongside this, Nike convenes and moderates' conversations with artists, cultural leaders and industry, exploring African creativity, cultural exchange and the creative economy. Her work considers how African creative practice can command greater visibility, build cultural and commercial value, and shape global conversations, with a particular focus on the influence of African women within the creative economy.

Nadia Denton has worked in the film industry for two decades as a curator, public speaker and impact producer. She has been a curatorial advisor for Cinéma Africain (Austria) since 2024. She coined the term BEYOND

NOLLYWOOD and has championed Nigerian cinema across various film programmes. Her publications include *Cinéma Africain: Archiving, Resistance and Freedom* (2025) and *The Nigerian Filmmaker's Guide to Success: BEYOND NOLLYWOOD* (2014). She co-produced *Shooting it Like a Woman* (2017), a BBC World Service radio documentary about Nigerian women in the film industry. Nadia is an official African Heritage Guide across the V&A, Tate Modern and British Museum. Her 'Igbo Worldview' tour is the first African Heritage offering in the British Museum's 272-year history.

Oliver Enwonwu FRSA, FRAI is an artist, art historian and cultural leader whose practice explores liminality, memory, identity and inheritance. A third-generation artist and the son of pioneering African modernist Ben Enwonwu, his recent paintings examine states of transition and the threshold between the physical and metaphysical, drawing on ancestral memory, ritual, movement and African systems of thought. He was the inaugural Artist-in-Residence of the King's Foundation × Akoje Residency. His work is represented in important public and private collections internationally, including his portrait of Canterbury's first Black Lord Mayor, displayed at The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge. A former President of the Society of Nigerian Artists, Enwonwu has played a significant role in advancing contemporary African art through Omenka Gallery, Omenka Magazine and the Ben Enwonwu Foundation. He serves on several cultural and heritage boards across the UK and has spoken on African art, cultural identity and artistic practice at institutions internationally, including Stanford University and Florida International University.

Jessica Harpley is an Assistant Curator within the V&A's Textiles and Fashion department, currently working on the project to renovate and reimagine the museum's permanent Fashion Gallery, due to open in 2028. She has an MA in Fashion Cultures and has published on the Victorian chatelaine. Jessica worked on the V&A exhibitions *Bags: Inside Out* and *Africa Fashion* respectively and contributed essays to the *Cartier* and *Marie Antoinette Style* exhibition books. She has completed cataloguing projects spanning World Dress, African textiles, and Omega textiles.

Isaac Huxtable is a Yorkshire-born, London-based writer and curator. He works across photography with a central focus on the construction of race in modern and contemporary images. Isaac is currently an Assistant Curator in Photography at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He studied at the Courtauld

Institute of Art, followed by roles at the British Journal of Photography, the Photographers' Gallery, and the art agency Artiq. His words have featured in the British Journal of Photography, Elephant Magazine, Galerie Peter Sillem, The Photographers' Gallery, V&A, and South London Gallery. He is particularly interested in documentary practices, speculation, and critical theory.

Dr Eva Namusoke is Senior Curator, African Collections Futures at the University of Cambridge's McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, working across collections from and about the African continent in the university's museums, botanic garden, libraries, archives, and departments. Eva published a report on these collections in December 2024. Eva was the curator of 'Bound Together: Leather from Northern Nigeria' (2025-2026) at The Fitzwilliam Museum, which was inspired by the report. Her wider work focusses on institutionalising the findings of the report and supporting greater engagements for public and scholarly audiences with the African collections at Cambridge. Her current research project and focus of an upcoming exhibition, 'Afterlives of Return', is about a 2024 Cambridge to Kampala loan of Ugandan artefacts and explores what happens after return, how artefacts are (re)interpreted, and how the relationships around these returns are changed and sustained. Eva completed a history PhD at the University of Cambridge following degrees from Yale University and the University of Exeter.

Dr. Ella Ravilious is Curator: Architecture and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Her book about her grandfather's artistic career, *Eric Ravilious: Landscapes and Nature*, was published by Thames and Hudson/V&A in 2023. Her next book, co-authored with Gill Saunders, will be a global history of linocuts which will be published in October 2026.

QR CODES to support your research journey at the V&A

As you continue your journey of discovery, we invite you to keep exploring Africa and its diasporas across the V&A. Stay connected through the African Heritage Newsletter, explore stories and resources on the Global Africa webpages, and use *Explore the Collection* to uncover objects, people and histories through your own research. If something sparks your curiosity, why not view it up close at V&A East Storehouse? Every search can reveal new connections, perspectives and stories waiting to be found.

1. **African Heritage Bi-Monthly Newsletter**

Keep up to date with the latest events, opportunities, stories, and projects across the Global Africa programme by signing up to the African Heritage Newsletter.



2. **Global Africa Webpage**

Discover V&A articles, blogs, collections, and resources exploring the histories, cultures, and creative contributions of Africa and its Diasporas.



3. **Explore the Collection**

Use the QR code to access *Explore the Collection*, the V&A's online objects catalogue. Try searching terms such as *Nigeria* or *Nigerian* as a starting point to uncover objects, stories, and connections across the collection.



4. **Order an Object at V&A East Storehouse**

Why not order an object from the V&A collection that has inspired you and view it up close? V&A East Storehouse offers a unique opportunity to explore collection objects in greater detail.



5. **African and Caribbean Heritage Tour: Past Meets Present**

Join our volunteer guides as they bring African and Caribbean heritage to life—uncovering powerful narratives that have too often been overlooked.

