Sources for the study of marketing in the V&A Archive

The Public Affairs division is responsible for the ways in which the V&A promotes and markets itself. It has produced a factfile that provides information on its current marketing strategy, campaigns and press coverage. The factfile is available on the Marketing the V&A page.

This subject guide outlines the resources available in the V&A Archive for studying the history of marketing and publicity at the V&A, particularly the V&A's corporate identity/brand and its graphic language. These include posters and other printed literature: advertisements for exhibitions, displays and events, office stationery, concert programmes and some information on the V&A logo and signage. They may be viewed by appointment in the Blythe House Reading Room.

V&A logo

The V&A logo is an essential component of the Museum's graphic identity and is immediately recognisable to a global audience.

In the 1970s, a version of the V&A logo, rendered in ITC Baskerville Italic font with its distinctive and ornate ampersand, appeared on Museum exhibition and general publicity posters, but not systematically.
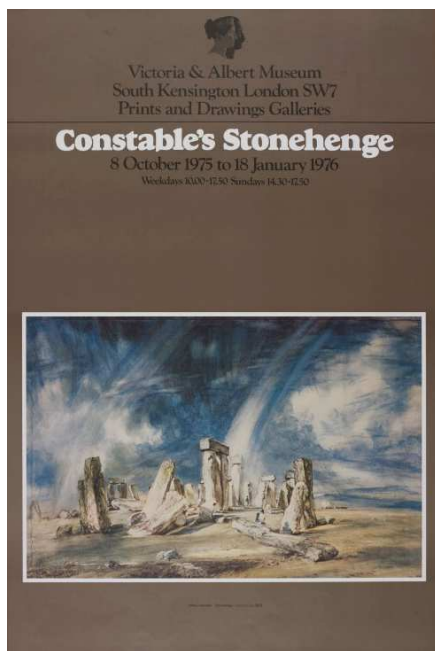

V&A Archive, MA/24/183

V&A Archive, MA/24/183 (detail)

In 1975 a proposal was made to incorporate the logo of the profiles of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on all future posters for the V&A produced by HMSO Graphic Design. This raised several concerns, however, the principal of which was that 'such a device on all posters will inevitably reduce the impact of all the individual posters, each of which depends on a striking image backed up by striking wording' (V&A Archive, VA 380/2). It was agreed that the logo would be used only on specific occasions when it was appropriate to the design.
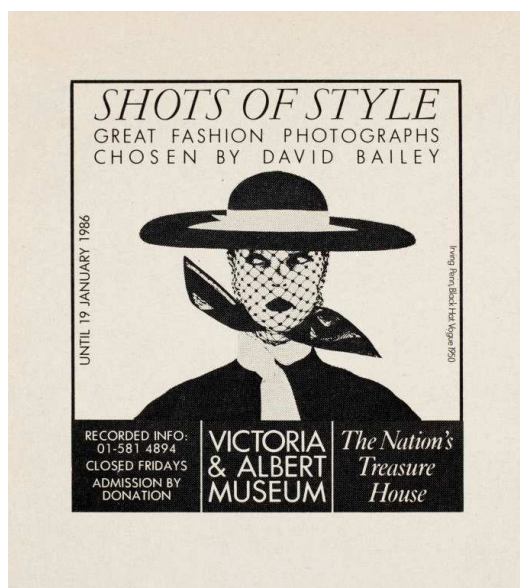

V&A Archive, MA/24/154

V&A Archive, MA/24/154 (detail)

Papers concerning a 1985 advertising and publicity campaign suggest that the 'much loved term "V&A"' had disappeared from the logo and that it was intended to restore it to the Museum's advertising copy. A new slogan was proposed, 'The V&A – the nation's treasure chest', which was to run initially in classified advertisements between March and November, although the proposed slogan was modified subsequently and the older, expanded logo was preferred:

Shots of Style ad, V&A Archive, RP/1985/671

V&A Archive, MA/24/274
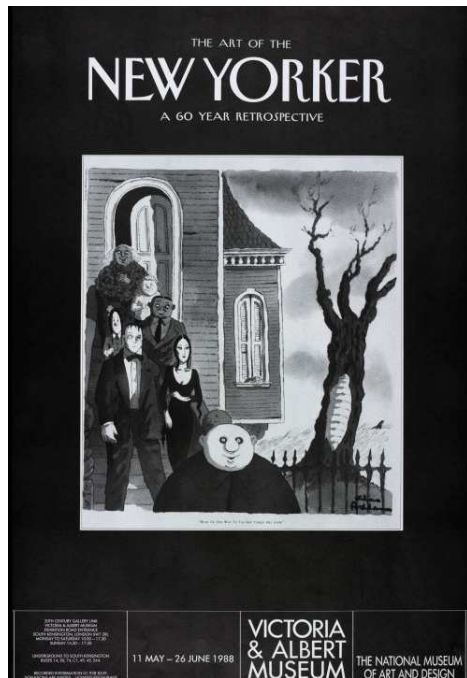

V&A Archive, MA/24/274 (detail)

In summer 1986, the V&A's Board of Trustees agreed that the Museum should carry the sub-title 'The National Museum of Art and Design'. This was incorporated subsequently into the Museum's logo and was carried on all promotional material.
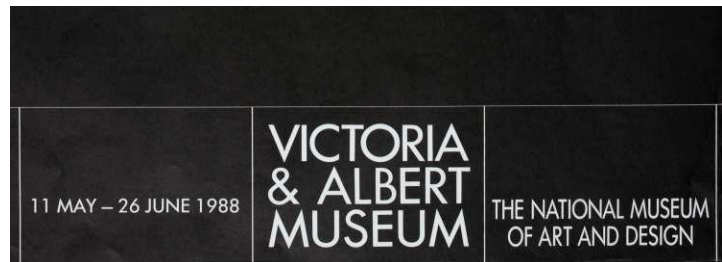

V&A Archive, MA/24/263 (logo before the subtitle was added)

V&A Archive, MA/24/263 (detail)

V&A Archive, MA/24/305

V&A Archive, MA/24/305 (detail)

The present logo was designed by Alan Fletcher of Pentagram in 1989.

Writing in **Grafik**, Melanie Mues considered 'elegance, simplicity and longevity' as the main attributes of Fletcher's logo and thought it 'more robust than expected from a word mark with such fragile Bodoni serifs' (**Grafik**. 177 (Sept. 2004): 75).

Further reading:
V&A Archive, VA 380/2 (RP/1975/2428: use of logo on posters)
V&A Archive, VA 380/3 (RP/1985/671: publicity 1985-1986)
V&A Archive, RP/1988/471: Pentagram – corporate logo and stationery

V&A typeface pre 2002

In 1951, the V&A's Advisory Council considered commissioning a new typeface, preferring a Roman typeface to an italic one. It is not known if anything came of this. Until the brand refresh in 2002 there was no standard typeface used on V&A materials: previously the typeface was chosen to complement the subject matter of each exhibition.
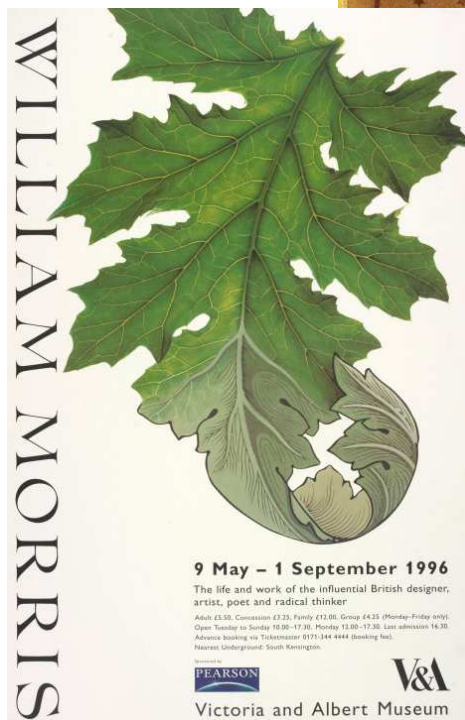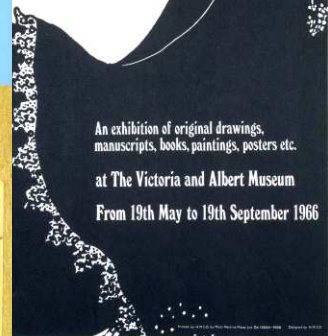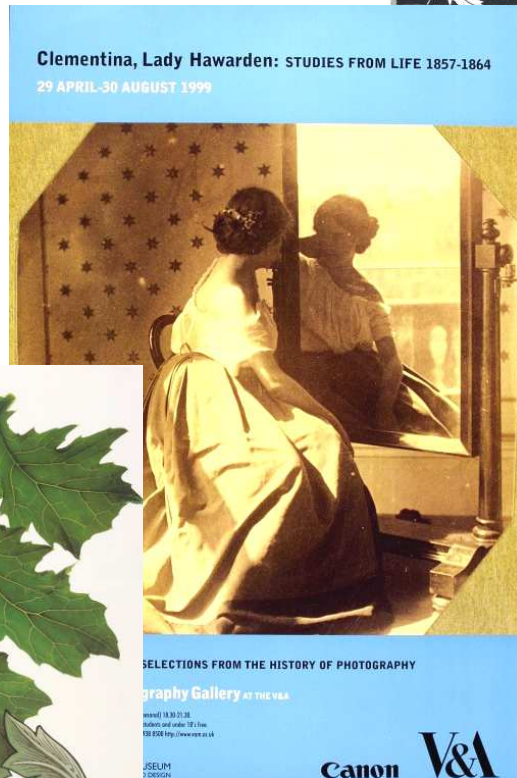
Further reading:
V&A Archive, MA/46/1/5: Advisory Council minutes

V&A Archive, MA/24/29
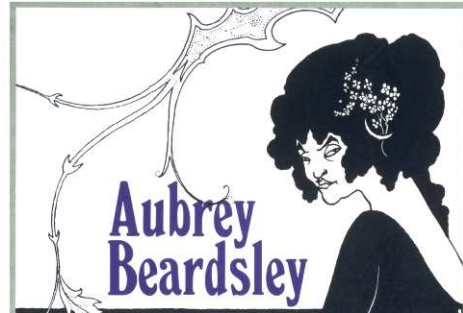
V&A Archive, MA/24/376

V&A Archive, MA/24/397

V&A brand refresh 2002

In 2002 Wolff Olins, a leading brand consultancy firm, was appointed to refresh the V&A's brand and graphic identity and to provide guidelines for its future use in print work. The V&A logo was retained, but it was to be used in a more dramatic and confident way. Colours would play a much greater role in the identity (the only instruction was 'no black'). To bring all communications together, a new typeface was developed specifically for the V&A, the 'V&A Sans' (adapted from TheSans font, which had been designed by Luc(as) de Groot in 1994). As a result 'The Museum is now able to communicate with visitors in more direct, elegant, and

persuasive manner' (**V&A End of year report, April 2002 – March 2003**). At this point the strapline 'The National Museum of Art and Design' was also dropped.

The refined visual identity was launched with the Versace exhibition marketing campaign in October 2002. It was subsequently rolled-out on to all other external and internal materials, including the V&A's website, staff newsletters and signage.

The following documents relating to the brand refresh can be made available:
- Creative brief: V&A identity repair and enhancement
- Wolff Olins: tender/outline concept for V&A brand / corporate identity refresh ('Doing More With Less')
- V&A design toolkit
- V&A style guidelines
- Example of the Versace poster and Discover the V&A leaflet

Further reading:

Clayton, Richard. 'V&A appoints Wolff Olins to overhaul its identity.' **Design Week** (23 May 2002).

Jones, Robert. 'Museums need to be rebranded if they want to show how much they've changed.' **Museums Journal** 108, no. 8 (Aug. 2008): 16.

Wolff Olins, 'V&A: Renewed':

http://www.wolffolins.com/media/case_studies/VA_case_study.pdf

V&A End of year report, April 2002 – March 2003

Further work on the V&A's brand

The visual identity refresh was followed by more extensive work to define the V&A's brand, both internally and externally, in partnership with branding consultant Jane Wentworth. This lead to the creation of The V&A Blueprint – a summary of the V&A's mission, strategy and values, the setting up CulturePlan, a brand engagement programme for staff, and various other manifestations of the brand for staff in particular, such as a new staff handbook.

The V&A blueprint
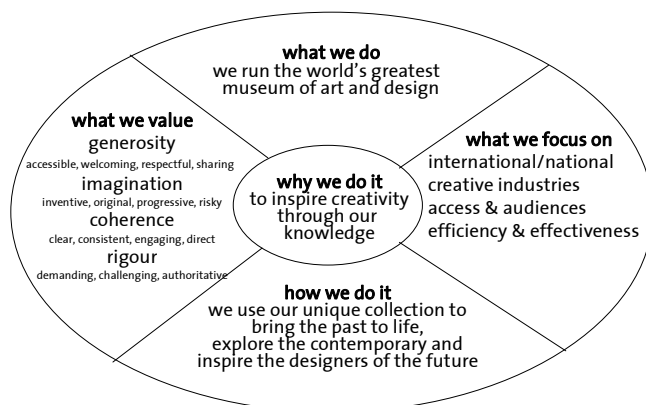
Further reading:

Welcome to the V&A staff handbook

V&A style guidelines

When in 2002 the V&A refreshed its brand, it also introduced new formats and guidelines designed to present the Museum in an 'elegant, unified and consistent way' (**V&A Style Guidelines**, 2). In order to bring internal documents in line with these new standards, a simple style guide was produced for all Word and PowerPoint documents, and text guidelines for curatorial and non-curatorial text were developed to ensure consistency of tone of voice. These guidelines were used for the production of all-in house generated literature and communication materials.

Further reading:
V&A Archive, RP/1994/2027: V&A style guide
V&A Archive, RP/1995/677: Text house style (Education dept.)

Museum stationery

Prior to 1983 the V&A was part of the Department of Education and used standard civil service stationery. Following devolution it commissioned its own range of corporate stationery, which was subject to a major redesign in 2002. The refreshed identity was manifested on all these items through the use of the new typeface, the logo and seven mix-and-match colours 'to be used in isolation or to complement each other when multiple pieces of stationery are put together' (**V&A Style Guidelines**, 9). The V&A Archive holds a selection of stationery used for Museum business since the 1950s which reveal a range of styles and graphic approaches.

Examples of V&A corporate stationery, V&A Archive

Further reading:

V&A Archive, A0052: Specimens of stationery (writing paper, postcards and envelopes), 1950s to 1980s

V&A Archive, A0415: Specimens of stationery (letter heads, envelopes, compliment slips etc.), c.2000 and c.2004

V&A Archive, A0422: Specimens of stationery and forms used by the Museum and the Prints, Drawings & Paintings Department, 1980s to 1990s

Wayfinding and signage

The V&A's building is a series of interlinked buildings, with a variety of different levels and access points. This combined with its great size (often claimed erroneously to comprise 7 miles of gallery space) makes it a very complex building to navigate. Different maps and floorplans have been produced over the years to try and make sense of the Museum's internal layout and so aid the visitor's peregrinations.

In 1906, J. J. Keliher and Company published its pioneering red line guide, which illustrated and described sixty star objects and directed the visitor 'in the simplest manner possible, by a red track on the plan, to the leading objects in the various sections of the Museum' in two hours (**The Red Line Guide to the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington**. London: J. J. Keliher and Co., 1906).
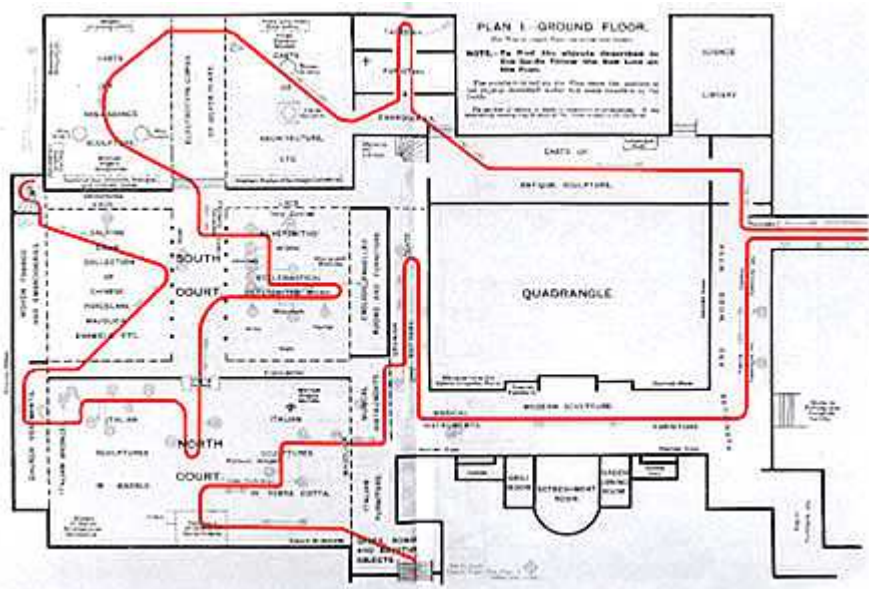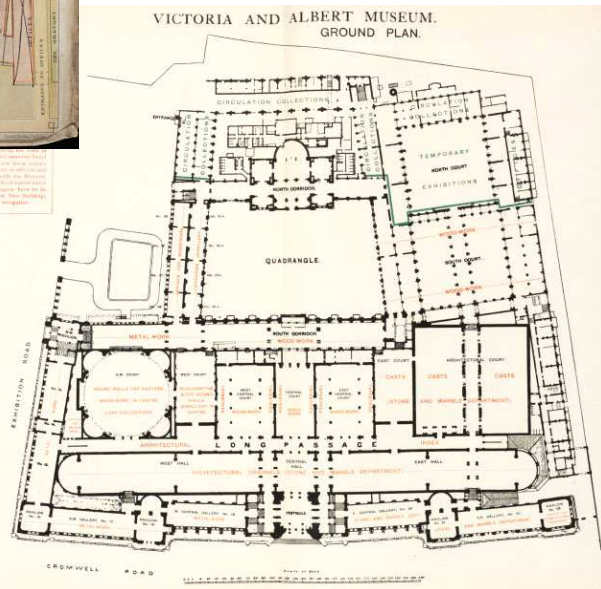

The maps in the V&A Archive also reveal the evolution of the Museum's public spaces over the years.
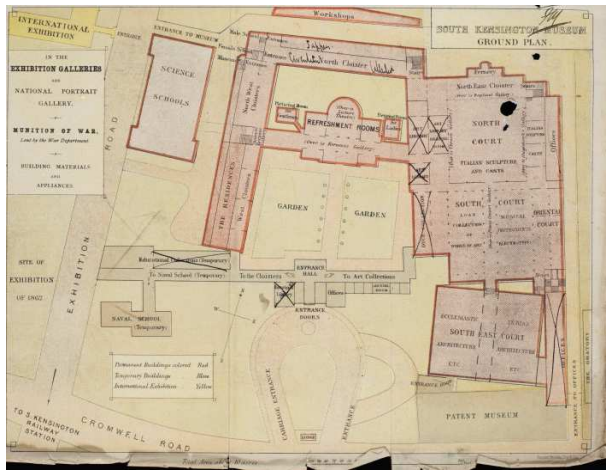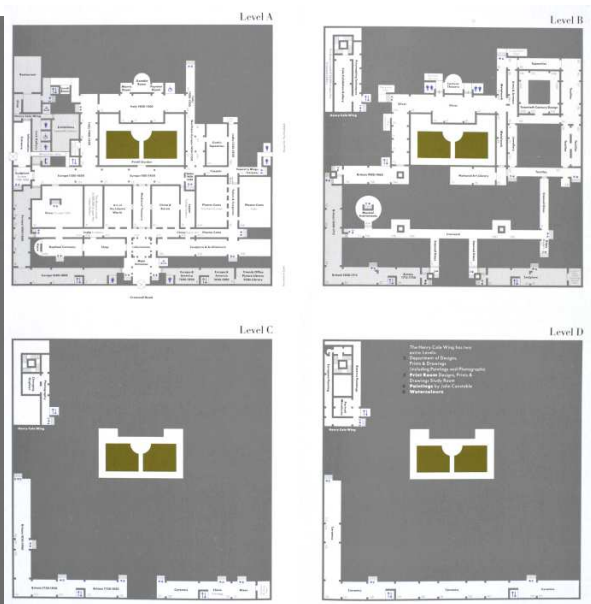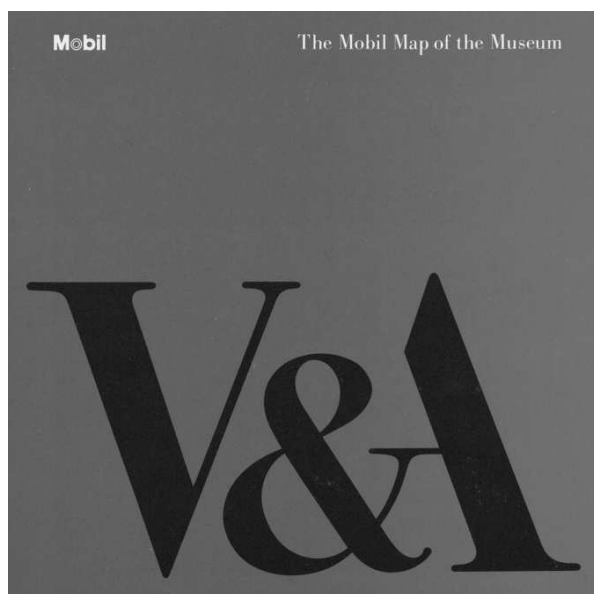
V&A Archive, ED 84/233

V&A Archive, ED 84/154

In July 1988 the V&A launched a new map and guide which were designed by Pentagram and sponsored by Mobil.

Mobil guide, V&A Archive, MA/52/1/26

The map was intended 'to bring simplicity and clarity to a complex institution and building' while the guide would provide the first-time visitor with 'basic information about the role of the V&A, highlights of the collections and the services available'. A new signage system, based on banners hanging between galleries, was introduced in September beginning with the first floor and the rest of the building following in 1989.

In late 2003 the V&A introduced a new signage scheme and map designed by Holmes Wood Consultancy. The Museum was divided conceptually into quarters (Asia, Europe, Materials & Techniques, Modern), which were colour-coded. 'The linchpin of the new scheme is the map, which pulls together the colour-coding, the room numbers, the gallery names and the stair and lift references. It describes and navigates the building by acting as a journey-planner rather than trying to replicate the complex architecture' (**'Development of the Signage'**: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/development-of-the-signage/).

The new scheme also incorporated the relevant elements of the Museum's refreshed identity – the V&A Sans typeface and strong use of colours. Temporary signage was also addressed at this time, with templates being created for the layout and wording approved by the Marketing Department to ensure consistency of appearance and tone-of-voice.

Current Museum floor plan, V&A Archive, MA/52/1/48

Further reading:
V&A Archive:
MA/51/1/31/2: 'Putting the visitor first – V&A launches new visitor care initiative' (Press Release)
MA/52/1/26: Ephemera, 1988 (**The Mobil Guide to the Museum**)

A0328: annotated draft text and sample covers for **Red Line Souvenir of the Victoria and Albert Museum**, and advertising poster

Rees, Elizabeth. **Preliminary study and recommendations for a new approach to signing at the Victoria and Albert Museum** (1987)

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees, 16 January 2003, item 4

A formative evaluation of plans for a sign scheme and map prepared for the Victoria & Albert Museum by the Holmes Wood Consultancy … prepared by Dr Paulette M. McManus, Museum & Heritage Consultant, May 2003

Holmes Wood Consultancy:

http://www.holmeswood.com/Work/wayfindingAndSigns/details.asp?iuid=16459909>

Holmes Wood Consultancy. 'V&A Sign Report' (27 March 2003)

'V&A wayfinding scheme and onsite signage principles' (23 January 2008)

'Development of the Signage': http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/development-of-the-signage/

V&A publicity posters

The V&A Archive holds an expanding collection of over 1000 posters which chronicle the many exhibitions and displays that have been mounted over the years and the variety of visual and textual messages used to drawn in audiences. Our full collection of posters may be explored through our catalogues, which can be found on the V&A Archive homepage:

- MA/23 General publicity posters
- MA/24 Exhibition publicity posters
- MA/25 Circulation department publicity posters
- MA/26 Bethnal Green Museum publicity posters
- MA/27 Theatre Museum publicity posters

An illustrative selection of posters covering the period 1960 to 2009 has been made that illustrate the wide range of graphic design styles used over the years and the refreshment of the V&A identity . These have been arranged by decade and are available for viewing in the Blythe House Reading Room.

Five V&A Canon Photography Gallery exhibition publicity posters
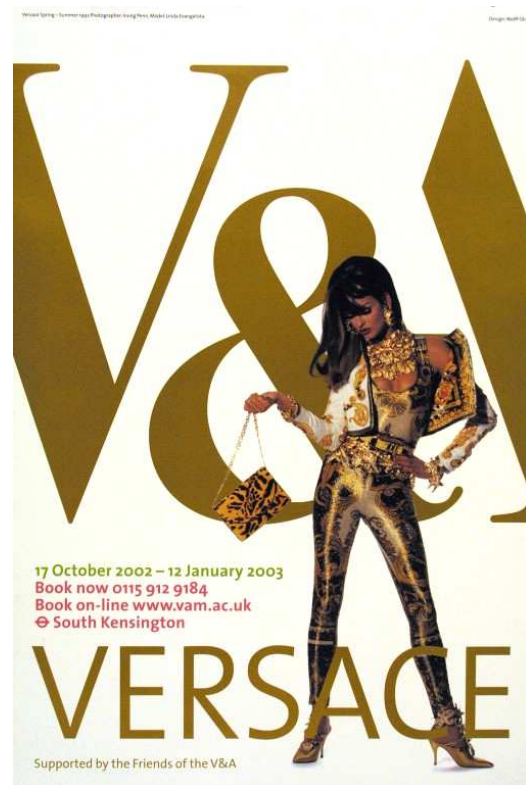
Further reading:

Posters for the Victoria and Albert Museum designed by Peter Branfield; [catalogue of an exhibition] 15-26 February 1971. London: The Association, 1971.

The Saatchi & Saatchi campaigns

In April 1987 Saatch & Saatchi was commissioned to produce a summer advertising campaign aimed principally at the tourist market. Its brief was 'To create a greater awareness of the V&A and its collections amongst the large proportion of the population who are not regular museum visitors or who, because they are confused by the Museum's content and purpose, believe that the V&A is not for them'. The resulting posters were displayed at numerous sites on London Underground and may be viewed in the V&A's Prints and Drawings study room:

- Vibrant & astonishing: E.510-1988
- Violent & astounding: E.512-1988
- Vicious & aggressive: E.E511-1988
- Venerable & angelic: E.513-1988
- Vulgar & absorbing: E.514-1988

The V&A Archive holds copies of large-scale posters displayed on London Underground: MA/23/90-94.

In 1988 Saatchi & Saatchi devised an advertising campaign that excited controversy on account of its wry and irreverent attitude towards the Museum's collections. Provocative and surreal imagery coupled with the suggestion that the Museum restaurant took priority over its priceless objects was (mis)interpreted by some as the final triumph of popularist consumerism over scholarly rigour.

The campaign's objective was to reposition the Museum by appealing to a younger audience in a way that confronted preconceived notions of V&A. Charles Mills, the V&A's marketing manager, observed that 'Underlying this advertising campaign was the thinking that you didn't have to tell the whole truth about the V&A; you just had to get people curious enough to test it for the first time. That would ensure that they would come back' (quoted in Nick Baker. 'Communicating the character.' **Museums Journal** 93, no. 3 (March 1991): 23).

The campaign, however, was not as ignorant of the Museum's history as its critics would have us believe for the South Kensington Museum (as the V&A was known until 1899) was the first museum in the world to provide a public restaurant.

The notorious slogan – 'An ace caff with quite a nice museum attached' – has since been admitted to the **Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Quotations**.

Ivory sculpture of Venus and Cupid by Le Marchand. The Victoria & Albert Museum. Two minutes from South Kensington tube.

Where else do they give you
£100,000,000 worth of objets d'art
free with every egg salad?

V&A An ace caff with quite a nice museum attached.

V&A Archive, MA/23/101

As an adjunct to the poster campaign, the V&A screened its first television commercial on Sunday 6 November on London Weekend Television. The commercial was produced by Saatchi & Saatchi and developed the 'food' theme highlighted in the poster campaign. The art critic Brian Sewell provided the voice over.

Between June and November 1988, the campaign resulted in a rise in attendance of 8%; the first rise in attendances since 1983.

Further reading:

V&A Archive, RP/1987/1353: Saatchi & Saatchi – V&A poster campaign
V&A Archive, MA/51/1/31/1: Press releases
Baker, Nick. 'Communicating the character.' **Museums Journal** 93, no. 3 (March 1991): 23-25.
Macdonald, Sarah. 'Dusting down the V&A's image.' **Marketing Week** (4 November 1988).
Taylor, Paul. 'Art for Arts Sake.' **Independent** (22 October 1988).

Ephemera

Our collection of Museum-related ephemera dates from 1964. It includes general publicity and exhibition leaflets and flyers, and postcards and maps, which together demonstrate the different ways in which the Museum has promoted itself over time. The following catalogues are available on the V&A Archive homepage:

MA/51   Press Office ephemera

MA/52   Museum publicity and marketing ephemera

MA/54   Preview/opening and Private View invitations

MA/55   V&A In-View magazine & V&A Magazine

Selection of exhibition and display ephemera, V&A Archive, A0535

Many of the marketing themes outlined in this subject guide are conveniently brought together for study purposes in a series of mounted display boards composed of materials produced in 1994. Ask for A0535, parts 1-3.

Select reading list

The following books make reference to the Victoria and Albert Museum:

Belk, Russell W. **Collecting in a Consumer Society**. London: Routledge, 1995.

Davidson, Martin P. **The Consumerist Manifesto: Advertising in Post-modern Times**. London: Routledge, 1992.

Corner, John, and Sylvia Harvey, eds. **Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of Nation Culture**. London: Routledge, 1991.

Hill, Elizabeth, et al. **Creative Arts Marketing**. London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003.

Horner, Susan, and John Swarbrooke. **Leisure Marketing: A Global Perspective**. London: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005.

Kavanagh, Gaynor, ed. **Museum Provision and Professionalism**. London: Routledge, 1994.

McLean, Fiona. **Marketing the Museum**. London: Routledge, 1997.

Access to records at the V&A Archive

The Archive and Library Study Room at Blythe House, which serves the Archive of Art and Design, the V&A Archive, the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections and the Beatrix Potter Collections, is open Tuesdays to Fridays, from 10.00 to 16.30, by appointment only.
Further details of how to make enquiries and access the archives can be found on our homepage at http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-v-and-a-archive/

Contact details

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Tel: +44 (0)20 7942 2340
Contact us online at http://vam.altarama reft000.aspx.com/