



The Clothworkers' Centre for Textiles and Fashion Study and Conservation

Opens 8 October 2013

The V&A is creating a new centre for the study, enjoyment and care of its outstanding textiles and fashion collections. Housing over 104,000 objects ranging from small archaeological textile fragments from Egypt to enormous tapestries created for medieval European palaces; and from the latest creations by leading contemporary designers to hoop petticoats from the 1740s, the Clothworkers' Centre will offer the best possible access to the V&A collections for the many researchers, students and enthusiasts who use them every year.

The Clothworkers' Centre for Textiles and Fashion Study and Conservation is being developed at Blythe House in Kensington Olympia, home to the V&A's study collections and the Archive of Art and Design. It will open on 8 October 2013 and is being made possible thanks to a generous lead grant from The Clothworkers' Foundation and further support from many others.

Haworth Tompkins Architects have sensitively designed the Centre within the Grade II listed Edwardian building, maintaining and enhancing the industrial feel of the internal architecture by reinstating original features, while inserting contemporary interventions to form new spaces. The original grand entrance of Blythe House will be reopened to create a more welcoming street presence. A donation from Mr. Jorge Yarur Bascuñán has enabled the V&A to create a new reception area, which will feature floor to ceiling glass cabinets to house changing displays from the study collections. The first display will be Eduardo Paolozzi's *Krazy Kat Arkive of Twentieth Century Popular Culture*.

A spacious new public study room will offer a relaxed and peaceful environment for visitors to view even the largest textiles first hand, with staff and reference books available for consultation. The adjoining seminar room, supported by The Patricia Baines Trust, will be used for groups and classes accommodating up to 18 people. Coats plc. has enabled one of the antique wooden display cabinets from the former Textiles Gallery to be restored for display in the study room. The cabinet will contain 160 framed historical textiles to show the quality, geographic range and

diversity of the collection and to demonstrate a variety of textile techniques and design.

Modern, custom-built storage will ensure the long-term preservation of the collection. It includes storage for 1,280 large rolled textiles from 1.5 to six metres long; 500 linear metres of storage for hanging garments; and 7,000 drawers in six different sizes to house everything from dress fabrics to religious robes, handbags to walking sticks, and embroidery to underwear. A gift from The Basil Samuel Charitable Trust has purchased specialist access equipment to enable staff to work safely at height.

The V&A's Textile Conservation Department is one of the leaders in its field anywhere in the world. The new Centre provides upgraded conservation studios in which they can carry out their specialist conservation of the collection. Visitors will be able to see into the studios and watch work in progress.

Martin Roth, V&A Director, said: *"This development at Blythe House reflects our commitment to making the V&A's collections available to the widest possible audience to inspire designers and help researchers. We want visitors to the new Clothworkers' Centre to have the same experience studying fashion and textiles as they do when viewing fine art in our public study room or visiting our library."*

The new Clothworkers' Centre forms part of the V&A's ambitious FuturePlan and will release spaces previously used as storage at South Kensington for public galleries. Textiles and fashion will continue to be displayed in temporary exhibitions and in permanent galleries at the V&A, notably in the Fashion Gallery, which presents around 100 outfits arranged chronologically to reflect the quality and breadth of the V&A's collections. Some of the Museum's finest tapestries, embroideries and furnishing silks can be seen in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries and important carpets, chintz, lace and rare fashion items in the British Galleries. The Tapestry Gallery shows the magnificent Devonshire Hunting Tapestries, the only great hunting tapestries to have survived from the 15th century and many superb textiles from China, Japan, Korea, South Asia and the Islamic world are on display in the Asian galleries.

In addition, catalogue entries for the textile and fashion collection are available online through 'Search the Collections': <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>, and a newly commissioned film about the Centre will be available on the V&A Channel.

Individual and group appointments to study and research the collections held in the Clothworkers' Centre must be booked in advance to enable the Museum to ensure that requested objects and the appropriate space to study them are available. Public tours of the Clothworkers' Centre will take place on the last Friday of every month.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- Entrance to The Clothworkers Centre and Blythe House is FREE and by appointment. Group bookings can be made now and individual bookings from 1 September. To book email textilesandfashion@vam.ac.uk
- To book a place on one of the monthly public tours email textilesandfashion@vam.ac.uk

About Haworth Tompkins

Haworth Tompkins is a London based architecture studio with a growing international reputation in the cultural, educational and regeneration sectors. Founded in 1991, their work has received numerous major design awards (including two RIBA Stirling Prize nominations), was selected for the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale and is regularly published internationally. The studio has worked on a number of cultural projects for clients including the London Library, National Theatre, Chichester Festival Theatre, the Royal College of Art, London, Hayward Gallery, Battersea Arts Centre, and the Liverpool Everyman theatre.

www.haworthtompkins.com

About Blythe House

Blythe House, designed by Sir Henry Tanner, was originally built between 1899 and 1903 as the headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank. Its mixed-gender work force had separate entrances and blocks within the building to avoid improper mixing of the sexes. In 1979 Blythe House was acquired by the Government with the intention that it be used to store the reserve collections of the national museums and galleries. It is still used by the V&A, British Museum and Science Museum for this purpose. The building is arranged over four floors. The richly ornamental exterior façade is in the Edwardian Baroque style while the vast interior spaces are decorated with glazed bricks and wooden parquet floors. It was given its Grade II listing in 2004.

About Textile Conservation at the V&A

The V&A's Textile Conservation Department is one of the international leaders in its field. There are 14 full time textile conservators and fashion mounting specialists with an enormous range of expertise enabling the treatment of all textile objects to be undertaken. The main focus of their work is the ongoing care of the V&A collections, preparation of objects for gallery display, loans and for the regularly changing headline exhibitions aimed to travel to multiple venues worldwide. Significant recent projects have included the conservation of the Troy tapestry, now on permanent display in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries and the rescuing of Dior's famous 'Zemire' ensemble which had been badly water damaged whilst being stored in a cellar near the Seine in Paris prior to its accession by the V&A.

About The Clothworkers' Foundation

Founded by Royal Charter in 1528, the original purpose of The Clothworkers' Company was to protect its members and promote the craft of cloth-finishing within the City of London. The Company continues to promote textiles, principally through educational grants, fostering the development of technical textiles, and support for the nation's textile heritage. The assets of the Company (based on property and investments) are used to support The Clothworkers' Foundation, which is a registered charity.

Funding

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