



## V&A opens new permanent Photographs Gallery

Opens 25 October 2011



Julia Margaret Cameron, *Circe*, 1865

A permanent new gallery to show highlights from the V&A's internationally renowned collection of photographs will open this autumn, considerably extending the space dedicated to photographs at the Museum. The gallery will launch with a display of works by key figures of photographic history including Victorian portraits by Julia Margaret Cameron and significant works by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray, Alfred Stieglitz, Diane Arbus and Irving Penn.

The gallery will chronicle the history of photography from its invention in 1839 up to the 1960s, after which developments in scale, concept and technology mark a shift in approach and appearance. The display will be re-curated every 18 months. Temporary displays, primarily showcasing contemporary photography, will be shown in the V&A's existing photographs gallery.

A broad range of works will be displayed in the new gallery, including the oldest photograph in the V&A collection, a daguerreotype from 1839 of Parliament Street from Trafalgar Square in London. Other highlights will be an early botanical photograph created without a camera by Anna Atkins (1854); a dramatic seascape by Gustave Le Gray praised at the time for its technical and artistic accomplishment (1856); and a commanding portrait by Robert Howlett of Isambard Kingdom Brunel standing in front of the chains of *The Great Eastern* ship (1857). Later works on display will include Curtis Moffat's camera-less photograph of a dragonfly (about 1925) influenced by Man Ray's pioneering style and an astonishing scientific photograph by Harold Edgerton of the coronet formed by a single milk drop falling into liquid (1957).

There will also be two 'In Focus' sections, each featuring a photographer represented in depth in the V&A collection. The first will be dedicated to British photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, who used long exposures and soft focus to create some of the most powerful portraits of the 19th century. The second will present Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century, who used a small hand-held camera to capture the extraordinary in the everyday.

In 1856, the V&A became the first museum to collect photographs and in 1858, was the first to exhibit them. The V&A is home to the UK's national collection of the art of photography, one of the largest and most important in the world.

The gallery, formerly a study space, is being designed by the V&A's design department as part of the V&A's FuturePlan to transform the Museum through new galleries and redisplay of its collections. Architectural details will be restored, including ten magnificent semi-circular paintings, commissioned in the 1860s as part of the original decorative scheme, to illustrate the principles of art education and show the highest achievements from the history of art.

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**Notes to Editors**

- The Photographs Gallery is FREE
- The Gallery has been curated by Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photographs and Marta Weiss, Curator of Photographs at the V&A
- Further objects from the collection can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room – details can be found at [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)
- The V&A is open daily 10.00 – 17.45 and until 22.00 every Friday
- *Signs of a Struggle: Photography in the Wake of Postmodernism* will be on display in the temporary displays gallery from 11 August – 27 November 2011. The display will demonstrate the far-reaching impact of Postmodernism on photographic practice since the mid 1970s. It will include work by David Hockney and Cindy Sherman.

**For further PRESS information please contact the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2502/2500 or email [press.office@vam.ac.uk](mailto:press.office@vam.ac.uk).**

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