

## V&A FAQs

### What is the V&A?

- The Victoria and Albert Museum – known as the V&A – is the world's leading museum of art and design, with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity.
- The V&A is an international Museum, represented by its worldwide collections, but also in its international programme of touring exhibitions and staff exchanges, web initiatives and licensing partnerships.
- The V&A was established in South Kensington in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers.
- The V&A gained its current name in 1899 when Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of a new wing and renamed the Museum in memory of her husband, Prince Albert.
- Martin Roth, previously Director General of the Dresden State Art Collections, has been Director of the V&A since 1 September 2011.
- The Museum is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Prime Minister. The current chair is Sir Paul Ruddock.

### What's in the V&A's collections?

- The Museum's collections span over 2000 years of human creativity, in virtually every medium and drawn from across Europe, the Middle East, India, China, Japan and many other parts of the world.
- The collections include paintings, sculpture, architecture, ceramics, furniture, fashion and textiles, theatre and performance, photography, glass, jewellery and metalwork.
- The V&A houses the National Art Library which includes more than 750,000 books dedicated to the study of fine and decorative arts.
- Many of the V&A's collections have national status including the Art of photography, British watercolours and drawings, ceramics, fashion, furniture and woodwork, glass, jewellery, metalwork including silver, portrait miniatures, sculpture to 1914 and digital art.
- Visitors can search over a million objects from the V&A's collections on the Search the Collections online database at <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>
- There are over 2.7 million objects in the V&A's collection.

### **V&A South Kensington**

- The V&A is the national museum of art and design
- The V&A's South Ken buildings occupy a 12 acre site and are over a third of a mile in circumference with seven miles of gallery space.
- More people visited the V&A last year than ever before with more than 3.3 million visitors attending its sites from April 2011 – March 2012 (2.88 million visits to South Kensington). This represents a three-fold increase over the last ten years.
- There are 145 galleries within the Museum.

### **V&A Museum of Childhood**

- The V&A Museum of Childhood is situated in Bethnal Green.
- It is home to one of the world's largest and oldest collections of toys and childhood artefacts. The collection, which dates from the 16th century to the present day includes dolls, teddy bears, toy soldiers, train sets, model cars, puppets, rocking horses, costumes, board games, and some of the first jigsaw puzzles ever made.
- The Museum was opened in 1872 by the Prince of Wales as 'The Bethnal Green Museum'. It officially became the Museum of Childhood in 1974.
- Between 2005 and 2006 the Museum's magnificent grade II\* listed Victorian building went through a programme of restoration and redesign, led by architects Caruso St John.
- Rhian Harris has been Director of the Museum of Childhood since September 2008.
- The Museum of Childhood annually attracts around 400,000 visitors.

### **V&A Blythe House**

- Located near Olympia in West London, V&A Blythe House stores the Archive of Art and Design, the Beatrix Potter Collections and the V&A Archive.
- It is currently undergoing restoration and refurbishment to reinstate the Main Entrance to make it more welcoming to visitors.
- A new Textile and Fashion Study and Conservation Centre is also being created at Blythe House to bring the V&A's unrivalled collections of textiles and fashion under one roof for the first time. As part of this, a new conservation centre and a new public Study Centre and Seminar Room are being created offering visitors and researchers increased access and improved facilities to study and enjoy this important collection. It is due to open in 2013.

### **V&A Touring**

- The V&A began touring its exhibitions internationally in 1992 and now has the largest touring programme of any museum in the world with the greatest national and international reach.
- In 2011, 21 V&A exhibitions travelled to 34 venues in 13 countries worldwide, where they were seen by over 2.3 million people.
- The V&A was the first International Museum to send a major exhibition to Damascus, Syria (2008) and the first to open an exhibition in post-revolution Libya (2012)
- The Jameel Prize 2009 exhibition was the first V&A exhibition to visit venues in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the UAE and Morocco (2010).
- In addition to touring exhibitions, the V&A is one of the biggest lenders of objects to venues around the world. In 2010, V&A loans went to more than 250 locations in the UK and more than 350 worldwide.

### **V&A at Dundee**

- The V&A is currently working in partnership with the University of Dundee, the University of Abertay Dundee, Dundee City Council and Scottish Enterprise to create 'V&A at Dundee'.
- V&A at Dundee will be Scotland's leading centre for design in a stunning new building on Dundee's waterfront which will provide a venue for the V&A's major international touring exhibitions.
- In 2010 Japanese architectural practice, Kengo Kuma & Associates won the international architecture competition to design a landmark building for V&A at Dundee on the banks of the River Tay.
- Work is projected to start on the site soon and be complete in 2014

### **V&A Visitors**

- The most popular exhibition the V&A has ever held was Art Deco in 2003, which received 359,499 visitors.
- Over the last year, over 40% of the visitors to the V&A were working, teaching or studying in the creative industries and 20% of all visitors were full-time students; a higher proportion than any other UK national museum or gallery.
- The V&A website receives around 25 million annual visits.

## FuturePlan

- In 2001 the V&A launched FuturePlan to transform the Museum through new galleries and beautiful redisplays of its collections.
- The first 10 year phase of FuturePlan cost £120 million and saw around 70% of the Museum's gallery space redisplayed. Phase 1 was completed at the end of 2009 with the opening of the acclaimed Medieval & Renaissance Galleries.
- The second phase of FuturePlan is now underway and includes the creation of a purpose built gallery for the V&A's major exhibitions, the restoration of the famous Cast Courts, and the complete redisplay and reinterpretation of seven galleries to tell the story of European art and design between 1600 and 1800.
- The aim of FuturePlan is to improve visitors' enjoyment of the Museum by bringing greater clarity to the building, revitalising visitor facilities and redisplaying the collections while restoring much of the building's original architecture.
- Throughout FuturePlan the V&A has worked with some of the best architects and designers, placing modern design and innovation at the heart of the Museum.

## V&A's Collections

- The tallest object in the collections is a plaster cast of Trajan's Column, reproduced from the marble original in Rome. It is displayed in two separate towers which if put together would reach 35.6 metres high.
- The smallest object on display is a Tudor pin, which measures 3 cm long.
- The V&A owns a copy of the first commercially produced Christmas card, which was invented in 1843 by the Museum's first Director, Henry Cole.
- The V&A was the first museum in the world to collect photographs as art, beginning in 1856
- Contrary to popular belief, hardly any of the V&A's collections belonged to Queen Victoria or Prince Albert. The most notable exception is a famous series of paintings, the Raphael cartoons, which were loaned by Queen Victoria and are still on loan from the present Queen.
- The Great Bed of Ware is Britain's most famous bed; made in the 1590s, it is over 11 feet long and ten feet wide, and is mentioned in Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night'. The bed is currently on loan to Ware Museum for a year.
- The object which has travelled the most since it was acquired by the V&A is thought to be a watercolour of Stonehenge by John Constable, which has frequently been on loan to other museums and galleries.
- The highlight of the Jameel Gallery is the Ardabil Carpet, the world's oldest dated carpet and one of the largest, most beautiful and historically important in the world.
- One of the V&A's most famous objects is Tippoos Tiger' - a life-size beast made of carved and painted wood, seen in the act of devouring a prostrate European

in the costume of the 1790s. Concealed in the bodywork is a mechanical pipe-organ operated by a crank-handle emerging from the tiger's shoulder, making the tiger 'roar'.

- Annually the V&A makes many new acquisitions as it is important to maintain the Museum's position as the pre-eminent museum of art and design with collections that represent the best of historical and contemporary design and reflect changing societies.

### **V&A Enterprises**

- V&A Enterprises is the business face of the V&A which manages all aspects of retail, brand and image licensing and publishing and digital business.
- All its profits are returned to the Museum, helping to maintain its position as the world's leading collection of art and design, funding exhibitions, research, and collecting for the future.
- The V&A brand is licensed to over eighty licensees, spanning Europe, USA and the Far East.
- V&A Publishing produces books and catalogues as well as e-books, guides and apps.
- V&A Publishing publishes on average 30 titles a year with over 200 titles in print and has co-editions in over 21 different languages worldwide.
- V&A apps are available on multi platforms and can be purchased from the App Store and Android Marketplace.

### **V&A Shops**

- Within the South Kensington site, there are four branches comprising the V&A Shop, V&A Bookshop, V&A Exhibition Shop, and V&A Fashion Gallery Shop.
- The V&A Shop online can be found at [www.vandashop.com](http://www.vandashop.com). It has quadrupled its turnover in three years, with nearly a million visits last year.
- The V&A Museum of Childhood Shop is located within the V&A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green, London.
- The V&A Shops within South Kensington served 460,000 customers last year, whilst the V&A Museum of Childhood Shop served 46,000.
- Last full trading year (2011) was V&A's greatest retail year ever, recording a visitor spend well in excess of £2 a head.
- The V&A's main shop stocked 7,500 different products in 2011
- Over 25,000 metres of fabric was sold through the V&A Shop and online during V&A's popular *Quilts* exhibition.
- Worldwide bestselling V&A Publishing titles include *Art Deco 1910-1939*, which has sold over 100,000 copies, *Vivienne Westwood*, *Grace Kelly Style*, *Modernism* and *Art Nouveau*.