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Jacket — embroidery samples by **Sarah Burton**, creative director, **Alexander McQueen.** Photograph: **Thierry Bal**

V&A ANNUAL REVIEW 2013–14

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Public appetite for museum displays is at an all-time high, according to a special report published in *The Economist* in January 2014. The V&A was consulted for this report, and certainly the museum continues to be among London's most popular, with more than three million visitors to South Kensington for the third year running, and over 446,000 to the V&A Museum of Childhood. From the 1850s to today, the V&A has been a "palace for the people".

This year's annual review draws out the links between past, present and future in the history of the V&A. More than a record of the museum's activities over the past year, it reflects on what we have done but also why we have done it, and what we – and the wider museum community – can do next for our ever-growing public.

A wonderful group of contributors have made this review: Sarah Burton of Alexander McQueen has designed the jacket artwork, and our writers include esteemed historians, journalists, critics, designers, curators, educationalists and academics. Its many voices reflect the range of people who use and love the V&A, and capture some of the conversations and debates that take place within its walls.

Looking to the future, 2015–2020 will be a vital and exciting period in our history. We will see the opening of V&A Dundee, an iconic building by architect Kengo Kuma and the first purpose-built museum in Scotland devoted to design. The V&A's collections, exhibitions and expertise will reach more people across Britain than ever before. Our international presence will grow through the pioneering partnership with the China Merchants Group to build a new design museum in Shenzhen, China. Spectacular new galleries for Europe 1600–1800 will open at the V&A in early 2015 as part of FuturePlan Phase II, our ongoing programme of redevelopment and expansion. Work is already underway to transform the Exhibition Road entrance into a spacious new courtyard and gallery designed by Amanda Levete Architects. And last, but certainly not least, we hope to see a new V&A museum for the twenty-first century take shape in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The final article in this review asks "What makes a great museum?" and part of the answer has to be: the people. My thanks go to all the colleagues, collaborators, supporters and visitors who have made 2013–2014 a great year for the V&A.

Martin Roth
Director, Victoria and Albert Museum

Detail of jacket – embroidery samples by Sarah Burton, creative director, Alexander McQueen. *Photograph: Thierry Bal*

– PAST –

PRINCE ALBERT WOULD HAVE BEEN PLEASED

Helen Rappaport

On 17 May 1899 an ageing Queen Victoria travelled across London through dense crowds of well-wishers to make what would be her last public appearance. The purpose of her trip was to lay the foundation stone of the imposing new entrance and suite of galleries that were the latest addition to the South Kensington Museum. With characteristic peremptoriness she had, shortly before, made the executive decision to rename it the Victoria and Albert in honour of the dead husband who had inaugurated the institution in 1857, and whom she had been mourning devotedly for 38 years. Such posthumous reference to Albert was as inevitable as the eponymous nickname for the entire complex of museums in South Kensington, which, even in the prince consort's lifetime, had garnered currency as "Albertopolis".

Had the queen had her way, the red-brick building she opened that day would have been called the Albert Museum, for as far as she was concerned it was the natural successor to her husband's 1851 triumph – the Great Exhibition. Unlike the now long-dismantled Crystal Palace site, it marked a permanent commemoration of her husband's passionate support for the arts in Britain. Had he had any say, however, Prince Albert would have hated the new name as much as he would have his widow's persistent memorialisation, for the consuming ambition behind his patronage of the V&A from its inception had never been one of self-promotion, but to further the educative value of the arts by bringing together what, in its day, he intended to be the greatest collection of precious things that Britain could muster.

The words inlaid over the Cromwell Road entrance in 1908, long after Albert's death, encapsulate not just his sentiments in the 1850s, when the South Kensington Museum was first mooted, but how he would look upon it in its modern-day incarnation as the V&A – a place where, in the words of Sir Joshua Reynolds:

> *"The excellence of every art must consist in the complete accomplishment of its purpose."*

The prince's purist love of the abstract concepts of Truth, Beauty, Knowledge and Inspiration, as represented by the figures seen on either side of the museum's doorway, has been honoured over 150 years of its history, not in a fusty Victorian manner, but in ways that have always moved with the times. From its very establishment the institution has been at the forefront of innovation and design in the presentation of its new acquisitions, as well as in the imagination and scope of its ground-breaking exhibitions and important educational programmes.

Prince Albert's plans for a civic, educational complex, built on the 86-acre South Kensington Estate bought in 1852 with some of the profits of the Great Exhibition, were never less than grandiose, and a reflection of his own wide-ranging progressive interests. The inspiration for an all-embracing cultural centre had come from his youth in the German state of Bavaria and university education in Bonn. But it was the enduring spirit of 1851 that prevailed in the concept and design for the new museum, on which he collaborated with Henry Cole, for after the Great Exhibition closed he had been keen to bring together at a permanent site the four subjects that it had so vigorously encouraged: Materials, Machinery, Manufactures and Plastic Art (architecture, antiquities, sculpture).

The intention from the outset was that "the different industrial pursuits of mankind, arts, and science should not again relapse into a state of comparative isolation from each other, in which their progress is necessarily retarded". While the Great Exhibition might have been, in the words of Cole, "an unrivalled storehouse for the useful results of all human industry", Albert's personal vision went beyond that – to creating a gothic revival storehouse that would also serve as a seat of learning, embracing not just a national gallery of art, handicrafts and design, but eventually becoming one of a complex of institutions encompassing what we now know as the Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Imperial College of Science and Technology and the Royal Albert Hall. The South Kensington Museum would display the best of the applied arts – ceramics, architectural design, painting, engraving, metalwork, woodwork, textiles, Indian crafts, to name but a few – and celebrate their virtues alongside the more obvious ones of traditional painting. His ambition to pull together various art collections, public and private, was not entirely realised (the plan to include the National Gallery was quickly thwarted), but, nevertheless, today the V&A has become home to a number of major national collections far exceeding his original dream.

Prince Albert never lived to see the grand and iconic façade of the completed V&A. In his lifetime he had to content himself with walking the Sheepshanks, Vernon and Turner Galleries and the rather ugly exhibition space of the "Brompton Boilers" – the then popular name for the temporary corrugated iron and steel structure that housed the embryonic collection. This space facing Cromwell Road may have been crude and utilitarian, but even at this early stage, Victoria's husband prided himself on its championing of the educational and commercial "usefulness of art". The satirical magazine *The Tomahawk* derided the project as "Prince Albert's Own Circus and Comic Music Saloon (late Hall of Science and Art) South Kensington" in 1867, the year the Brompton Boilers were dismantled and moved to Bethnal Green, but there was no denying the institution's extraordinarily eclectic – some might even say eccentric – range of exhibits.

If Albert were to walk the seven miles of corridors of the museum as we know it today, he would certainly approve of the extensive exhibition space created since his death: the Cast Courts, the National Art Library, the various galleries dedicated to Japanese, Indian, Chinese, Korean and Islamic art, to Buddhist sculpture, to glass, fashion and ceramics. As a pioneering patron of photography, he would have taken great pride in the Photographs Gallery, opened in 2011, and the burgeoning photography collection, which was initiated by himself and Queen Victoria in the 1850s.

As a rather strait-laced Victorian, he might be shocked at some of the objects in displays and exhibitions dedicated to elements of pop culture, such as 'David Bowie is' and 'Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s', but he would be pleased to see, from the huge numbers of students and schoolchildren who visit, that the central role the museum plays is still fundamentally the same utilitarian one that Victorian educators promoted: the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the arts in all their diversity.

The campaign to bring art and culture to the masses that the prince advocated was reflected in the ethos of free entry (three days a week, and three days at a small charge to allow for study). As Albert said in 1851 when first proposing the museum: "It must not be forgotten that… the establishment of an Educational In-

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, photographed by John Jabez Edwin Mayall, c.1860

Chinese Festival, V&A family art activity and event, January 2014

stitution must not be merely national but international, its advantages being open to men of all nations." This was art for all and not just the educated Victorian elite, a place for the interchange of ideas and collaboration between nations. Aside from offering meeting rooms, a library and lecture rooms, it catered for the creature comforts of those who visited, with a public restaurant with affordable menus for the working classes, as well as cloakrooms and toilets. The addition of gas lighting allowed visits after the working day was over, in the promotion of art as leisure. The abstemious prince would have approved of the first director Henry Cole's ambition that it should offer a "powerful antidote to the gin palace".

Everything about the V&A's range of objects appealed not just to the polymath in Prince Albert, but also to the curious amateur visitor. In 1859 *The Leisure Hour* summarised the rich diversity of the collection: "Should you desire to know the philosophy of china or crockery, from Samian vases or Etrurian coffins, down to Wedgwood, Parian and encaustic tiles, a ramble through the museum will bring you *au courant*. Venetian mirrors may be your weakness, perhaps, or the tapestry of Gobelins; or, haply, antique Flemish woodcarvings may be what your heart desires to linger upon. Well, there they are all – *there*, in the museum… Multifarious the contributions are – an *omnium gatherum*, reminding one of the cabinet of the virtuoso." The first major exhibition, 'Works of Art of the Medieval, Renaissance and More Recent Periods', was held a year after Albert's death.

In the early years, Cole dubbed the museum "a refuge for destitute collections", but there is no doubt today that, in the spirit of the prince consort's wide-ranging backing for the arts, the V&A holds centre stage as the world's leading museum of art and design. Indeed, such is its international influence that more than 30 institutions around the world have been modelled on it.

Although the core of today's collection was essentially complete by 1909, this vast Aladdin's Cave of treasures continues to surprise and delight the twenty-first-century eye as much as it did in the nineteenth century. The purist in Albert might baulk at some of the changing aesthetic ideals of the past century and a half, in particular the rise of pop culture, contemporary art, fashion and experimental design, but the guiding principles of the V&A and its collections remain at heart a continuing vindication of his dogged support, often in the face of considerable criticism, for all the arts.

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Helen Rappaport is a writer, Russianist and historian, specialising in Victorian history and the reign of Queen Victoria, and the Romanovs and late Imperial Russia

– PAST –

PRINCE ALBERT AND MARTIN ROTH: SHARED VISIONS

Thomas Marks

"They don't know about Prince Albert in Germany," says Martin Roth. "It's a pity." As Director of the V&A, he is the first German citizen to run a national museum in the UK, and it seems apposite that he should be at the helm of an institution whose origins owe so much to the ideas and impetus of his fellow countrymen. Indeed, this neat historical irony proves fertile ground for discussion when we meet in Roth's office on a grey English day in late May. In a year marked by the anniversaries of the Hanoverian succession and the outbreak of the First World War, it feels at once apt and refreshing to turn to what now seems a more muted historical association between Britain and Germany: that of patronage and intellectual exchange, so crucial to the emergence of the South Kensington Museum in the 1850s.

If the notion of Prince Albert's personal legacy remains well established in this country – since 1899, his memory has been enshrined in the name of the museum he did so much to nurture – then the cultural contexts that formed his character and articulated his work are far less so. Albert's desire to reform art and design education and establish a *Kulturforum* in South Kensington owed much to the progressive intellectual climate of the German states in the early nineteenth century: to the educational reforms of Wilhelm von Humboldt; the advanced theories of the art historian Gustav Waagen; and the enlightened architecture of Leo von Klenze and Gottfried Semper. The direct involvement of some of these figures and the widespread influence of their ideas is, Roth suggests, unduly neglected today: "I think what a lot of people don't understand is that in the nineteenth century we really had the feeling of being cousins, before that horrible war. The war changed everything and made it nearly impossible for Britain and Germany to talk to each other."

Roth's sympathies for Albert extend to what it meant for the prince consort, shaped by the liberal culture of the University of Bonn in the 1830s, to assimilate his political and intellectual beliefs to the nation into which his marriage had thrust him. Public ambivalence to Albert during his lifetime often seemed predicated on his foreignness. When John Ruskin visited the royal court in 1850, he remarked that "Prince Albert put something like markedness into his bow, but that may be his general manner". And the night before he was offered the poet laureateship, Alfred Tennyson dreamt that the prince was "very kind, but very German". Perhaps inevitably, responses to the evolution of the South Kensington Museum were often coloured by a facile recourse to xenophobia. When the collection of the Architectural Museum was incorporated into the new museum in 1857, for instance, *Building News* complained that every collection in London would soon be "forced to adopt German disguises". "The opportunities and challenges, including the social ones," says Roth, "made him the Prince Albert we know."

Martin Roth. *Photograph: Thierry Bal*

Roth himself seems to relish that mixture of cultural proximity and distance that in some degree also defines his own situation. On the one hand, given London's inherently global culture, it seems remarkable that his appointment in 2011 made him the first non-British director at the V&A.

"London is not a foreign city," he tells me. "I've never had that feeling of being an alien." His wife grew up here and he has always been a frequent and fervent visitor. But on the other hand, his is an unprecedented position, and he is acutely aware of how that shapes his approach at the museum: "It's still completely unusual, and I enjoy that – it's a kind of privilege, to be honest. Even if it means having to convince people, I'm able to look on things from a different perspective, a different cultural background – or perhaps not so much a different cultural background as just a different kind of management style."

Roth honed that management style at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, where he was director-general for a decade prior to his move to London. The Dresden State Art Collections consist of twelve separate museums housed in six buildings, and the challenges this involved have clearly influenced his attitudes towards responsibility and opportunity at the V&A. With his gently exacting manner, he picks me up when I speculate as to whether such an expansive organisation might benefit from a top-down managerial approach: "I don't consider myself as being the one who has to tell other people exactly what they have to do. I take overall responsibility for the institution, and am somehow the *primus inter pares* – that's my approach. If you work for me, as a curator for example, this is your stage here and you are the expert. I don't want to tell you what you have to do. It's more like the V&A needs your expertise."

One senses here another of Roth's reasons for admiring Prince Albert: that he was a risk taker who knew the worth of what he was taking risks for. For the prince consort, that included universal education; design reform as a moral and industrial principle; and stimulating a broad creative alliance between the arts and the sciences. For Roth, it is perhaps best summed up in his enthusiasm for stimulating debate, both within the museum and in its unstinting rapport with the world beyond it. He cites the combative exhibitions mounted during the directorship of Roy Strong as examples, and particularly 'The Destruction of the Country House, 1875–1975', which was staged in 1974. "This job is about taking risks and doing things that are not normal," he says. "I'm so keen on bringing more debate to the museum again... What happens outside the museum has to be reflected inside the museum, and I think that's exactly along the lines of what was said 150 years ago by Prince Albert and Gottfried Semper – that everything had to be dedicated to society."

That principle endures in Roth's defence of the distinctive ethos of the V&A as a museum that, even in its more historic aspects, sustains its engagement with the contemporary world – as a stimulus for practising artists and designers, and with its face firmly set towards public accessibility. "It's not like the British Museum or the Louvre, which have deep storage facilities where the objects are sitting until they get into a museum or an exhibition. The V&A is what in Germany we would call *eine Vorbildersammlung* – it's a collection of examples, a collection of objects to use. It's definitely not a dead place, it's exactly the opposite – something like an ongoing school. I met the designers Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby last week, and they told me that 'the V&A made us what we are'."

Among the figures in Albert's intellectual circle, Gottfried Semper has long been a touchstone for Roth. He applauds the social conviction of the architect, who fled first to Paris and then London following his involvement in the abortive uprising in Dresden in support of German unification in 1849. He also speaks of his admiration for Semper as a builder of revolutionary barricades, but of course his sense of the German architect as somehow exemplary reaches beyond that. For his own career shadows Semper's trajectory from Dresden – where the latter's design for the gallery wing of the Zwinger palace had been under construction since 1847 – to London, where he began to teach at the Government School of Design and, working closely with the prince consort, provided unrealised designs for the South Kensington Museum. Says Roth: "I think Semper has always been a benchmark, at least for me, because he built the Old Masters gallery in Dresden, so whatever I did there was somehow related to him. I honestly think that building is perfect – a perfect example for a great, great building to show the arts."

Roth points out that he is himself an architect manqué: looking back, he says it was merely a quirk of life that saw him turn down a place to study architecture at university. At the V&A, he has inherited FuturePlan, the ambitious programme of redevelopment of galleries and the fabric of the building that has replenished the museum's commitment to innovation. "I don't need to invent anything different," he tells me. "As a museum director, I think building means always accepting what someone else has already started." The Europe 1600–1800 galleries are scheduled to open in 2015, and work on the grand Exhibition Road project, which will provide a new entrance and courtyard and a much-needed space for temporary exhibitions, began at the start of this year.

The latter aims to revitalise London's museum quarter, making a more visible and practical connection with the other Victorian institutions lining what has long seemed a soulless thoroughfare. It sounds like Albertopolis redux. "I'm really proud of being part of that Albertopolis idea," says Roth. "I always like those concepts that are so brilliant that in the end you forget about the original objections." But Albertopolis is also broadening its horizons, as Imperial College starts to develop its new campus in White City, and the V&A itself considers expanding into a projected new cultural district in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London. "That binding concept that's been here for more than 150 years is exploding. But that's another compliment to the people who invented it, that dynamism we still have."

It is a dynamism that Roth feels is intrinsic to London, which has a "symbiosis of local, national and foreign" that other cities cannot match. In part this is thanks to its willingness to accommodate and assimilate foreign people and ideas. Roth glances to more recent Anglo-German relations: "Look at the *Kindertransport*, and how kids came to this country and were able to make new lives here. It's a tragic story, of course, but it changed our understanding of what a foreigner can do here." And the inspiration that the city provides is grounded on both the historical and current opportunities it has offered to migrants. "Here it's sometimes difficult to escape that racetrack of inspiration. I'm not just saying it because they hired me. It's the most exciting city worldwide, absolutely."

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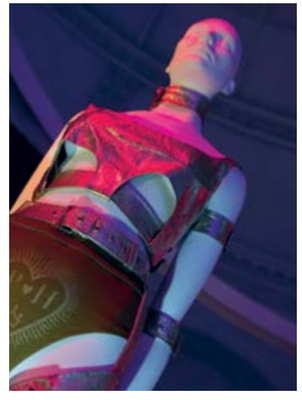
Thomas Marks is editor of *Apollo* art magazine and a founding editor of the online quarterly, *The Junket*

– PAST –

VALUES AND AMBITIONS: FROM THE V&A'S ORIGINS TO ANOTHER OUTSTANDING YEAR OF EXHIBITIONS

Julius Bryant



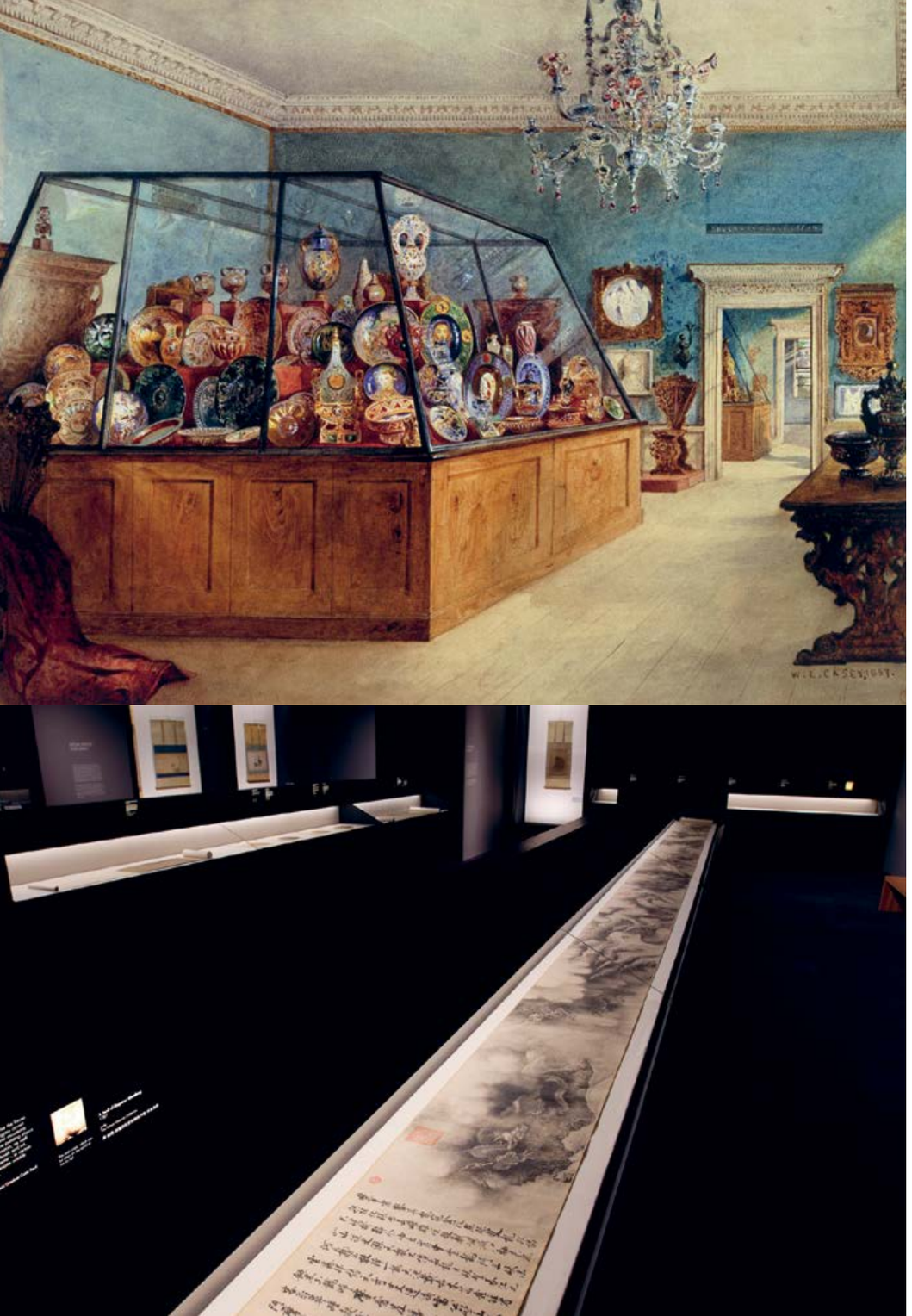
Installation shot from 'Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s', July 2013

The V&A can be a bewildering museum. In the variety of its collections, exhibitions, buildings and visitors, it can mean many different things to different people, and to you, the same person, at different stages in your life. Visitors range from aspiring designers of cutting-edge consumer products to devotees of *Antiques Roadshow* and *Downton Abbey*, from art historians doing research to families in need of a sunny courtyard coffee and paddling pool. With nineteen national collections in its care, it cannot be defined simply as a museum of art and design, bridging the fields between the British Museum, Tate and the National Gallery. To make sense of it all, and to get the most out of it, one needs to look beyond the exhibitions and collections on show to the sense of purpose that unites and motivates all the staff. It is this sense of a "cause" that makes the V&A so much more than a museum.

All thriving organisations have a "mission statement" articulated and embodied by their directors, but at the V&A the mission is more than a management tool. Many museums define themselves in terms of their duty to preserve and interpret their collections. Britain's National Museum of Art and Design seeks to inspire creativity, critical thinking and critical looking by everyone, whether they are visiting the actual buildings, experiencing its worldwide touring exhibitions or engaging with the digital V&A. Through exploring, celebrating and stimulating the realm in which art and design interact, it is a catalyst for social change that can improve the quality of life through enhancing our physical environment and our ability to see and appreciate it. At the risk of sounding like a crazy cult, the people who work at the V&A really do believe that promoting art and design is one means to a better world.

Unfortunately, there is no foundation document, no formal manifesto or Act of Parliament that sums up the "original" purpose of the museum. In the twentieth century, successive directors and historians have chosen different dates and key quotations from its founders to help to articulate and reinforce their priorities. For those who see the formation of the collections as the cornerstone of the V&A, its origins lie in the Government School of Design, established in 1837, whose staff collected objects as aids to teaching in what became the Royal College of Art. More familiar as a landmark of ambitions is the Great Exhibition of 1851, the first "World's Fair", and the vision of its creator, Prince Albert, for its legacy. Albert brought from Germany the idea of the *Kulturplatz*, a civic centre for museums, music and education open to all. "Albertopolis" was to be the first cultural quarter for London, uniting the arts and sciences around Exhibition Road through new colleges, museums and venues for concerts and exhibitions.

For those who see the V&A as primarily a museum of contemporary design (one that may have been distracted by collecting historic treasures), its "true" origins lie in the Museum of Manufactures, founded at Marlborough House, Pall Mall, in 1852. Funded by the Board of Trade, it responded to the poor design of British-made items on show at the Great Exhibition. Its first exhibition embraced controversy in a brave and provocative way by assembling a selection of contem-



William Linnaeus Casey,
Marlborough House: Second Room, 1852

Installation shot from
'Masterpieces of Chinese Painting
700–1900', October 2013

porary goods to illustrate 'False Principles of Design'. Promoting a virtuous circle of economic supply and demand, the first director, Henry Cole, sought to educate customers to insist on better designed products in shops so that retailers would drive manufacturers to change. As a key agent in a consumer society, the museum would improve design in everyday objects to help British factories to compete with foreign rivals. It soon began collecting historic examples and changed its name to the Museum of Ornamental Art, before moving to South Kensington in 1857.

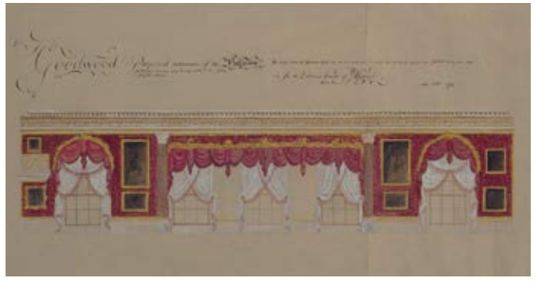
Another point of "origin" and identity, chosen by some, is the opening of the South Kensington Museum on the V&A's present site by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on 24 June 1857. At that moment it comprised the Sheepshanks Gallery of modern British paintings (in its first permanent building) alongside a temporary structure housing nine museums, including the Museum of Ornamental Art, an educational museum, a museum of construction, an architectural museum, a food museum, models for patented inventions, and contemporary art by members of the Institute of British Sculptors. Seen in terms of its collections, the South Kensington Museum in 1857 could seem to some like a muddled miscellany of ambitions, temporarily parked together while awaiting the clearer vision and resources of its first director. But it was much more than the nascent V&A needing to shed its neighbours. As the mother of many great institutions, including the Science Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Maritime Museum, Tate Britain and Tate Modern, it reflected a broad, almost encyclopaedic outlook in which art and science were united. Its temporary building survives, repurposed in Bethnal Green as the V&A Museum of Childhood. The South Kensington Museum rested on a unifying set of values, to reach out to the widest public through art, design and science in the way the Great Exhibition had shown to be possible.

If one looks for the origins of the V&A, and its original purpose, not in the dates of its first buildings or earliest acquisitions, but in the history of ideas and social values, we can rewind the clock even further – from 1857 to 1852 to 1851 to 1837 and beyond. In 1832 the government passed the Reform Bill to redistribute the vote to the expanding industrial cities of Britain. In this age of reform, access to knowledge, culture and taste were also redistributed through the establishment of public libraries and museums. Henry Cole and his right-hand men at South Kensington, Richard Redgrave and JC Robinson, belonged to this generation of largely self-educated, self-made, hard-working early Victorians who took their inspiration from Cole's friend John Stuart Mill and the Utilitarian Movement. In brief, utilitarianism was a radical political movement that believed in practical contributions to achieve the "greatest happiness" of the "greatest number" of society at large. Cole was committed to providing opportunities for self-improvement (such as reading, attending theatres, lectures and debates and visiting art galleries) for artisans, manufacturers and consumers.

This intellectual ancestry of the V&A has even deeper roots. Cole first met Prince Albert at the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, where the prince served as president from 1843; Cole joined in 1846 and was chairman from 1850 to 1852. The Royal Society of Arts (as it is better known today) was founded in 1754 and generated the Great Exhibition. From there it is a short step to arguably the most influential text on British design reform, Lord Shaftesbury's *Letter concerning the Art, or Science of Design* (1714).

The philosopher-earl's manifesto for social reform through the designed environment was the first object in the V&A's exhibition 'William Kent, Designing Georgian Britain 1686–1748' (organised with the Bard Graduate Center, New York), which ran until 13 July. In the year marking the tercentenary of the arrival of our royal family from Hanover, it celebrated Kent's genius as a designer of everything from country house interiors and landscape gardens to an extravagant royal barge. It also demonstrated how his clients sought to create new civic spaces in the capital, designed to look different from those of the previous political regime, to define and launch the new nation, the United Kingdom, established through the Act of Union (1707) of England, Scotland and Wales. History is always contemporary in the current concerns we bring to it and the lessons it can offer. And the show challenged traditional assumptions about the British idea of "good taste" by revealing the extent of the Georgians' love of gilded interiors – of bling. Complementing the exhibition, a display devoted to the designer Alec Cobbe showed how one aspect of Kent's work is a living tradition today.

Sketchbooks were spotted in use in both shows: visitors finding visual ideas. The inspiration the V&A offers to designers, consumers and collectors is visual, but is also about values. As a leader of style and taste, Kent was a phenomenon in his own day, but his first ever retrospective had to follow a more familiar celebrity. 'David Bowie is' celebrated much more than the quality of the stage costumes and video art on display. It embodied one fundamental conviction that the V&A's founders shared and lived: that you can be whoever you want to be; that whatever your origins, you can redesign yourself.



Alec Cobbe, *Proposal for a Ballroom, Goodwood*, 1994

After the thundering performances of Ziggy Stardust, projected as a stirring colossus at the show's conclusion, 'Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700–1900' seemed a total contrast. In a magical dark silence of aesthetic discovery the longest possible desk cases glowed, revealing through ancient unrolled paintings lost worlds of palaces, dragons, misty mountaintops, philosophers and craftsmen. Here were spiritual values that the museum's first curator, JC Robinson, would have recognised as fellows of the medieval works of art he collected. In contrast to Cole, he was convinced that quality in design and execution relied not only on rules and teaching, but on the ability to empathise with past makers through the quiet scrutiny of their masterpieces. The exhibition also reflected the global reach of the V&A's collections, a breadth that began with the revelation of the quality of Indian goods at the Great Exhibition.

Prince Albert and Henry Cole shared an internationalist ambition for their projects, from creating the first World's Fair to developing the museum's collections through collaborations with other institutions and governments. 'Treasures of the Royal Courts: Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars' had at its heart twenty examples of French and British diplomatic silver presented to the tsars by ambassadors displayed alongside examples from Charles I's collections sold by British merchants of the Muscovy Company (founded in 1555). Lent to the V&A by the Kremlin Museums, these silver vessels are rare survivors, extraordinary examples

Installation shot from 'Treasures of the Royal Courts: Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars', March 2013

of the type of objects that would have been melted down to finance the English Civil War or the reign of Louis XIV had they remained in Britain or France.

'Pearls', in collaboration with the Qatar Museums Authority, was a highlight of Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture. In exploring the history of pearls from the early Roman Empire to the present, it revealed how, in both the East and West, they were used as signs of power, whether with specific symbolic meanings or as more general indicators of rank in society. For all their beauty as jewellery, the variety of designs showed how taste varies among different cultures.

In 'Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s', power dressing took on a very different character. From cutting-edge designers for international celebrities to unknown young people out to make their statements through a DIY dress code, the exhibition examined experimentation and the infectious spread of visual ideas.

With the transfer of the V&A's textiles study collections to the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion at Blythe House in Kensington Olympia, a suite of vacated galleries was transformed by a temporary installation by the artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset. Objects from the museum's collections took on new associations as they furnished an imaginary apartment, like a stage-set for a fictional character. The power of these objects was such that they inspired the artists to write a script, the central character of which was an elderly architect, for visitors to read in each room. Gallery assistants were dressed as servants and a musician stroked the keys of a grand piano to stir the strange atmosphere.

From the distant and recent past and present, from distant countries with historic and current diplomatic links, V&A exhibitions bring together objects, ideas and stories that spread understanding and inspire. From their historic roots to today, the values and ambitions underpinning the museum endure.

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Julius Bryant is Keeper of Word and Image, the V&A's department for paintings, photographs, prints, drawings and the National Art Library

THE MUSEUM OF BIG IDEAS: THE VIEW FROM THE V&A

Professor Bill Sherman

V&A Research Department Library.
Photograph: Richard Haughton

A few months ago, I attended a symposium at the Bard Graduate Center in New York. It celebrated twenty years of BGC's innovative programme on the history of decorative arts and material culture. The speakers included academics from various fields and curators from museums on both sides of the Atlantic; and at least one of them, Ivan Gaskell, had a foot in both worlds, having recently joined the faculty of BGC after two decades at Harvard's Fogg Museum. In a provocative talk entitled "The Museum of Big Ideas", he lamented the loss of intellectual ambition in our leading museums, suggesting that they were now producing mere bits of knowledge, leaving it to universities to develop large-scale projects and innovative methodologies. Gaskell even offered a specific date for this fall from grace: the day (in 1965) that Michael Baxandall left the Victoria and Albert Museum for the Warburg Institute.

I heard Ivan's words the same week I decided to take up a five-year secondment from the University of York to the V&A – further proof (were it needed) that I'm not as clever as Baxandall. But I'm now several months into the job and I'm pleased to report that the situation is not as grim as Gaskell described. I have been struck, from the outset, both by the quality of the research being carried out at the V&A and by the extent to which it connects rather than divides the museum and the university. In fact, there are signs that the relationship between the two – at least in the UK – is as close as it has ever been, and is set to get still closer.

There are now countless courses that involve collaborations between museums and universities, and the V&A is home, as it happens, to the world's oldest postgraduate programme in the history of design – delivered in partnership with the Royal College of Art and taught by staff from both institutions. And we are one of the UK's official collaborative doctoral partners, with four fully funded collaborative doctoral awards each year to give to projects based on our collections that involve co-supervision between university scholars and museum staff.

This collaborative model used to be an alternative path for the PhD, one aimed at scholars considering careers outside the university. But this year it became a required part of the doctoral training for all PhD students funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). In the new regime for doctoral funding (the so-called Doctoral Training Partnerships), all funded postgraduates will be part of a consortium bringing together multiple universities and non-academic institutions – including museums. The V&A is a named external partner in no fewer than six of the country's eighteen consortia, which gives us a surprisingly important role to play in training this new generation of postgraduates in public engagement. And the academics who supervise these students will be all too aware of their own need to build such "impact" into their work, since it now counts for a full 25 per cent in the current review of the research for all departments in the country that determines government grants.

It has always been clear that many ideas are best served by bringing together different kinds of expertise, and I can already see that some of the most interesting research being carried out at the V&A involves conversations between curators, conservators and academics. We host a range of visiting fellows from universities around the world, working with the museum on everything from objects involved in political protest and emerging design cultures in African megacities to the problems of preserving historical dyestuffs or reinventing the mannequin for the digital age. Many of our most ambitious exhibition projects are developed through such partnerships: the team producing 2015's highly anticipated show on Alexander McQueen is based in the Research Department and led by Claire Wilcox, who is both senior curator at the V&A and visiting professor at the London College of Fashion. Claire's new catalogue will feature contributions by in-house curators, academic consultants and visiting scholars, including an essay on cabinets of curiosity by Swedish postdoctoral fellow Lisa Skogh (an expert on courtly collecting), who is also involved in the installation and interpretation of the reconstructed Cabinet in our new galleries devoted to Europe 1600–1800.

It is fitting, then, that the V&A is one of the few museums to use the academic domain for its URL (vam.ac.uk rather than vam.co.uk or vam.org). After all, it is working with a wide range of universities, as host and partner, on research grants supported by UK and EU funding councils and charitable trusts on both sides of the Atlantic. We have just received a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to help us to develop a model for a V&A Research Institute that will make the world's largest and oldest collection of art and design a leading centre for museum-based, object-led research.

Big ideas are clearly in the hands of both university scholars and museum professionals, and it is in the interest of both communities (as well as the ideas themselves) for us to work out ways of maintaining and developing that relationship.

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Professor Bill Sherman is the V&A's Head of Research

INSIDE THE MIND OF DAVID BOWIE

Mark Grimmer

59 Productions had never been involved in a large-scale exhibition before winning the contract to design 'David Bowie is' for the V&A. And in many ways that was the most powerful weapon in our arsenal. The museum invited us to tender as it was keen that the show should be theatrical in its aesthetic, and subversive in its approach to the subject matter. Coming from a background in design for theatre, opera and live events, we were confident that we could deliver on the theatrical angle, and having no real idea about the conventions of museum design, we weren't troubled by taking a non-conformist approach – we didn't know any better.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the job was clinging on to that sense of iconoclasm and playfulness: eschewing the traditional, the linear and the didactic, without falling foul of accessibility standards and alienating more conservative visitors. Collaboration and compromise were at the heart of the process, with valuable input coming from a wide range of departments – exhibitions, conservation, visitor services, security, the David Bowie Archive, our artistic advisers Paul Morley and Jonathan Barnbrook, and of course the curators. Compared with most of our theatrical projects, there was a polyphony of voices to listen to and learn from. And they weren't always in agreement.

Over the course of twelve months' worth of weekly meetings at South Kensington (seemingly in different meeting rooms each time), it became increasingly clear that success in the world of exhibitions – as in many other corners of the design world – is all about translation. Curators Geoff Marsh and Victoria Broackes's challenge to us as designers was to take a series of intellectual and philosophical concepts, expertly intuited from Bowie's life and work, and to give them physical form, to translate the conceptual into the sensory, and to help to create a vivid world which the visitor could inhabit, get lost in and eventually emerge blinking from: surprised, confused, and a little more inspired than when they arrived.

Bowie's work is all about the voracious consumption, digestion and reconstitution of culture to create new forms – "the only art I'll ever study is stuff that I can steal from," he famously said. Our approach was to apply a similar methodology to the design of the exhibition, taking a collage of references from paintings, books, music and performances that we knew to have been influential to Bowie himself. Traces of de Chirico, Magritte, the German Expressionists, Fritz Lang, Stanley Kubrick, William Burroughs and Soho cabaret were laced with elements from the singer's own biography and œuvre in an attempt to create something that took the visitor inside Bowie's head. The aim was to devise an experience that reflected both his own inspiration and his artistic output: a meta-exhibition of sorts. It seems, therefore, entirely fitting that the one cultural event of 2013 to eclipse the show was the return to the public eye of the man himself, proving definitively that David Bowie is, and will continue to be for some time.

In partnership with Gucci
Sound experience by Sennheiser

Installation shot from 'David Bowie is'. *Photograph: Stephen Cummiskey*

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Mark Grimmer is one of the creative directors of 59 Productions. He was the lead designer on 'David Bowie is'

PRESENT

THE CLOTHWORKERS' CENTRE – A LIVING LIBRARY

Edwina Ehrman

Conservation Studio, the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion

Storage in the Clothworkers' Centre

The Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion opened in October 2013, and in the first six months more than 1,500 visitors passed through its doors. Located at the V&A's archive at Blythe House, it includes a light and spacious room where appointments can be made to study objects from the collection first hand; a seminar room for workshops and classes; well-equipped, flexible, up-to-date conservation studios; custom-built storage for more than 104,000 objects; and a new reception area.

Haworth Tompkins, the London architectural practice who worked with the V&A to create the centre, received a 2014 RIBA London Regional Award for its design. In the brief the museum asked the architects to devise a behind-the-scenes experience for the visitor that would excite, inform and encourage curiosity.

The reception area demonstrates how successful this approach has been. The original northern entrance to Blythe House, with its handsome Edwardian neo-baroque façade, has been reinstated and visitors enter the building from the newly cleaned portico. Passing up a short flight of steps alongside the new stairlift, you can now look into stores housing documents, plans and other material from the Archive of Art and Design (AAD), and catch a glimpse of people watching recordings of plays from the Theatre and Performance Collection, or absorbed in records in the archive's study room.

More tantalising perhaps are the floor-to-ceiling "walls" of glazed open storage integrated into the reception area. These house an intriguing mass of toys, models and action figures from Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi's *Krazy Kat Arkive of Twentieth Century Popular Culture*. The overarching theme of the collection, "The image of the hero in industrial society", can be seen in the military musclemen who vie for attention alongside Mickey Mouse, Popeye, robots and astronauts. We hope that this will inspire our fashion and textiles visitors to find out more about the other reference collections housed at Blythe House. The AAD, which collects the archives of individuals, associations and companies involved in design and the applied arts, includes many textile and fashion archives, from Courtaulds and Heal's to Biba, Antoni & Alison and the fashion photographer John French.

The study room is located on the third floor at the light-filled end of a 100-metre-long space. Once occupied by scores of clerks employed by the Post Office (for whom Blythe House was built), it is now filled with ranks of massive black metal compact storage units, which are almost four metres high. They convey a sense of the order, security and industry essential to good collections management. "Wow!" is a common reaction, as are excitedly delivered questions: What is in these units? How are the objects stored? What treasures can I see? To answer these, we offer tours of the storage areas on the last Friday of every month, and encourage participants to use "Search the Collections" to find out more about the objects that we care for.

Our visitors can see other forms of storage. Sturdy floor-to-ceiling pull-out metal mesh racks support short lengths of textiles rolled around metal cylinders and framed textiles from across the world. In between the racks are tables for staff to work on, giving further insight into the tasks necessary to support the V&A's glittering galleries and displays at South Kensington and its many publications and research projects.

On entering the study room, visitors will find the objects they have requested for study laid out for them, but many are also tempted by what their neighbours are perusing, triggering conversations, questions and sometimes debate.

You are also welcome to look at the framed textiles kept in one of the study units, previously housed in the Textile Galleries at South Kensington. The 160 examples were chosen to show the range and quality of the collection and the principle techniques used to make and decorate textiles. The frames can be placed on easels and examined with magnification aids. Our growing selection of books can help those who wish to know more.

The great challenge of the Clothworkers' Centre project was to create an environment where its contents could be safely housed and visitors welcomed, informed and inspired, and where objects lay at the heart of the experience. The collections are in essence a 3D library, replete with information just waiting to be captured.

The Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion has been made possible thanks to the generosity of The Clothworkers' Foundation; the Pauline Johnstone Bequest; the Penelope Crutchfield Bequest; the Diana Jefferson Bequest; Mr Jorge Yarur Bascuñán; The Patricia Baines Trust; the American Friends of the V&A; Coats Plc; Coats Foundation Trust; The Staples Trust; The Zochonis Charitable Trust; the Basil Samuel Charitable Trust; a gift in memory of Raymond M Burton CBE; the Coral Samuel Charitable Trust; the Ruth Covo Family Foundation; and many other donors.

Edwina Ehrman is Lead Curator, the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion

TAKING THE V&A TO THE COMMUNITY

Marisa Smith

In October 2012 the V&A launched a new community strategy designed to refocus our learning and outreach programmes over a three-year period. In addition to sustaining and developing programmes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) audiences and people with disabilities, new learning initiatives were introduced to increase the diversity of those engaging with our collections and services – particularly families living in areas of deprivation, young people not in education, employment or training and elderly, vulnerable or socially isolated adults.

While objectives vary – from raising young people's employability skills in a time when youth unemployment is high, to the encouragement of enjoyment and mental well-being among adult attendees – these programmes all strive to foster positive relationships between the museum and hard-to-reach audiences via high-quality projects and events. In line with the V&A's mainstream learning initiatives, inspiration for these activities often stems from our headline exhibitions, offering community groups a chance to learn, relate and respond to high-profile displays.

In 2013 artists Elmgreen & Dragset created their first museum show, *Tomorrow*. It comprised a five-room installation and a commission on the façade of the V&A. The former Textiles Galleries were transformed into the grand but somewhat dilapidated apartment of fictional ageing architect Norman Swann, who had been forced to sell his home and was, in the narrative that ran through the artwork, in the process of moving out.

At the core of the installation were the V&A's collections and architecture, carefully interwoven with facsimiles, props and external loans – Swann's "belongings". Without labels, "do not touch" signs or barriers, the exhibition provided an opportunity to see the museum's objects in a very different context, with visitors encouraged to play the role of detective, piecing together clues about Norman's life and state of mind.

Completing the show was a hoarding on Cromwell Road. This advertisement for Norman's South Kensington apartment mirrored those of property developments throughout London, making part of the V&A appear on the market to the highest bidder. It was this poignant and political comment about the capital's property bubble that offered inspiration for a series of powerful community performances in late 2013.

The V&A invited Cardboard Citizens, a theatre company that seeks to change the lives of homeless and displaced people, to respond, theatrically, to the artwork. (Earlier in 2013 the company staged a drama performance devised with young people over the space of a year as part of the active and ongoing programme of community events at the V&A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green.) The intervention resulted in the production of a new play entitled *Viewing the Property*, written and directed by Cardboard Citizens' CEO and Artistic Director Adrian Jackson. The script used the artists' installation as the stage-set for a series of estate agent viewings, which were disrupted by the surprise appearance of a squatter.

Performances were delivered over three days by two actors from the charity, with the audience taking on the role of the prospective buyer. More than 600 visitors viewed the property, giving Cardboard Citizens a platform on which to highlight the issues faced by homeless people, with a view to promoting greater understanding among the wider public.

The scope of the performances, which offered an alternative perspective of a gallery space, served to enhance the 'Tomorrow' learning initiative and raise awareness of community learning in the V&A's public programme. The benefit to museum audiences was clear in our evaluation process, with 99 per cent of attendees rating the quality of the actors "good" or "excellent", and 94 per cent rating their enjoyment of the show "good" or "excellent", with feedback such as:

> *"Added new dimensions to a fascinating installation."*
> *"Interesting political content – just bought first house, so personally relevant too."*
> *"Merging of theatre within an out-of-the-ordinary setting. Also, I think it's great to get such an important company involved to help convey the message."*

Over the next year, we look forward to introducing more major exhibitions and displays, and our permanent collection, to our priority community audiences, and sharing their responses within the wider public programme.

'Tomorrow: Elmgreen & Dragset at the V&A'
In partnership with AlixPartners

Performance in *Tomorrow* by Cardboard Citizens, 11 October, 2013

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Marisa Smith is Programme Manager (Practical Workshops & Events), Learning Programmes

– PRESENT –

THE SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVING ART

Phil Loring

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WHEN CONSTRUCTION CREWS BEGAN TO BUILD THE SCIENCE MUSEUM, IT MARKED THE FINAL SPLIT OF THE ART AND SCIENCE COLLECTIONS OF THE FORMER SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM. THE ART OBJECTS REMAINED ON THE EAST SIDE OF EXHIBITION ROAD, AT THE V&A; THE SCIENCE APPARATUS GAINED A WORTHY NEW HOME ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE ROAD. THIS ESSAY UNDERLINES THE ARTIFICIALITY OF THIS SPLIT. IT EXPLORES A TREASURED EXPERIENCE USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ART AND DESIGN – THE ENCOUNTER WITH AN OBJECT THAT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY – FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OTHER SIDE OF EXHIBITION ROAD

It's not often that you see a man's nervous system laid bare on the dissecting table. One of the most talked-about objects in 'Mind Maps', the Science Museum's exhibition about the history of psychology, is a full-body human nerve dissection made in about 1550 in Renaissance Padua, on loan from London's Royal College of Physicians. With virtuosic skill, the dissector cut away all the flesh and bone from a man's corpse, leaving only the nerves, spinal cord and brain, and then varnished these directly on to the wooden tabletop.

We hung the dissection vertically and low on the wall, so that visitors would encounter it like their own reflection in a full-length mirror. At first glance, it's easy to mistake it for a painting. The shape of a human body is immediately evident. You can follow the curve of the head, shoulders and arms, and trace the head, chest, belly, thighs, feet, even the fingers and penis. There are no fig leaves or discreet drapery here. Only when you come up nose-close can you see the texture, the subtle shadows cast by the bas-relief of overlapping nerve fibres that clue you in that this is, or was, a real body. For many people, the penny doesn't drop until they start to read the label, and then they audibly gasp with fascination or revulsion, or both.

What is happening in that moment? It's a hallmark of the museum experience: the personal encounter with an unexpected artefact behind glass, torn from the context of its production and use, which somehow still retains the power to make visitors catch their breath. Museums accordingly have put a great deal of care into fostering such encounters. Curators, exhibition designers, museum educators and audience researchers have developed a rich body of practical expertise about, for example, how and where to hang a painting (or a nerve dissection), how to light it, and how to write and typeset the labels. And particularly in the past two decades, the idea of museums as "experience makers" or "experience stagers" has come to dominate the field of museology. It has encapsulated and eclipsed earlier notions of museums as collections-centred or education-centred spaces.

Yet the stubborn fact remains that each encounter is intensely personal. Friends disagree, often strenuously, about whether the nerve dissection, or any other artefact they come across in a museum, is magnificent, disgusting, or simply dull. And despite more than a century of scientific research into the question, remarkably little is known about what goes on inside visitors' nervous systems when they engage with a fascinating object. In what follows, taking the nerve dissection as a springboard, I will trace several attempts by scientists to understand the role the body plays in mediating our response to extraordinary objects.

Empathising with objects

Just a century ago, empathy meant a feeling for objects, not people. The word itself is surprisingly new, coined in 1909 by the influential British psychologist Edward Titchener. He invented it in order to translate *Einfühlung*, or "feeling-into", a multilayered technical term in German aesthetics. Empathy in this technical sense referred to the way that external objects, such as works of art, can arouse physiological responses in us – altered breathing, loosening or tightening of muscles, blushing, smiling, indigestion. At the same time it referred to how we can project our own bodily experience into objects, as when we perceive stateliness or sorrow in a statue. We "feel our way into" the object, and the object "feels its way into" us.

To Titchener and the German philosophers of aesthetics, these two aspects were inseparable, and deserved to be united in a single word.

Early twentieth-century psychologists used empathy, also in the technical sense, to shed light on our responses to high art and also on some types of optical illusion, on the basis that we "feel-into" the lines of the figures we perceive. For example, a vertical line looks longer than a horizontal one of the same length because its verticality evokes in us the extra bodily effort it takes to rise up against gravity. Certain patterns appear to pulse because they trick part of the nervous system into concluding that the head is moving separately from the eyes, and the brain tries to compensate. From this perspective, looking was as closely linked to touch as it was to vision. It involved actively moving the gaze around the object, almost literally caressing it with the eyes.

What made this science rather than pure speculation was that such ideas were grounded in new discoveries about how sense organs work – and, more specifically, how muscles themselves functioned as a kind of sense organ underlying and co-ordinating all the others. After decades of ingenious and painstaking experimentation with nerves and muscles, the influential nineteenth-century physiologist Hermann von Helmholtz theorised that the muscles controlling the eye operated like little logic machines. They automatically responded to nerve impulses from the retina and other parts of the body in order to resolve ambiguities of size, shape and distance, well before the retinal signals reached the "higher" parts of the brain.

Titchener deployed and enlarged this idea of the "muscle sense" when he described empathy as a fusion of seeing, feeling and muscular action. "Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy," he wrote, "but I feel or act them in the mind's muscle." This jarring metaphor – in the mind's muscle – neatly reflects the unsteady status of psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a new science, with one leg in physiology and the other in philosophy, gingerly taking its first steps.

Tracking the wandering eye

Physiological aesthetics, like many other branches of early psychology, was left by the wayside as the young science gathered momentum. Yet some psychologists continued to seek the power of art in the way it moved the eyes. In the 1930s and 1940s educational psychologists at the University of Chicago adapted eye-tracking cameras, originally used to study how children learned to read a line of text, into tools for studying how people "read" art.

Their basic insight was that our eyes do not slide across a scene, but instead flit around in a series of discrete jumps and pauses too quick for us to be conscious of. Recording the momentary resting places of the constantly wandering gaze offered a kind of back door into the mind. Unlike the German aesthetic philosophers, these psychologists deliberately resisted drawing inferences about what people were thinking or feeling while looking at art. Psychology was attempting to cut its lingering ties with philosophy, and making unfounded claims about what was happening in people's minds was regarded as sloppy science.

The earliest research studied people of many different ages and backgrounds as they looked at a range of figurative and non-figurative artwork: paintings, statuary, tapestries, architecture, interior design and advertisements. Few solid conclusions emerged from this research, in part because it cast the net so wide. In general, no two subjects tended to approach an image the same way. They may have focused on more or less the same areas in a given picture, but never in the same sequence. None the less, it generated one of the most fascinating images of the male form ever produced, entitled "Eye movements of a woman in looking at a man" – arguably the mid-twentieth-century American equivalent of the Vitruvian man. Published in the early 1940s in the popular general interest magazine *Look*, it showed a neatly dressed, clean-shaven white man wearing a grey business suit and fedora, overlaid with a scattering of points numbered from one to 24, with lines linking them in sequence, like an abstract version of connect-the-dots. The accompanying caption modelled how to read the figure: "She looked first at his chest; then her eyes swept up to his face, moved to his left eye, then down to his collar, etc." The reader was left to fill in the rest of the incipient romance.

Anatomical table showing adult male nervous system, 1650s *© Royal College of Physicians*

Around the edges of the photo, framing it as science, were brief nuggets of statistical data drawn from research on 100 women. These labels were linked to about a dozen key features of the man's image, ranging from his face to his shoulders to his shoes and even his pocket handkerchief. For example, "Hat: 71 women, 9.12% of time", which meant that 71 women in a sample of 100 glanced at his hat at least once, and gave it on average 9.12 per cent of the total time they spent sizing up the picture. Slightly more women (77 out of 100) glanced at his trousers, but for less time (only 6.72 per cent of the total). Virtually every woman (98 out of 100) looked at his tie, for 21.9 per cent of the time, and an equal number at his face, for 31.65 per cent of the time. Only half looked at his shoes, for 3.36 per cent of the time. Such numbers conveyed that eye-tracking was sober, cautious science, grounded in quantitative research.

Yet ultimately the eye-tracking diagram, just like visitor research studies showing where people move in a gallery and how long they "dwell" at each spot, tantalises without satisfying. It tempts us to guess what was on the woman's mind, for example at the dot numbered nineteen, when her gaze swept up the man's trouser leg and momentarily, unconsciously, rested on his upper left thigh. But the eye-tracker's job was to resist such tawdry temptations, to stick to observable facts and statistical analysis – to stay on the mind's surface rather than attempting to explore what the picture meant to the person experiencing it. And this eventually created a backlash among scientists who wanted to go deeper.

The joy of looking

Throughout the Cold War, creativity and play were two of the hottest topics in American social science. Researchers studying them promised to shed light on the differences between the "free" world and the supposedly conformist mentality on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Psychologists began to theorise about intrinsic motivation, in an attempt to explain why people pursued certain activities, such as art or sports, purely for their own sake rather than for external reasons such as financial gain or social approval. In such cases, the activity somehow became its own reward.

The most influential work in this area, led by the Hungarian exile Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi at the University of Chicago, explored states of deep absorption,

"peak states" where people lost themselves in an activity so completely that time seemed to slow down and the rest of the world, and sometimes even the self, momentarily fell away. This research found no distinction between physical and intellectual activities: artists talked about peak experiences in almost exactly the same way as chess players, rock climbers, or surgeons described them. Action and awareness merged together, creating what Csikszentmihalyi called a "self-rewarding" state.

In the late 1980s, at the request of the director of education at the J Paul Getty Museum in California, Csikszentmihalyi turned his focus to the question of what motivates people to go to museums. He asked a large number of curators and museum directors to describe what it felt like to get wrapped up in a work of art. What they said had many of the hallmarks of the self-rewarding state: a sense of high challenge, extreme levels of concentration on the object, as if it were exerting a kind of pull on the viewer, yet at the same time a paradoxical sense of control and mastery. Curators looked at art, Csikszentmihalyi concluded, because they got intrinsic enjoyment out of using their eyes in a highly skilled way to overcome the challenges that a work presented.

This was little surprise to art lovers, but it made a big difference to scientists studying art. Csikszentmihalyi's status within the field allowed him to mount a compelling critique of earlier attempts to understand art with the tools of science – including the Chicago eye-tracking studies. "Although physiological, perceptual and cognitive processes are important components," he wrote, "they are relatively meaningless until given weight and value by the interpretation of subjective experience." Subjective experience was exactly what the eye-tracking studies had sought to eliminate, and helped to explain why those studies felt so thin.

Csikszentmihalyi's work also carried echoes of the previous century's work on empathy. He emphasised that being moved by an artwork was not "a gratuitous epiphany" – the work didn't just reach out and grab the viewer, even if it sometimes felt that way. Museum experts brought a formidable body of skills, knowledge and experience to the encounter. For them, looking was an active process in which they used the object to confirm hunches and bounce back information in an almost physical way, like carefully shaking a present to find out what it is without tearing open the wrapping. And this activity in turn produced profound emotional and physiological effects in the viewer.

Body-brain ensembles

Directly beside the nerve dissection in the 'Mind Maps' exhibition sits an early brain scanner, built in Sweden and used in the 1980s and 1990s at the US National Institutes of Health. It's ugly and boxy and about the size of a car (in fact the scientists who used it nicknamed it the "Volvo"). These scanners produce the kind of "lit-up" images of brain activity that have defined the visual landscape of the mind sciences in the past two decades as they map changes in the concentration of specific types of molecule in the brain, such as dopamine or glucose, over a period of seconds or minutes.

In many ways, brightly coloured brain scans suffer from the same limitations as eye-tracking camera images. They tantalise us by offering a window into the mind, but in the end all they deliver is a statistical analysis showing the movement of molecules through the brain. Csikszentmihalyi's critique still carries force: "relatively meaningless until given weight and value by the interpretation of subjective experience". Yet brain scanners can bring us places that eye-trackers could not. They have added a new layer of depth to Csikszentmihalyi's findings, by offering glimpses of the neurochemistry involved in self-rewarding states.

This work is still in its infancy. Most of it has been done using responses to music, because the feeling of the "chills" people sometimes get when listening to powerful music is particularly well-suited to study in an expensive (and claustrophobic) brain scanner. The "chills" are relatively easy to replicate, and the subjective experience of them, as reported by simple means such as pressing a button, correlates well with the level of physiological arousal visible on a brain scan. Preliminary indications are that what happens in the brain is a complex interplay of neurotransmitter-mediated reward and anticipation which activates the same circuits as when we eat something sweet or enjoy sex.

Research in this field, which has recently been named "neuroaesthetics", is booming, and we will undoubtedly hear more of it in the years to come. The most important message we can take from this brief history lesson is that neuroaesthetics is not about the brain, but about the entire body. The nervous system extends to the tips of our fingers and controls the muscles that move our eyes, arms and legs. Each of us is a body-brain ensemble roving through the world, and museums are spaces where we are meant to recognise and celebrate that fact.

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Phil Loring is BPS Curator of Psychology at the Science Museum, London. This autumn he will move to the Teknisk Museum in Oslo, Norway, as Curator of the History of Medicine

– PRESENT –

SEEING THINGS

Personal responses to objects from the V&A's collections. Portraits by Thierry Bal

ANNABEL

"Despite its flatness, this photograph has numerous angles. I find looking into the reflection of the photographer, who has crystallised himself in time so inadvertently, pleasantly voyeuristic. The scene is familiar and unconscious, a gardener and basket caught in the periphery, yet the picture is elaborately framed: the beauty of the mirror has given lasting significance to their everyday existence."

Venetian mirror, c.1700, from the collection of Mr John Webb; photograph by Charles Thurston Thompson, 1853

ANNIE

"My grandpa kept pigeons in a coop in his back garden. Although he died when I was young, I can still remember their distinctive smell and sound, and the way that they moved. This fan reminds me intensely of him. With each personal sadness that life brings, I have learned that the people you love have a way of living on through objects. This fan is saturated with a comforting familiarity."

Fan, c.1910, maker unknown; given by Major and Mrs Broughton

ALISON

"I love these socks. They provoke so many questions: who wore them? Why and when? Perhaps His and Hers? Who crafted them? Where? Made of wool… how many sheep in ancient Egypt? Dyed red, signifying caste or belief? Or an expensive BCE fashion statement? Just amazing old socks."

Socks, 250–420AD, maker unknown; given by Robert Taylor (Major Myers collection)

LUKE

"Long-term documentary projects can sometimes be sweeping or impersonal, but Nicholas Nixon's captivating Brown Sisters series is focused and intimate. I'm drawn to this particular 1987 photograph. To my mind, it is one of the tighter and therefore more powerful frames in this body of work."

Original photograph by Nicholas Nixon, 1987 © Nicholas Nixon

ANNABEL

ANNIE

ALISON

LUKE

– PRESENT –

ACQUISITIONS


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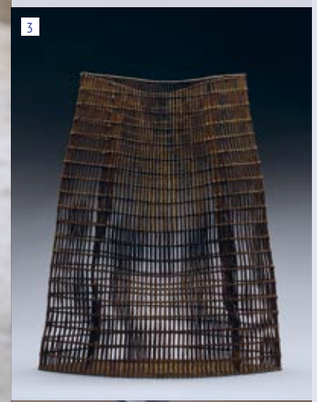
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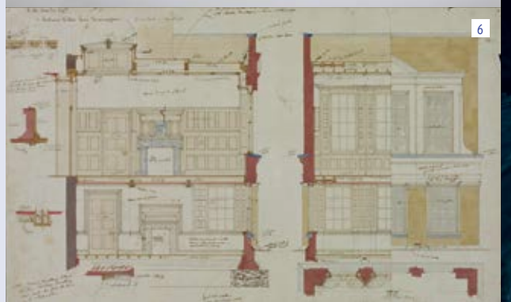
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1
To See Ourselves As Others See Us
Jeff Zimmer
2012, Scotland
Enamelled and sandblasted glass, layers framed in a light-box
Purchase supported by the Scottish Glass Society

2
Silversmith's model for a cup and cover
1760–1800, Britain
Paint; metal; plaster; wax; wire; material
Purchase supported by Alan Rubin of Pelham Galleries

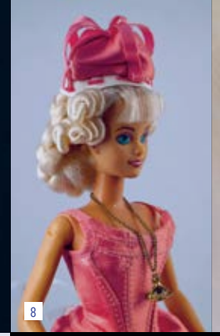
3
Oyster Net
Annie Turner
2013, England
Stoneware with lithium glaze
Purchased with the support of the Friends of the V&A
Gallery location: Contemporary Ceramics

4
Alexander McQueen evening gown, from 'Horn of Plenty' Collection
Nick Waplington
2009, Britain
C-type print
Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group
Gallery location: Prints and Drawings Study Room
Related exhibition: 'Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty' (2015)

5
Model for the Olympic Cauldron, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
Heatherwick Studio
2012, England
Brass; copper; steel
Gallery location: Prints and Drawings Study Room
Related exhibition: 'Heatherwick Studio: Designing the Extraordinary' (2012)

6
Architectural design drawing by Philip Webb showing sections and partial elevations for the extension of Constantine Ionides's house at 8 Holland Villas Road, Kensington
1870, England
Pencil and watercolour on paper
Funding: accepted in lieu of tax, allocated to the V&A by Arts Council England


7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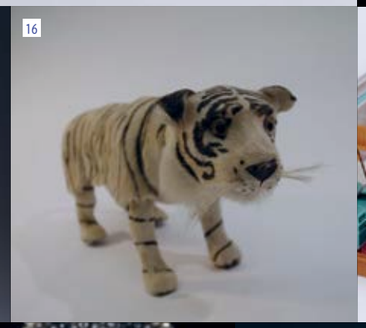
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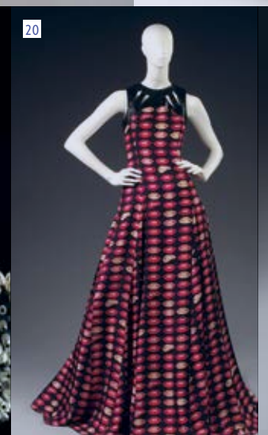
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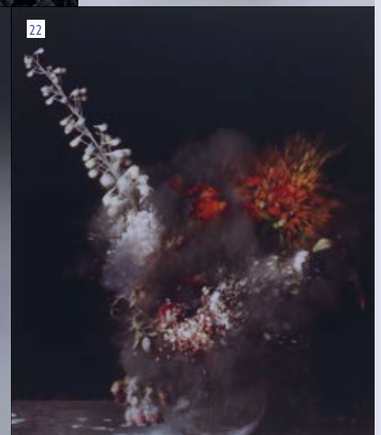

22

7
Gasson Opera Collection
About 1700–2000, Europe
Various works
Purchased with the support of the Friends of the V&A

8
Sindy doll with outfit by Vivienne Westwood
Hasbro
1991, USA
V&A Museum of Childhood

9
Grafton alto saxophone
Hector Sommaruga
1950–1967, England
Acrylic; brass
Related exhibition: 'David Bowie is' (2013)

10
Liberator gun
Defense Distributed
2013
3D-printed Acrylonite Butadiene Styrene (ABS) plastic
Purchased by the Design Fund
Related display: 'Rapid Response Collecting' (2014)

11
Vivien Leigh Archive
1913–1967
Various works

12
Sweatopia (1000 people/ 1000 homes)
Jitish Kallat
2010, India
Lithograph

13
Aggregation
Chun Kwang-Young
2010, South Korea
Paper; styrofoam
Purchase funded by Samsung
Gallery location: Korea

14
Works on paper and artist's seals
Chiang Yee
1933–1935, Britain and China
Pen and ink; watercolour; carved soapstone
Purchase supported by Travel with the V&A: China

15
Trompe l'œil dress
Roberta di Camerino
1970s, Italy
Printed jersey
Related exhibition: 'The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945–2014' (2014)

16
Pouncing Tiger Automaton
Roullet-Decamps
Late 1800s, France
Metal mechanism and carved wood covered with animal skin; cast metal
Given by Geoffrey M Fletcher
V&A Museum of Childhood

17
Jennys Home,
modular doll's houses
Tri-ang, Britain
About 1965–1972
Plastic; cardboard
Given by Karen Curtis
Given by Angela Davidson
V&A Museum of Childhood
Related exhibition: 'Small Stories: At Home in a Doll's House' (2014–2015)

18
Imam 'Ali,
textile printing woodblock
1875–1900, Iran
Carved wood

19
Frozen necklace
Sam-Tho Duong
2013, Germany
Pearls; nylon thread
Purchase funded by the Friends of the V&A
Gallery location: Jewellery
Related exhibition: 'Pearls' (2013)

20
Dress with lip-print, A/W 2011
Holly Fulton
2011, Britain
Silk; leather
Related exhibition: 'Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950' (2013)

21
OO-IX Boy on a Motorcycle
Hayashi Shigeki
2013, Japan
Slip-cast porcelain
Gallery location: Japan

22
Time After Time, Untitled No. 28
Ori Gersht
2006, Britain
Archival pigment print on aluminium
Purchase funded by the Photographs Acquisition Group
Gallery location: Photographs

THE WOLSEY ANGELS: SAVING OUR TUDOR HERITAGE

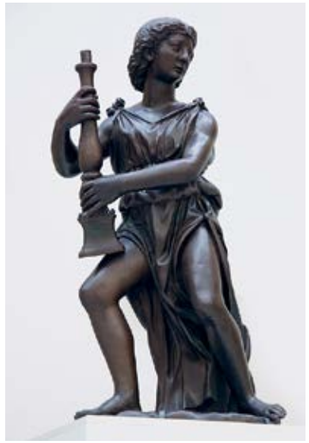
The four recently rediscovered cast bronze Renaissance sculptures known as the Wolsey Angels, which were once owned by two of the most powerful men in Tudor history, are remarkable survivors from a rich and colourful period. They were commissioned in 1524 from the eminent Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Rovezzano, a contemporary of Michelangelo described by the Italian painter, architect, writer and historian Giorgio Vasari as "among our most excellent craftsmen", who was working in England under the patronage of Cardinal Wolsey, chief adviser to Henry VIII.

Standing at about a metre tall, the angels were designed to appear prominently on columns at the corners of a lavish tomb for Wolsey that would reflect his wealth and statesmanship. During the years that followed, Henry sought to annul his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and Wolsey's inability to persuade the Pope to do so led to the demise of his career. He fell ill and died in 1530, before the tomb was complete.

The king subsequently seized the angels and other parts of the proposed tomb and employed Benedetto to build his own burial monument on an even grander scale. The pieces were documented in contemporary inventories, but Henry also died before it was finished. The angels were never united with the other elements of the tomb, which Elizabeth I moved to St George's Chapel in Windsor in 1565. During the Civil War, some were sold off and four bronze candlesticks were acquired by the Bishop of Ghent and taken to the cathedral at St Bavo. Only a black stone chest is known to have remained, and was later used for the tomb of Admiral Lord Nelson in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

The angels remained undiscovered until two of them appeared in an auction in 1994, unillustrated and simply referred to in the catalogue as a pair of large bronze angels in the Renaissance style. Nothing was known, at this stage, of their provenance. They were eventually attributed to Benedetto's tomb for Wolsey by Italian art historian Francesco Caglioti. In 2008 the other two were found at Harrowden Hall, a country house in Northamptonshire. It later came to light that all four sculptures had stood above the posts of the hall's entrance gates.

The V&A hopes to purchase both pairs of angels for £5 million and unite them for the public to enjoy. They are on loan to the museum for the duration of the campaign, and are on display in our Medieval and Renaissance Galleries, Room 50.



The Wolsey Angels on display at the V&A

If you would like to help us to secure a permanent future for the angels at the V&A, please donate online at **www.vam.ac.uk/wolseyangels**

Supported by the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund

ESSENTIALS

EXHIBITIONS 2013–14

Treasures of the Royal Courts: Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars
9 March 2013 – 14 July 2013
**** "Revelatory… illuminating a neglected slice of material and political history" – *Daily Telegraph*
Supported by the Friends of the V&A; with further support from Summa Group; additional thanks to Vnesheconombank

David Bowie is
23 March 2013 – 11 August 2013
***** "A whirlwind that feels at once meticulously planned and joyfully fluid" – *Huffington Post*
In partnership with Gucci;
sound experience by Sennheiser

War Games
V&A Museum of Childhood,
25 May 2013 – 9 March 2014
"A show meant for adults and children… to provoke debate… it may be war but the exhibition is unquestionably fun" – *Guardian*

Sky Arts Ignition: Memory Palace
18 June 2013 – 20 October 2013
**** "Exhilarating… a reminder that the things we take for granted – public services, literacy, museums, free expression – are rooted in dazzling leaps of the imagination and must be defended" – *Independent*

Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s
10 July 2013 – 16 February 2014
"Ultimately, 'Club to Catwalk' goes back to the root of the clubbing scene, documenting how the fashion and creative trends are still making waves today" – *Elle*
With thanks to TONI&GUY Hair Meet Wardrobe

Pearls
21 September 2013 – 19 January 2014
"A luminous show" – *The Economist*
A V&A and Qatar Museums Authority exhibition
Sponsored by Shell

Tomorrow: Elmgreen & Dragset at the V&A
1 October 2013 – 2 January 2014
**** "Playful, wry and surreal… nothing if not gutsy" – *Metro*
In partnership with AlixPartners

Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700–1900
26 October 2013 – 19 January 2014
***** "A show of perpetually positive delight" – *Daily Telegraph*
Supported by the Friends of the V&A;
travel partner Viking River Cruises;
restaurant partner Ping Pong

Jameel Prize 3
11 December 2013 – 21 April 2014
***** "A scintillating vision of modern Islamic art" – *Guardian*
In partnership with Art Jameel

William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain 1686–1748
22 March 2014 – 13 July 2014
**** "As this exemplary exhibition attests, no British designer made a bolder claim on posterity than the phenomenal Kent" – *Daily Telegraph*
Organised by the Bard Graduate Center, New York City, and the V&A. Support generously provided by The Ruddock Foundation for the Arts; with thanks to the American Friends of the V&A through the generosity of The Selz Foundation

The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945–2014
5 April 2014 – 27 July 2014
"Beautifully and intelligently staged" – *Guardian*
Sponsored by Bulgari; with support from Nespresso; with thanks to the Blavatnik Family Foundation; with additional thanks to the American Friends of the Victoria and Albert Museum

Wedding Dresses 1775–2014
3 May 2014 – 15 March 2015
"Some of the most memorable and dreamy wedding gowns ever created" – *Sunday Times, STYLE*
Travel partner Kuoni; supported by Monsoon Bridal and Waterford Crystal

Displays 2013–14

- **Barbara Nessim: An Artful Life**
  15 February 2013 – 19 May 2013
- **Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces**
  16 March 2013 – 5 January 2014
- **Beatrix Potter and the Beautiful Satin Waistcoat**
  19 March 2013 – 15 September 2013
- **Clara Button and the Magical Hat Day: A Fantastic Journey in the V&A**
  19 March 2013 – 19 January 2014
- **Making it Up: Photographic Fictions**
  3 May 2013 – 16 March 2014
- **Red Balloon 68**
  V&A Museum of Childhood,
  25 May 2013 – 3 November 2013
- **Deception: Ceramics and Imitation**
  25 May 2013 – 16 March 2014
- **Building Memories: The Art of Remembering**
  31 May 2013 – 24 February 2014
- **V&A Illustration Awards 2013**
  4 June 2013 – 1 December 2013
- ***Untitled* (2013) by Georg Baselitz**
  John Madejski Garden,
  15 June 2013 – 8 September 2013
- **Silver from the Malay World**
  15 July 2013 – 16 March 2014
- **The Lost Art of Writing**
  24 July 2013 – 30 June 2014
- **London Design Festival 2013 at the V&A**
  14 – 22 September 2013
- **Design Fund: New Acquisitions**
  14 September 2013 – 20 October 2013
- **Afro Supa Hero**
  V&A Museum of Childhood,
  14 September 2013 – 9 February 2014
- **Are You Sitting Comfortably?**
  V&A Museum of Childhood,
  28 September 2013 – 1 June 2014
- **British Drawings: 1600 to the Present Day**
  5 October 2013 – 13 April 2014
- **Masterpieces of Chinese Painting: Digital Dragons**
  26 October 2013 – 16 March 2014
- **Xu Bing: *The Song of Peach Blossom***
  1 November 2013 – 2 March 2014
  Supported by Jing & Kai
- **Xu Bing: *Travelling to the Wonderland***
  John Madejski Garden,
  2 November 2013 – 2 March 2014
- **Confiscation Cabinets**
  V&A Museum of Childhood,
  9 November 2013 – 1 June 2014
- **Empire Builders: 1750–1950**
  30 November 2013 – 15 June 2014
  In partnership with RIBA and the BBC documentary series, *The Brits Who Built the Modern World*
- **Alec Cobbe: Designer, Collector, Connoisseur**
  18 December 2013 – 18 May 2014

TOURING VENUES

OVERSEAS

- Mitsubushi Ichigokan Museum, Tokyo
- National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
- Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Palace Museum, Beijing
- San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas
- Art Gallery of Alberta
- Australian Centre for Moving Image
- Virginia Museum of Fine Art
- Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- Museum of Image and Sound, São Paulo, Brazil
- State Library of New South Wales
- Auckland War Memorial Museum
- John F. Kennedy Center for the Perfoming Arts, Washington

UK

- Millennium Galleries, Sheffield
- Horsham Museum & Art Gallery
- Willis Museum, Basingstoke
- The Gallery, Winchester
- Wandsworth Musuem
- Burton Art Gallery, Bideford
- The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum
- The Collection, Usher Gallery, Lincoln
- Balmoral Castle
- Scarborough Museum
- Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh
- The Lowry, Salford
- Guildhall, Portsmouth
- Woodville Arts Centre
- Theatre Royal, Plymouth
- Royal Shakespeare Company (special version)
- New Walk Museum, Leicester
- World Museum, Liverpool
- Portsmouth City Museum
- Inverness Museum and Art Gallery
- The Ark, Dublin
- DLI Museum and Durham Art Gallery, Durham
- Cecil Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford

VISITOR FIGURES

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Total visits to V&A South Kensington, Museum of Childhood and Blythe House Archive	3,335,200	3,734,300	3,646,900
Total visits to V&A Touring Exhibitions	2,592,100 (38 venues)	2,315,000 (49 venues)	1,827,500 (36 venues)
Total unique web visits	N/A	16,260,300	14,739,300
Total visits by children aged 16 and under	440,100	469,700	478,000
Total visits by school pupils aged 18 and under	106,700	126,200	128,000
Percentage of BAME visitors to V&A sites	18	19	18
Percentage of visits by professionals, teachers and students in the creative industries	42	42	45
Percentage of visitors who would recommend a visit to V&A sites	99	99	100

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Greater London	1,119,100
South East England	221,200
Rest of UK	593,600
UK Visits	**1,933,900**
Europe	1,000,000
North America	295,800
South and Central America	74,800
Asia	207,600
Rest of World	134,800
Overseas Visits	**1,713,000**
	3,646,900

FINANCIAL REVIEW

			2012-13 £M	2013-14 £M
SUMMARY	• Government Grant in Aid of £39.41m was received in the year, which is a fall of 3.2% against the baseline grant of £40.71m for 2012–13.	• Grant in Aid	40.7	39.4
FUNDRAISING	• Fundraising across all areas including FuturePlan, acquisitions and exhibitions was strong in 2013–14. • Grants and donations of £9.6m (including from the HLF) were received towards the Europe 1600–1800 Galleries and Exhibition Road project. • The museum continued to collect, relying heavily on private funding. £0.95m was raised towards acquisitions, including funding from individuals, the Friends of the V&A and the Art Fund. • The number of members of the Friends of the V&A increased to over 58,000 and they contributed income of over £1.8m to the museum. • Exhibition sponsorship was particularly robust this year with 'David Bowie is' exceeding targets. Income from Corporate Membership and the Director's Circle also increased. Our corporate hire business continues to increase (see trading). • The V&A Foundation, which supports the strategic aims of the museum, raised an additional £2m in 2013–14 towards capital projects and the endowment fund.	• Fundraising	10.7	14.5
FUTUREPLAN	• A total of £10.1m was spent on FuturePlan projects and other fixed assets. The Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion was completed in the year and work on the Europe 1600–1800 Galleries continued. Site work began on the Exhibition Road project, which is expected to open in 2017. Funds have been designated to ensure the completion of these projects and for future investment.	• FuturePlan and other fixed assets • Lottery • Addition to reserves	–9.0 0.5 0.4	–10.1 1.7 –5.6
ACQUISITIONS	• A total of £2.29m was spent on acquisitions for the collection. In addition, objects worth £0.96m were donated to the museum in the year.	• Acquisitions	–1.3	–2.3
VISITORS & COLLECTIONS	• The museum exceeded its visitor targets, attracting 3.2m to South Kensington and 0.45m to the Museum of Childhood. Despite the fall in Grant in Aid, we have maintained spending in core areas to ensure the collection is properly protected and that the visitor experience is consistently high.	• Collection & visitor costs • Grant to V&A Foundation	–36.2 –2.5	–35.5 –
EXHIBITIONS & LEARNING	• The success of 'David Bowie is' both at the V&A and on tour is reflected in another strong year for income. • The quality and scale of the exhibition programme has been sustained. • Demand for our learning courses remained very strong and reached capacity in areas ranging from schools visits to postgraduate qualification.	• Exhibition income • Exhibition & learning costs	6.3 –13.8	6.0 –13.3
TRADING	• This is another very successful year for V&A Enterprises, the trading arm of the museum, supported by record visitor numbers and exhibition attendances.	• Trading profit	1.9	2.6
OTHER INCOME	• This comprises fees charged to other organisations.	• Other income	2.4	2.6
TOTAL	• The museum uses all its income on charitable activities.		0.1	–

Note: This summary financial information aims to explain the V&A's core income & expenditure.
It is prepared from the same information as the full financial statements which are available at www.vam.ac.uk.
This summary information has not been audited or independently examined.

SUPPORT

The V&A would like to pay special tribute to the following past and present major benefactors for their exceptional support

- The American Friends of the V&A
- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- The Art Fund
- William and Judith Bollinger
- Bonita Trust
- Julie and Robert Breckman
- The Canadian Friends of the V&A
- Vladimir Caruana and Ivan Booth
- The Clore Duffield Foundation
- The Clothworkers' Foundation
- The Curtain Foundation
- Mr and Mrs Edwin Davies CBE
- Dr Genevieve and Mr Peter Davies
- DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Sir Harry Djanogly CBE
- The Foyle Foundation
- The Friends of the V&A
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- Sir Paul Getty, KBE
- The Getty Foundation
- Gilbert Public Arts Foundation
- Gilbert Trust for the Arts
- Lydia and Manfred Gorvy*
- The Headley Trust
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation
- The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation
- Andrew Hochhauser QC
- The Iris Foundation*
- Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel
- Pauline Johnstone
- J. Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
- Sir John Madejski OBE DL
- MasterCard
- The Ronald and Rita McAulay Foundation
- The Monument Trust
- National Heritage Memorial Fund
- The Porter Foundation
- Hans and Märit Rausing
- Sir Paul and Lady Ruddock
- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation
- Simon Sainsbury
- The Rt Hon Sir Timothy Sainsbury
- Samsung
- Leslie, Judith and Gabrielle Schreyer*
- The Selz Foundation
- Sennheiser
- Robert H. Smith*
- Toshiba Corporation
- Mr T. T. Tsui
- Dr Susan Weber*
- The A. H. Whiteley Family
- The Wolfson Foundation
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

The V&A would like to thank the following for generously supporting the museum's ongoing redevelopment in 2013/2014

- Peter Williams and Heather Acton
- The American Friends of the V&A
- Mr and Mrs Edward Atkin CBE
- The BAND Trust
- Mr and Mrs Maurice Bennett
- Mr and Mrs Benjamin Bonas
- C. Jay Moorhead Foundation*
- Cecil and Hilda Lewis Charitable Trust
- The Clothworkers' Foundation
- Coats Foundation Trust
- Coats PLC
- Stephen and Anne Curran
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- The Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation
- The Fidelity UK Foundation
- Sam Fogg
- Fondation Auguste Morin
- The Friends of the V&A
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- Lydia and Manfred Gorvy*
- The Headley Trust
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Lord Barnby's Foundation
- William Loschert
- Mark and Liza Loveday
- Mr and Mrs Harvey McGrath
- The Mercers' Company
- The Monument Trust
- The Patricia Baines Trust
- The Philip and Irene Toll Gage Foundation*
- The Salomon Oppenheimer Philanthropic Foundation
- The Selz Foundation
- Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement
- The Staples Trust
- Travel with the V&A: Burma, Lisbon and Paris
- Dr Susan Weber*
- The Wolfson Foundation
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

The V&A is very grateful to those who have made a contribution to the museum's work through the Director's Circle

— Platinum

- Peter Williams and Heather Acton
- William and Asli Arah
- The BAND Trust
- Mr and Mrs Thomas Brenninkmeijer
- Noah and Avital Bulkin
- Jordan Cook and John Burbank
- Stephen and Anne Curran
- Comte and Comtesse Charles-Henri de La Rochefoucauld
- Dr Genevieve and Mr Peter Davies
- Fares and Tania Fares
- Judy and Frank Grace
- Olivia Harrison
- Andrew Hochhauser QC
- Mr and Mrs Jerker Johansson
- Maurice and Rosemary Lambert
- Mr and Mrs Harvey McGrath
- Ms Sarah Nichols
- The Sarikhani Family
- Mr J and Mrs HM Shafran
- Mrs Virginia Shepherd and Dr Paul Shepherd
- Lady Estelle Wolfson of Marylebone

— Gold

- Eric Abraham and Sigrid Rausing
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- Sam Fogg
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- Bianca and Stuart Roden
- Elaine Rowley and Tony Luckhurst
- Mr and Mrs William Salomon
- Bob and Amy Stefanowski
- Margaret and Jeremy Strachan
- Frederick and Kathryn Uhde
- Miss Rebecca Wang
- Simon Weil
- And others who wish to remain anonymous

— Silver

- Mrs Aziza Allard
- Tom Reid and Lindy Ambrose
- Toby and Kate Anstruther
- Harriet Anstruther
- The Hon Mrs Nicholas Assheton
- Jane Attias
- John and Paula Attree
- John and Bernadette Barber
- Tom Beazley QC and Ingrid Beazley
- Betsy Blackwell and John Watson
- Molly Lowell and David Borthwick
- Jean and John Botts
- Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation
- The Bridgeman Art Library
- Helen Bromovsky
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- Carla Muñoz Slaughter
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- Marina Vaizey
- Johnny and Sarah Van Haeften
- Julian Vogel and Sally Mackereth
- Robert and Felicity Waley-Cohen
- Bruno Wang
- David and Traci Weaver
- Professor Evelyn Welch
- Susan and Charles Whiddington
- George and Patti White
- Stephen White Esq
- Toby and Regina Wyles Charitable Trust
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– FUTURE –

IN TUNE WITH TASTE AND THE TIMES

Emily King

From its inception, the V&A has made a point of accessibility. It was, famously, the first museum with electric light, allowing it to open in the evenings when working people were able to visit. While imposing in scale, its brick and terracotta façade was homely in comparison with the neoclassical porticoes of the British Museum and the National Gallery. Influenced by the German architect and pro-democracy activist Gottfried Semper, it was extremely liberal for its time in its aim to create a free-thinking public. Although the term was not yet current, it could even be described as populist, yet in the early decades of its existence its relationship with popular taste ran decidedly one way. Its role was to educate the public, and there was no sense that anything could be learned from the public in return.

In the process of allocating parliamentary funds to acquire exhibits from the Great Exhibition of 1851, a committee led by the museum's first director, Henry Cole, reported that "each specimen has been selected for its merits in exemplifying some right principle of construction or of ornament". Following an educative display titled 'False Principles of Design', there were reports of customers in china shops rejecting the goods on offer having seen something "prettier" at South Kensington. The results of this approach were such that, in the late 1880s, a visiting American, William T Walters, noted that the V&A "has accomplished more for the general diffusion of art knowledge and love of the beautiful among the English people than all the inactive art collections of Great Britain put together".

Yet for all the aesthetic authority of the museum's founders, the collections they amassed became susceptible to the vagaries of fashion relatively soon after they were acquired. In the early twentieth century many of the institution's initial exhibits – Cole's "modern manufactures" – were shunted off to the branch museum in Bethnal Green, where they languished until late twentieth-century curators began to reassess the role of these objects in the early history of the V&A in particular and Victorian decorative art in general. In the mid-1970s art historians provoked questions more profound than those of trend and counter-trend when, taking their lead from literary critics such as Edward Said, they began to address the museum's imperialist associations. It came under fire both for profiting from the spoils of colonialism – in particular for acquiring the collection of the corrupt and brutal East India Company – and for its paternalistic preference for certain non-European decorative styles over others. During the course of the twentieth century, the V&A first lost its ability to claim it was always right, and later in the eyes of many was seen to have been, on occasion, decidedly wrong.

With audiences no longer accepting aesthetic or moral diktats, the museum was required to renegotiate its relationship with public taste. In 1981 it opened the Boilerhouse exhibition space in collaboration with the Conran Foundation, and attracted new visitors with the promise of contemporary design. After the Boilerhouse closed in 1986, the space continued to be used for of-the-minute ex-

Rendering of Europe 1600–1800 Galleries © *ZMMA*

Installation shot from 'Kylie – The Exhibition', 2007

hibitions. Productions such as 'Kylie – The Exhibition' (2007) and 'David Bowie is' (2013) sent out the message that a mass following, rather than disqualifying something from being shown in the museum, might be the very reason it should be in its galleries. That said, these exhibitions and others in the same vein do expose the need for the institution to say something new on popular topics by offering fresh information or making unexpected connections. To my mind, 'David Bowie is' did just that, while 'Kylie – The Exhibition' (which was a touring show, not originated by the V&A) replicated mass culture inside the gallery, with the inevitable downscaling that that requires.

In 2013 the museum launched a "rapid response" strand to its collecting activities. More than engaging with popular taste, this policy draws the V&A into popular debate. All the objects acquired so far – among them jeans made in the factory that collapsed in Bangladesh in April 2013 and Katy Perry brand false eyelashes made by Indonesian workers who are paid as little as 20p a day – have been the subject of intense attention from both the traditional and the new media. According to Kieran Long, the curator in charge of these exhibits, the museum "should be looking at views of social and cultural change about manufacturing, about global supply chains, about things that really are a part of design and manufacturing that affect the lives of many people all over the world". As with exhibitions of popular culture, the implication of Rapid Response Collecting is that the V&A can no longer consider itself a distinct and superior sphere of judgment, and that attention paid to something in the wider world should prompt interest within the museum. It also suggests that exhibits do not, as Henry Cole believed, have to demonstrate "right principles", but instead can be vehicles for telling stories. In part, this notion emerges from re-examining the objects gathered by Cole himself. Far from looking exemplary, these days they are souvenirs of a Victorian view of good taste and proper manufacture.

Pre-dating Rapid Response Collecting by fifteen years, but in a related spirit, since 1998 the Prints and Drawings Department of the V&A has conducted a biannual "high-street trawl". This involves a small group of curators going to a particular urban area, usually in London, and picking up printed ephemera in a non-discriminatory fashion. Rather than being acquired as exhibits, what was collected has been stored in the Blythe Road archive. The trawls usually take place on 16 June and 16 December. That the former of these dates is Bloomsday, the celebration of the day on which James Joyce's *Ulysses* is set in 1904, suggests that the curators take a highbrow approach even to the gathering of lowbrow material. The National Art Library located in the museum continues to do a similar trawl of magazines, acquiring single issues of publications that seem particularly relevant to the moment without committing to full subscriptions. These strategies allow the V&A to suspend its own tastes and respond to those of today.

Inevitably, the very strategies by which curators seek to escape constraints of era and status look very much of their time and place. Acknowledging that Rapid Response Collecting is doomed to date, Long described his and his team's ultimate ambition as being seen as an "innovative, leading-edge group of thinkers" of their day, while becoming "part of the great museum's history". Rather than being viewed as a collection of paradigmatic objects, the V&A is more accurately conceived of as an archive of different ideas about how best to represent our culture and those of others through groups of things. Even if the institution can no longer be thought of as representing the unqualified best, it still reveals something very significant about the past 150 years. What might now be regarded as lapses of taste or curatorial blind allies brim with information about their period.

V&A interior with 'David Bowie is' banner

False eyelashes endorsed by Katy Perry, 'Cool Kitty' style, 2013, manufactured for Eylure

At the moment the V&A is five years into the second phase of FuturePlan (the first ran from 2001 to 2009). This involves refurbishing existing galleries, creating new ones and undertaking new construction. Among recent milestones has been the opening of the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion at Blythe House, while a major new set of galleries devoted to European art and design between 1600 and 1800 will open in 2015. The most significant new construction is the Exhibition Road project designed by Amanda Levete Architects that is scheduled for completion in 2016. Including a new entrance and courtyard, it will allow the public to flow from the street into the museum uninhibited by formal barriers.

In many cases the emphasis of the current work is on stripping away that of intervening eras to return to the original late nineteenth and early twentieth-century structures. The prevailing philosophy seems to be that, while it is no longer possible to be always right, it is desirable to be faithful. Eventually, Levete's Exhibition Road courtyard will be seen as very much a product of its time. According to current fashion it would be celebrated as such, but there is every chance that this won't be the case. In terms of building, and even more profoundly in terms of collecting, the V&A has to act according to the mores of the time for a future in which those mores might seem redundant or even ridiculous. Thank goodness, then, for more than 160 years of evidence making clear the lasting value of work undertaken in good faith at the V&A.

Bird's eye view rendering of the Exhibition Road project © *AL_A*

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– FUTURE –

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LIFE

Kieran Long with Corinna Gardner

Lufsig, soft toy wolf, 2013, designed for and manufactured by IKEA

Vype Reload e-cigarettes, 2013, designed and manufactured on behalf of CN Creative

In early 2013 the V&A established a new team of curators in the collections department. Our brief was (and remains) to cover fields of contemporary design that have not been systematically collected recently: architecture, product design and digital design. The intellectual background of this new strategy was articulated by the museum as an interest in "design and society", a parameter that was left deliberately open to interpretation. As the senior curator of the team, it was an exciting brief. In my view, the only interesting developments in the field of architecture and design in recent years have come about against a background of how our collective lives are lived. From globalisation, security and surveillance and the privatisation of public space to the need to tackle the planet's dwindling resources, design and architecture are the evidence of how some of the most pressing issues of our time will affect our lives.

Architects and designers and the culture around them will always be preoccupied with who can make the most beautiful shapes. However, the majority of the diverse professions that make up contemporary design are engaged with work that, for good or ill, defines our experience of the world, and articulates the values of society. In the coming years, we will collect objects in each of our three fields that exemplify the creativity and artistry of current designers – but we felt there was also a need to acquire items that address the political and social questions that are the context of design.

The weight of a great collection can be seen as a constraint: the responsibility to continue historical trajectories of collecting, and to fill gaps in the holdings we already have. If you have a lot of pottery, you are likely to amass a lot more pottery. Rather than focusing on what's in our own stores, I wanted to introduce objects from popular and consumer culture – the mass produced and the unauthored – because it is often these that help us to think about the world we live in most clearly, even if that was not always the intention of their designers.

This continued a trend that can be seen in many parts of the V&A, away from a nineteenth-century tradition of collecting based on taste and connoisseurship and towards considering objects as part of their contexts. The British Galleries, for instance, completed in 1998, were the first (of several since) to bring all the collections of the museum together in order to tell a chronological story of design's relationship with culture.

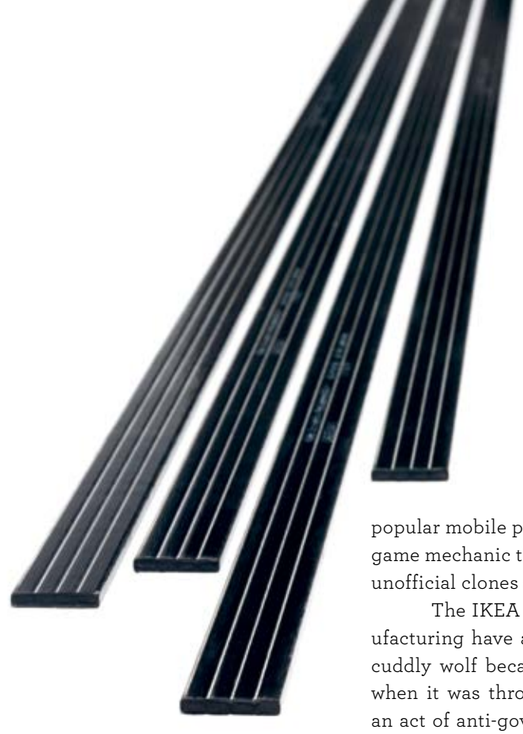
Rapid Response Collecting aims to ensure that the collections reveal the reality of contemporary design and manufacturing for future researchers by acquiring objects in timely response to global events. We want visitors to see material evidence of the big news stories of our time, so many of which touch on the world of architecture, design and art.

A year ago, we made our first acquisition – early prototypes of the Liberator, a 3D-printed gun designed by Cody Wilson of Defense Distributed. This highly controversial use of design and manufacturing technologies did not come from a professional designer, and is certainly not a piece of decorative art. The gun is a signpost, a moment of nemesis for the techno-optimism of digital and industrial design. It also marks a turning point in design history, and one whose implications have yet to play out fully.

The acquisition had significant media impact, and the external interest in it crystallised another important intellectual motivation for our collecting. The gun is significant because it is a work of design that changes the relationship we have with others in society. All of the pieces in the Rapid Response Collecting gallery carry questions about how we live together today, and how the public realm is articulated, made free, or constrained; how we see each other; how we communicate or entertain ourselves. Other acquisitions in this vein include a pair of false eyelashes (endorsed by the pop star Katy Perry, and made by workers in Indonesia who earn less than a dollar a day), several pairs of Christian Louboutin "nude" shoes (in five skin tones to suit the major new non-Caucasian markets for high fashion) and the popular mobile phone game Flappy Bird, a free-to-play phenomenon with a simple game mechanic that provoked both energetic debate in the media and hundreds of unofficial clones and tributes online.

Flappy Bird mobile game, 2013, designed by Gears Studios

Fifi pump in five nude shades, 2013, designed by Christian Louboutin Ltd



Sections of KONE UltraRope, 2013, designed and manufactured by KONE Corporation

The IKEA soft toy named Lufsig is a case in point of how design and manufacturing have a relationship with politics, sometimes despite themselves. This cuddly wolf became an unlikely object of political dissent on 7 December 2013 when it was thrown at CY Leung, Hong Kong's most senior political official, in an act of anti-government protest during a town hall meeting. Within days it had sold out in the territory's three IKEA stores, and was running low in many cities in Taiwan and mainland China. A dedicated Facebook page soon sprang up, attracting tens of thousands of "likes", and prominent public figures posed holding Lufsig.

The mass-produced toy was ideal for Hong Kong's anti-China activists for two reasons. The unpopular Leung is known as "the wolf" by his opponents – both due to the similarity between his name and the Chinese word for wolf, and because he is considered ruthless and dishonest, favouring mainland Chinese interests over those of Hong Kong. A play on language adds to its potency: in Mandarin the transliteration of "Lufsig" is innocuous, yet when pronounced in Cantonese, spoken by a majority in the territory, the name sounds very like a profane term for female genitalia.

This is a political story, but it is also one about design. It is about how a character from a children's fairytale, designed for and manufactured by a Swedish furniture retailer, gives us access to the political discontent of a restive Hong Kong populace. The low-cost cuddly toy stands as evidence of social, political and economic change – and is also evidence of the curatorial attitude that we have adopted. Instead of our work being limited to collecting items that fall within the professional parameters of architecture, product design and digital design, we have brought them together under the rubric of what we like to call a "department of public life".

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Kieran Long is Senior Curator of Architecture Design and Digital.
Corinna Gardner is Curator of Contemporary Product Design

– FUTURE –

WHAT MAKES A GREAT MUSEUM?

Graham Black

Answering this question is one of the most difficult challenges a museum professional can set him or herself. For this article, I have tried to perform my role as an interpreter and provoke your thoughts on the issue. I was fortunate to have the company of Tim Reeve, Chief Operating Officer at the V&A, to bounce ideas off. Given the sheer diversity of museums, and opinions on them, there can be no simple answer. Yet, every museum project I undertake begins with me asking what difference it makes that their institution exists. Answering this positively begins the journey to greatness.

First, outstanding collections, cared for and studied by curators who are experts in their fields, a tremendous building and an illustrious history can help to make a museum great but are not enough in themselves. We have all visited dead institutions that meet these criteria but hide behind the worthiness of their collections, claiming these justify their existence. To paraphrase the American commentator Stephen Weil, it is not enough to be worthy, a great museum must be worthwhile. Such a place will never be just a warehouse or a plaything for like-minded initiates. Collections matter, but what matters more is what you do with them.

To become great, a museum must have a strong sense of purpose, one signed up to by everyone associated with it – and one pursued in bad times as well as good. Of course, any old sense of purpose will not do. As Reeve points out, in discussing one of the most exciting elements of the V&A's plans for the future: "It is important that your sense of purpose remains rooted in your founding mission. The V&A had entrepreneurial activity at its heart from the beginning. Today we do not apologise for seeking to grow and diversify our commercial activity, as if it were only there to fill a funding gap rather than being a legitimate expression of what we do in its own right. Rather the relationships sparked between the curatorial, the creative and the entrepreneurial are part of what makes this museum distinctive."

But a great museum must also be rooted in the present and in the real world. In translating its sense of purpose into the essential three or five-year plan, it cannot afford to be introspective. Reeve makes clear that "the great museum must look outwards and be much more receptive to new ideas and innovations coming not just from outside the museum, but from outside the sector. We need to get out much more, and be prepared to be influenced by views from way beyond our comfort zone".

And it has to be rooted in its audiences. I once wrote: "It is a wonderful time to be working in museums – at long last audiences are being given the priority they deserve." The primary purpose of a great museum for me begins and ends with its relationships with its audiences. It must reflect the society it serves. In recent years, Western society has faced a perfect storm of globalisation, economic woes, generational shift, demographic change and the impact of new media. Cultural institutions have not been immune to the impact. In 2009 cultural commentator Tom Fleming wrote:

> *"We are witnessing a complete renovation of our cultural infrastructure. Those 'bricks and mortar' culture houses, citadels of experience, towers of inspiration, that for so long have stood steadfast as symbols of cultural continuity and comfort, while the streets around them have whizzed and clattered to multiple disruptive transformations, are being turned*

inside out... this wholesale renovation is born out of an urgent requirement to change or die, and it is just beginning."

Yet too many museums appear not to have noticed; they are comfortable in dealing with the past, but seem to find the present and future much more difficult. Rather than developing dynamic, creative responses to these positive pressures for change, there is a deep uncertainty. The result is inertia, reflective of a lack of vision and often linked to inexpert leadership, funding cuts, a staff structure and collections geared to another age and responsibility for the expensive maintenance of historic buildings that do not meet modern requirements. They know they must define and adapt to their future roles by establishing what is meant by museum practice for the twenty-first century – yet most remain vague, at best, about this. They cannot afford to be. Reeve states that "museums must get away from the more rigid and old-fashioned operating models, and be structurally much more dynamic and open to change on a regular basis, as society itself continues to change".

The starting point is to get to know their existing audiences much better, and develop a far more sophisticated understanding of their needs and motivations. "It is self-evident that museums are as much about people as collections. All of the big decisions we make should be based on rigorous research of audiences – existing and potential. Every new project should start by standing in the visitor's shoes and designing journeys and experiences from that perspective," says Reeve. This is not a chore, but rather a remarkable opportunity to convert audiences from one-off visitors into regular visitors. It is also not a numbers issue: it is through frequent engagement that meaningful learning takes place. If we believe in the power of museums as learning institutions and the ability of cultural learning to change lives, a primary focus should be on encouraging people to come back time and again. Dallas Museum of Art transformed itself after studying its visitors in depth between 2003 and 2009. It doubled attendance and motivated more than 50 per cent of visitors to take part in its public programmes.

Meanwhile, new, particularly mobile, technology is changing the relationship between museums and their visitors, making content and participation, on-site and online, more accessible. Yet it also means having to work harder to attract people to the institution itself – if we cannot meet their needs, they will go elsewhere, starting with the internet. This requires a profoundly different, much more participatory experience – one that involves creating new and meaningful opportunities for engagement. See, for example, the experiment by the Acropolis Museum in developing personalised story-led routes around the building for visitors, adding depth to their understanding. Or the growing attempts to encourage deep reflection and resultant visitor contributions, extending the representation of multiple perspectives.

This in turn highlights the hoary old issue of the need for museums to share authority. We live in a world where at least our younger audiences already take material online and actively disseminate, sort, classify, collaboratively rethink, reclassify, republish and reuse it as they see fit. We need to apply their expectations to our museums and also recognise the expertise that many of our visitors can bring. For an example that also encompasses the entrepreneurial, have a look

Exhibition Road western range rendering © *AL_A*

at the Rijksstudio at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where 150,000 artworks are available to download and use – including making your own product and selling it through the studio's shop.

However, not surprisingly, museums have always been highly protective of their reputations, while individual curators, like most professionals, are not readily willing to abandon their cognitive authority. Both these factors can lead to a failure to give visitors more control and opportunities to contribute directly, with the potential of influencing the nature and ethos of the organisation itself. Yet this is largely a paper problem, not a real one. As Reeve says: "Museums should not worry about conversation or challenge. If you have an outstanding collection and have properly conserved and fully researched it, you should be confident in reaching out to – and hearing back from – all your potential audiences. First-class curatorship is about an ability to take that research and understanding and apply it through multiple platforms to as diverse an audience as possible."

And audiences will continue to want to hear the authoritative voice of the museum. What they increasingly will not do is accept an authoritarian one – they will expect to have the chance to reflect on and respond to that voice. None of which denies the role of the great museum in developing and transmitting knowledge. In fact, it helps visitors to acquire a deeper understanding of the institution, resulting from direct participation. Overall, this represents opportunities undreamed of by our predecessors to share collections, enthusiasm and expertise with the world, and to work with visitors for the benefit of all.

Also, audiences cannot be restricted to the traditional white, highly educated professional profile. Museums are for everyone – this was a founding principle for most of those established in the nineteenth century. It has regained a particular significance over the past 30 years, and is a prominent aspect of the UK Museums Association's code of ethics. The development and retention of new audiences should be at the core of what we do, on both ethical and business grounds. Ethically, museums hold the cultural memory of humankind and access should not be the exclusive right of an educated elite, nor should their contents exclude the contributions made by large sectors of the population. In business terms, demographic shifts mean audience bases, particularly in inner cities, are changing. In the medium to long term, museums must connect with these new audiences or die. However, it is not a case of one or the other – they need both to grow the active support of traditional audiences and develop new ones.

The potential is enormous. A great museum, committed to partnership with its communities, will break the stranglehold of its physical site and restricted opening hours and reach beyond its walls, housed collections and history. As such, museums can become "third places", non-threatening environments in which to work with their audiences to develop partnerships that promote dialogue and support civil engagement. Have a look at the website of the Centre for Cultural Understanding and Change at Chicago Field Museum, or, even better, visit the wonderful Hackney Museum.

I want to finish on a personal note: what makes a great museum *experience* for me? Part of the public role of the museum has always been to support the visitor or learner as observer. Recognising that observation is not a passive role is central to this. I have a mental image of the visitor's voice sitting at the heart of the museum – the buzz of conversation and discussion among audiences as they encounter and respond to the exhibits, as they interact with each other and as they contribute to the institution. Such a museum will recognise the visit as an enthusiastic conversation between the collections, the visitors and the museum, rather than simply seeing visitors as empty vessels to be filled with information.

Conservator working on the cast of Michelangelo's *David* in 2014

Borrowing from and adding to Charles Landry's 2003 paper on what makes museums special, I see my perfect museum experience as four-dimensional: it has breadth because it broadens my horizons; it has depth in that it brings out the significant; it has height in that it generates aspiration through inspiration; and it has longevity in that the experience stays with me, and grows in me.

The strapline for the Abba Museum in Stockholm is that you walk in but dance out. That is what happens inside me on every perfect museum visit.

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Graham Black combines his role as Professor of Museum Management at Nottingham Trent University with work as an independent consultant in museum interpretation. He is the author of *The Engaging Museum* (2005) and *Transforming Museums in the 21st Century* (2012)

CURRENT AND FUTURE EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Wedding Dresses 1775–2014**
  until 15 March 2015
  Travel partner Kuoni; supported by Monsoon Bridal and Waterford Crystal

- **Disobedient Objects**
  until 1 February 2015
  Supported by Cockayne – Grants for the Arts, a donor-advised fund of The London Community Foundation

- **Horst: Photographer of Style**
  6 September 2014 – 15 January 2015
  Travel partner American Airlines. With thanks to Bicester Village, London, and Kildane Village, Dublin.
  Supported by the American Friends of the V&A

- **Constable: The Making of a Master**
  20 September 2014 – 11 January 2015
  Supported by the Friends of the V&A

- **Small Stories: At Home in a Doll's House**
  V&A Museum of Childhood, 13 December 2014 – 6 September 2015
  Supported by the Friends of the V&A, The Mercers' Company and The Leche Trust

- **Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty**
  14 March 2015 – 19 July 2015
  In partnership with Swarovski. Supported by American Express

Salvador Dalí's costumes for
Léonide Massine's ballet *Bacchanale*,
1939 © *Condé Nast/Horst Estate*

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