



**National  
Media  
Museum**



## News Release

### **World's leading collection on the art of photography to be created at the V&A**

An historic agreement between the Science Museum Group (SMG) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is set to create the world's foremost collection on the art of photography.

The museums today announced that more than 400,000 objects from SMG's three-million-strong photography collection, held at the National Media Museum, will be transferred to the V&A. These photographs will join the V&A's existing collection of 500,000 photographs to create an International Photography Resource Centre. The new Centre will provide the public with a world-class facility to access this consolidated collection, which will become the single largest collection on the art of photography in the world.

The decision represents a reunion for some of these images, which were once part of a single collection at the 19th century South Kensington Museum before it divided into the V&A and the Science Museum. The collection being transferred encompasses exquisite vintage prints, the world's first negative, unique daguerreotypes and early colour photographs, as well as important albums, books, cameras and the archives of major photographers. At its heart is the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) Collection, which charts the invention and development of photography over the last two centuries.

Among the treasures moving to the V&A are works by British pioneers William Henry Fox Talbot, Hill & Adamson, Roger Fenton and Julia Margaret Cameron. The collection also demonstrates Britain's role as an international hub for photography, with major holdings by artists such as Alfred Stieglitz, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Gertrude Käsebier, Paul Strand and Ansel Adams. Highlights of the consolidated collection will include Oscar Rejlander's 1857 ground-breaking composite *The Two Ways of Life*, Mervyn O'Gorman's intriguing 1913 autochrome *Christina*, Yusuf Karsh's iconic Winston Churchill portrait and Angus McBean's surreal study of Audrey Hepburn alongside works by contemporary photographers including Martin Parr, Sarah Jones, Susan Derges and Simon Roberts.

Science Museum Group Director, Ian Blatchford, said: *“Our two museums have a long and proud shared history and this decision illustrates just how seriously we take our common mission to cherish and share the nation’s extraordinary cultural heritage.”*

V&A Director, Martin Roth, said: *“The V&A and Science Museum Group have shared origins and uniting our complementary collections will create a peerless historical and artistic photography resource. Our ambitious plans for enhancing digital access, collaborative research, touring exhibitions and creating an International Photography Resource Centre will mean that future generations of visitors and researchers will benefit from these examples of the most important artistic developments in artistic photographic history.”*

Dr Michael Pritchard, Director General of the RPS, said: *“The RPS has worked closely with the National Media Museum since 2003 to ensure that the world-class RPS Collection of photographs, technology, books and documents from 1827 to 2016 has grown and developed. I am pleased that we can further enhance the RPS Collection’s stature alongside the V&A’s own art photography collection and make it more widely available to the public and scholars and ensuring it remains a prime resource for future generations. The RPS is extremely fortunate to benefit from the support and expertise of one of the world’s most revered cultural institutions.”*

Once transferred, the collection will be stored, digitised and made accessible for study. In the short term, the permanent gallery space dedicated to photographs at the V&A will be doubled. A second phase will see the opening of an International Photography Resource Centre to provide unprecedented opportunities for access, collaborative research and education with this unrivalled collection. As part of the agreement, the V&A will work closely with SMG to give access to the transferred collections for future scholarship and exhibitions.

The V&A will continue to tour and lend its collections both in the UK and internationally. Over the past seven years, V&A photographic exhibitions have travelled to 15 locations across the UK from Aberdeen to Bristol.

The National Media Museum in Bradford – one of the four museums that make up SMG – is refocusing its photography collections to align with its own strategic emphasis on the science, technology and culture of light and sound. The National Media Museum will retain the collections which support an understanding of the development of photographic processes (such as the Kodak collection), the ongoing cultural impact of photography (such as the Daily Herald archive) as well as photographic archives that have specific relevance to Bradford (such as the Impressions Gallery archive). The move reinforces Director Jo Quinton-Tulloch’s new focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) at the National Media Museum, heralded by a new £1.5 million interactive light and sound gallery due to open in March 2017.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### *About the V&A*

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 5000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. The V&A holds the UK's national collection of the art of photography, international in scope and ranging from the year of photography's announcement in 1839 to the present.  
[www.vam.ac.uk/photography](http://www.vam.ac.uk/photography)

### *About the Science Museum Group*

The Science Museum Group is a family of museums made up of the Science Museum in London, the National Media Museum in Bradford, the National Railway Museum in York and Shildon and the Museum of Science & Industry. The Science Museum Group attracts over five million visits a year. Its world-class collections, in the fields of science, technology, engineering, medicine, design and enterprise, transport and media are the most comprehensive and significant anywhere in the world. The Group plays a vital role in helping to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers, showcasing the best of British research and providing accessible and inspiring exhibitions and event programmes for both adults and children.

**For PRESS information about the V&A, please contact Zoe Franklin on 020 7942 2497 or [z.franklin@vam.ac.uk](mailto:z.franklin@vam.ac.uk)**

**Press images are available to download from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)**

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