



Media Statements: updates to proposed plans for V&A Curatorial, Research and National Art Library restructure, within the Collections Division

Media statement on updated proposals midway through internal consultation process:

31 March 2021

A V&A spokesperson said: *“Due to the ongoing financial impact of Covid-19, and the need to find £10m annually going forwards, the V&A is reviewing the structure of its Curatorial teams, as part of its museum-wide recovery strategy.*

As part of the ongoing consultation process with V&A staff and Trade Union representatives, we have developed and shared an updated proposal that reforms the V&A’s materials-led approach, delivers the agreed savings and builds a curatorial structure and vision that will connect with the audiences of tomorrow. The V&A also remains committed to establishing a new, centralised research, National Art Library and archive function alongside increased resource focused on Africa and the diaspora.

As agreed with Trade Union colleagues, the internal consultation period will be extended to enable us to work together on the revised proposal, and to seek further feedback from staff. The final structure will be confirmed once the consultation has completed and all feedback has been reviewed.”

Statement on V&A curatorial restructure:

A V&A spokesperson said: *The financial impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector has been devastating, and as a result, the V&A is forced to find £10 million sustainable savings per annum. On 26 February 2021, we announced that the V&A would be entering into a period of collective consultation with our curatorial departments - the final phase of a 6-month, V&A-wide programme to help us find the savings that, sadly, are so necessary to safeguard our future as the world’s leading museum of art, design and performance.*

These proposals are the result of the unique pressures created by Covid-19, and we know what a difficult moment it is for our staff community. Our aim is to propose a thoughtful approach that will enable an evolution of our museum practice and support our strategic aims, whilst responding to the financial challenges of the pandemic - no area of the V&A collection will be left without specialist support. We are doing everything we can to be transparent with our colleagues, and to support them throughout this difficult process.

Theatre & Performance

Statement dated 19 March 2021 in response to claims the Theatre & Performance collections and gallery are at risk due to the proposals.

A V&A spokesperson said: *Despite emergency support from government, the V&A is facing a £10m annual deficit, and with deep regret, we have been forced to explore all routes to reduce costs across the museum in order to protect our future.*

We are currently in a formal internal, collective consultation process on proposed restructures of the V&A's curatorial teams, including the Theatre & Performance department. Preserving the National Collection of Theatre & Performance remains fundamental to the V&A's mission as the world's leading museum of art, design and performance – these collections and access to them, alongside our dedicated Theatre and Performance galleries at the V&A in South Kensington, are not impacted by the proposals.

The proposed changes relate to the structure of the V&A's dedicated curatorial teams, and our priority is consulting openly and meaningfully with our staff and trade union colleagues on these proposals and supporting our staff community through this difficult process.

National Art Library

Statement dated 17 March regarding update to plans for the National Art Library resulting from the Government extending the furlough scheme.

A V&A spokesperson said: *The NAL's exceptional collections and iconic space remain fundamental to the V&A's mission and purpose, and we are proud of its status as one of the finest libraries dedicated to art and design in the world. The proposals include for a senior library consultant (fixed-term post) to undertake a comprehensive review of the NAL and V&A archives services as well as the visitor experience we offer, to help realise our ambition to broaden access to the NAL and V&A archival collections and to bolster our research portfolio, including the support we offer staff, students, academics, sector professionals and research bodies.*

Acknowledging the vital role the NAL plays, we will be conducting the review over six months in order to keep the closure period to an absolute minimum. Sadly, our financial position dictates that a period of closure will be necessary as we move into a new and uncertain financial year, not least in terms of visitor numbers, however the furlough scheme will be fully utilised for staff affected. The V&A will hopefully reopen to the public in late May, and we will aim to open the NAL at the end of the review, by December 2021. A digital library service for academics and researchers will be available throughout May – December 2021, with in person appointments to view collections facilitated on a case-by-case basis.

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For further information please contact press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).