



Press Release
4 January 2023

V&A to open Phase Two of the museum's Photography Centre in May 2023, creating largest permanent space dedicated to photography in the UK

V&A Photography Centre expansion
Opening 25 May 2023
Vam.ac.uk | @V_and_A | #VamPhotography

Today the V&A announces that the second and final phase of the V&A's Photography Centre will open 25 May 2023. Once open, the Photography Centre will become the largest space in the UK for a permanent photography collection, and the seven galleries – four of which will be new additions – will showcase the museum's world-leading holdings and enable visitors to experience photography and its diverse histories in new ways.

The V&A has collected and exhibited photography since the founding of the museum in the 1850s, and today its collection is one of the largest and most varied in the world. Phase One of the museum's Photography Centre opened in 2018, with three galleries designed by David Kohn. May 2023 sees the completion of the second and final phase of the Photography Centre with an additional four galleries, with base-build designed by Purcell, and fit-out designed by Gibson Thornley Architects.

Two of the new rooms will showcase global contemporary photography and cutting-edge commissions in rotating displays. The other new spaces – a room dedicated to photography and the book, and an interactive gallery about the history and use of the camera – will shine a light on the processes involved in photography, as well as the study and presentation of the medium. These new rooms join the three existing galleries, with two galleries for changing displays from the collection and a space dedicated to digital media, which will also present new content.

Highlights of the opening displays will include recent acquisitions exhibited at the museum for the first time, including works by **Liz Johnson Artur**, **Sammy Baloji**, **Vera Lutter**, **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**, **Tarrah Krajnak** and **Vasantha Yoganathan**, as well as a monumental photographic sculpture by **Noémie Goudal**. Two major new commissions supported by the Manitou Fund will also be unveiled, with a photographic series by leading Indian artist **Gauri Gill**, and a digital commission by British media artist **Jake Elwes**. The Manitou Fund has committed to funding six commissions for the Photography Centre, which will see a new print and digital

commission in 2023, 2025 and 2027. On completion, the Photography Centre will also feature new, themed displays, presenting works from the 1840s to the present day, beginning with *Energy: Sparks from the Collection*, exploring how all photographs need some form of energy to exist, and a smaller display, *How Not to Photograph a Bulldog*, featuring dog photography manuals from the Royal Photographic Society Library.

Marta Weiss, V&A Senior Curator of Photography and Lead Curator of Phase Two of the Photography Centre, said: *“Photography lies at the heart of the V&A. The museum has collected photography since 1852 and continues to acquire the best of contemporary practice. As photography plays an ever-increasing role in all our lives, the expanded Photography Centre will be more relevant than ever. We look forward to welcoming visitors to explore the medium’s diverse histories and enjoy our world-leading collection.”*

About the Photography Centre:

Room 95

Inside the Camera

Room 95 will be an interactive gallery exploring how cameras work and how they are used, from the Victorian view camera to the first iPhone. The highlight will be a walk-in camera obscura, demonstrating the optical phenomenon that is the basis of how all cameras work. A timeline of cameras will show their evolution, with accompanying animations explaining the inner workings of these iconic devices.

Room 96

Room 97, The Parasol Foundation Gallery

Photography Now

Two new galleries will be dedicated to showcasing recent acquisitions of global contemporary photography, including special commissions. Highlights in the inaugural display will include works by **Liz Johnson Artur**, **Sammy Baloji**, **Vera Lutter**, **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**, and **Vasanthan Yogananthan**, all acquired with the support of the V&A Photographs Acquisition Group. A series of self-portraits by **Tarah Krajnak**, acquired with the support of The Parasol Foundation Trust, will also feature. A spectacular anamorphic sculpture by **Noémie Goudal** will bring photography off the wall to explore both geological time and the nature of perception.

A new commission, supported by the Manitou Fund, from leading Indian photographer **Gauri Gill** will also be unveiled. This new body of work depicts temporary architecture on the outskirts of Delhi, ingeniously constructed by farmers from repurposed materials. The makeshift dwellings housed farmers bringing their concerns from the village to the capital, in response to new laws that threatened their economic security.

Room 98, The Kusuma Gallery

Photography and the Book

A flexible space dedicated to Photography and the Book will reflect how books have been a fundamental way of presenting photography since the 1840s. The Kusuma Gallery, which has been funded by The Kusuma Trust, will visibly house the extensive

Royal Photographic Society (RPS) Library, following the transfer of the RPS Collection to the V&A in 2017. The RPS Library contains journals, books, pamphlets and manuals from all over the world, spanning topics from aerial photography to X-rays. More than 20,000 books, published over nearly 200 years, will be available to visitors by request, with a selection of browsing books on open shelves.

The Kusuma Gallery will also feature changing displays of photographic books, periodicals and archival material. The first display will be *How Not to Photograph a Bulldog*, a light-hearted foray into one of the many topics covered by the photographic manuals in the RPS Library.

Films about the RPS Library and photographic processes will be shown on digital terminals for visitors to enjoy. This flexible space will also be used for teaching and other programming.

Room 99, The Modern Media Gallery

Digital Gallery

One of the three Phase One galleries, The Modern Media Gallery continues to be dedicated to digital media, challenging definitions of what photography is and generating questions around the use of photography today. The gallery will showcase a new digital commission by Jake Elwes, supported by the Manitou Fund.

Room 100, The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery

Room 101, The Sir Elton John and David Furnish Gallery

Photography 1840s-Now

Developed during Phase One of the Photography Centre, these galleries will be entirely rehung for the 2023 opening. A new display, *Energy: Sparks from the Collection*, will explore the diverse kinds of energy in photography – both the hidden processes intrinsic to creating a picture, and the subjects in front of a camera. Featuring works from the 1840s through to the present day, it will demonstrate how, from the advent of photography, power in all its diverse forms has sparked the imaginations of photographers.

Situated in the V&A's Northeast Quarter, the Photography Centre reclaims the beauty of seven original 19th-century picture galleries, restoring them to their original glory and purpose. Planned in two phases, the Centre is part of the V&A's FuturePlan development programme to revitalise the museum's public spaces through contemporary design and the restoration of original features.

Beyond the physical gallery spaces, a key focus for photography at the V&A is research and the development of new sector-leading initiatives. A major strand is The Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project, established in 2021 to support women in photography. Led by the inaugural Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography, Fiona Rogers, and funded by Ms. Ruth Monicka Parasol and The Parasol Foundation Trust, the Project encompasses a curatorial post alongside acquisitions, research, education and public displays.

The Project's first acquisition by Tarrah Krajnak will be included in the opening display at the V&A. Also in May 2023, five winners of the inaugural V&A Parasol Foundation Prize for Women in Photography will be exhibited at Peckham 24 – south London's vibrant three-day contemporary photography festival. The prize is dedicated to supporting and championing the work of women in contemporary photography and will run for three years.

The V&A is also delighted to announce additional support from The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation. Alongside significant funding of Phase Two of the Photography Centre, the Foundation has generously extended their commitment to a series of two-year Fellowships in photography for early-career curators until 2028. The V&A is pleased to announce the appointment of Mary Phan as the second Curatorial Fellow in Photography, supported by The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation, who will be in post until 2024.

The Photography Centre is being made possible by Sir Elton John and David Furnish, The Kusuma Trust, The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation, The Parasol Foundation Trust, Modern Media, Shao Zhong Art Foundation and many other generous supporters.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about the V&A Photography Centre, please contact the Shannon Nash on s.nash@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 2502 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

Notes to Editors

- The V&A's current Photography Centre (Rooms 99 – 101) will be closed from 6 February 2023 to allow final works to take place. The complete Photography Centre will re-open 25 May 2023.
- Phase Two of the V&A Photography Centre is curated by Marta Weiss, Senior Curator of Photography, and Hana Kaluznick, Assistant Curator of Photography, with Fiona Rogers, Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography and Catherine Troiano, Curator of Photography.
- *Energy: Sparks from the Collection* is curated by Duncan Forbes, Head of Photography; Martin Barnes, Senior Curator of Photography; and Lydia Caston, Exhibition Project Curator, with Phoebe Evans, Assistant Curator of Photography
- The design team include Purcell as the base build architect and Gibson Thornley as the fit-out architect.
- For more information about the V&A Parasol Foundation Prize for Women in Photography please visit [here](#).

Social Media

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @victoriaandalbertmuseum

Tiktok: @vamuseum

About the V&A Photography Collection

The V&A has collected photographs since its foundation in 1852 and continues to collect today, with new acquisitions supported by the V&A Photographs Acquisition Group and other generous donors.

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) Collection was transferred to the V&A by the Science Museum Group in 2017 and was acquired with the generous assistance of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Art Fund. The consolidation of these world-class collections was the catalyst for the museum's Photography Centre, Phase One of which opened in October 2018, with Phase Two scheduled to open in Spring 2023.

The V&A's collection encompasses the work of leading historic and contemporary photographers as well as publications, cameras and related equipment. When not on display, photographs from the collection can be viewed in the Prints & Drawings Study Room.
vam.ac.uk/collections/photographs.