

Schoolchildren welcome The Princess of Wales to Young V&A - the UK's new free destination for children, families, and young people

28 June 2023, 12pm: Today, local schoolchildren welcomed V&A Patron, The Princess of Wales, for a visit to officially open the Young V&A in Bethnal Green ahead of the museum reopening its doors to the public this Saturday 1st July. Over the last three years, the Grade II Listed building has been transformed into the UK's first free national museum designed entirely for young people.

Local schoolchildren, parents and teachers all played a critical role in the project, participating in co-design and co-production workshops in which they worked with the architects and Young V&A team to reconceive how the building could be used, designed key architectural features, contributed ideas for the displays and exhibition programme and participated in making new commissions for the galleries.

After being welcomed by V&A Chairman Sir Nicholas Coleridge, V&A Director Dr Tristram Hunt, Young V&A Director Dr Helen Charman, and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, The Princess of Wales was given a tour of the building by Dr Hunt and Dr Philippa Simpson, the V&A's Director of Design, Estate and Public Programme, and schoolchildren from Globe Primary School, who played a key role in the creation of Young V&A.

Young V&A houses three new galleries called Play, Imagine, and Design. Each has been conceived for specific age groups, from babies to teens, with nearly 2000 objects from the V&A's collections presented in new and playful ways, designed to inspire children's own creativity. With V&A staff and children pointing out key features during the tour, The Princess was shown first-hand how the museum's new spaces will be enjoyed by children and their families once it opens to the public this Saturday 1 July.

Highlights included:

- 'Sound It Out', an A-Z of V&A objects brought to life with a series of unique playful poems by leading authors including Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho, Valerie Bloom and Michael Rosen, designed to boost literacy and communication skills. The Princess enjoyed exploring the array of objects on show from glass apples to an Ancient Egyptian fish-shaped cosmetics dish and a series of zebra toys.
- 'Build It', where a giant customisable marble run, spinning sand pit and soft construction area encourage children to get hands-on with creativity through physical and social play. The Princess joined children working together to create their own fantastical dens, using big blue blocks in the 'Imagination Playground'.

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- In 'Design Can Change the World', The Princess encountered a Microlino car dramatically suspended from the ceiling as part of a new display looking at urban mobility and carbon reduction.
- In 'Adventure', The Princess joined children at a workshop, where they were making up stories inspired by the historic and contemporary objects from the V&A's collection from Peppa Pig and Paddington Bear to a Japanese Samurai suit of armour, a 1955 NASA Moon Explorer toy, and Katsushika Hokusai's 1831 *The Great Wave*.
- HRH The Princess was given a tour of 'The Stage' which shows highlights from the V&A's Theatre and Performance collections, from shadow puppets to Frankenstein's Monster and a 2014 costume from Hackney Empire Theatre's production of *Mother Goose*, and shown a dressing up area where they can create their own performances.

At the end of the visit, The Princess was presented with three gift bags for her children, by Percy (age 7), and Zeo (age 8), from Globe Primary, with presents from the Young V&A shop.

Young V&A's mission is to foster the next creative generation. During the tour Young V&A's staff shared their plans to support teachers and parents in developing children's love of art, design, and performance, through new resources, a Schools Programme, and activities and events in a suite of new workshop spaces created on the lower ground floor of the museum. Like all other V&A museums, Young V&A will always be free to enter, ensuring that everyone is able to access the resources on offer.

Throughout the project, Young V&A worked with leading experts in children's education and development in the early years. As much as they are designed for fun, the galleries and interactives are rooted in the latest research into the critical skills that children need to thrive in our fast-changing world and have been carefully designed to foster skills such as oracy, fine and gross motor skills, problem solving, empathy and team building.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A said: *"Young V&A is the UK's first and only free museum designed with and for children, families, and young people. We've created a new space dedicated to the way that children play and learn, to support them as they grow, and it was wonderful to share the project with The Princess of Wales, given her personal commitment to promoting the importance of investing in children's early years."*

Marie Maxwell, Executive Head Teacher, Bangabandhu and Globe Primary Schools, Bethnal Green, said: *"Our pupils had a wonderful time meeting The Princess of Wales today - they loved sharing their experiences on shaping the new museum and having the chance to shine a light on their local area too. It's an experience they'll never forget."*



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For further PRESS information about Young V&A, please contact Laura Mitchell on l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk / 020 3949 4509 (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

About Young V&A

Young V&A is a museum sparking creativity now and for the future. Created with 0-14-year-olds, it is a place for young people to imagine, play and design, and get inspired by a collection of 2000 toys, characters, objects and artworks from around the world and throughout history. Rooted in its local community with 150-year heritage as East London's first museum, Young V&A works to energise young creators everywhere, as well as empower everyone to promote creativity for the next generation and support the teaching of art and design education for all.

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