

News Release

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V&A acquires Sandy Powell's 2020 celebrity-signed 'autograph suit'

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- Sandy Powell's 'autograph suit' signed by Leonardo DiCaprio, Daniel Kaluuya and Billie Eilish saved Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage for the nation
- The suit goes on display in the V&A's Theatre and Performance galleries from today
- Conservation of the suit can be seen in tonight's episode of *Secrets of the Museum* (Wednesday 13 April) on BBC2 at 20:00 and is also available on iPlayer.

Today the V&A announces that a one-of-a-kind suit designed and worn by the British costume designer and Academy Award winner Sandy Powell has been acquired for the collection and is now on display in the museum's Theatre & Performance galleries. The iconic 'autograph suit' was worn by Powell during the 2020 awards season and is signed by 200 of the biggest names across film, fashion and music including Leonardo DiCaprio, Janelle Monáe, Daniel Kaluuya, Spike Lee, Donatella Versace, and Billie Eilish.

Powell's suit was auctioned as part of a fundraising effort driven by the Art Fund to save Prospect Cottage, the creative studio of her mentor and friend, the late visionary filmmaker Derek Jarman. The suit was purchased by Edwina Dunn OBE, CEO of the educational charity The Female Lead, who has generously gifted it to the V&A.

Sandy Powell, British costume designer and Academy Award winner, said: *It means so much to me that my suit has ended up at the V&A, my favourite museum in the world. I could not wish for a better home for something that has such close connections to the worlds of art, film and music and for me was such an emotional endeavour on both a personal and professional level. I think Derek Jarman would approve!*

Kate Bailey, Senior Curator of Theatre and Performance at the V&A, said: *This Oscar suit created by Sandy Powell is an extraordinary object which is so rich in stories and creativity. It is wonderful to share this unique work with our visitors and provides such a fascinating insight into the performing arts industry. We are extremely grateful for the*

generosity of Edwina Dunn and the Female Lead in their donation of the suit to the V&A collection.

Edwina Dunn OBE, CEO of the educational charity The Female Lead, said: *Sandy has been a passionate member of our celebrated Female Lead icons and when her suit came up for auction we purchased it, as a tangible symbol of our belief that 'we rise by lifting others'. For me the suit represents a collective effort to make a difference, and an expression of 'paying it forward' - together the signatories helped to save Prospect cottage, which will help young artists as an inspiring place for them to work.*

Powell wore the suit at events including the 2020 Critics' Circle, BAFTA and Oscar ceremonies with attendees signing their name in sharpie across the suit's cream fabric on the red carpet. Made from a rough calico (a robust material often chosen to make suit patterns), the fabric became a blank canvas for the celebrity signatures.

London born costume designer Sandy Powell has worked across theatre, dance and film, including *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *The Young Victoria* (2009) and *The Favourite* (2018). Powell credits Jarman as one of the biggest influences on her career, working on her first feature film with him, his best-known work, *Caravaggio* (1985).

Thanks to Powell's donation and Dunn's purchase (alongside other fundraising efforts), the Art Fund secured the amount needed to buy Jarman's Prospect Cottage, a space Powell herself has visited many times. The converted fisherman's hut which sits on the windswept shores of Dungeness, partly in the shadows of a nearby nuclear power plant, is a physical site of pilgrimage for fans of Jarman's work across the world. Saving the cottage for the nation and the programme of artist residences planned for the space is a lasting tribute to the creativity and legacy of one of the most revolutionary filmmakers of the 1980s-1990s.

The suit joins the highlights from the V&A's National Collection of Performing Arts on display in the Theatre and Performance galleries and is one of four star-objects featured in the latest series of BBC2's *Secret of the Museum*. The episode airs tonight (Wednesday 13 April) on BBC2 at 20:00 and is also available on iPlayer.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors:

For further PRESS information, please contact Shannon Nash on s.nash@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)207 9742 2502 (not for publication). A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from press-images.vam.ac.uk

About the V&A:

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of human creativity. It was established in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, its purpose is to champion creative industry, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination.

About the V&A's Theatre and Performance collection

The V&A's Theatre and Performance collections document current practice and the history of all areas of performing arts in the UK, including drama, dance, opera, circus, puppetry, comedy, musical theatre, costume, set design, pantomime, popular music and more. The collection was founded in the 1920s when the private collector Gabrielle Enthoven donated her extensive collection of theatrical designs, memorabilia, books and photographs to the museum. Since then, the collection has continued to grow to include significant objects and works of art, books, manuscripts, audiovisual recordings and ephemera, as well as the archives of performing arts companies, performers, directors, stage designers and private collectors.

About The Female Lead

The Female Lead empowers women to take the lead in their own lives, at every age and every stage. Grounded in founder Edwina Dunn's heritage as a data science pioneer, this educational charity listens to women and collects insight via research and storytelling. Creating content that shares and amplifies women's voices, the aim is always to stimulate positive personal and societal change.

Original content and teaching resources are gifted to girls in education in the UK and USA, to encourage debate, showcase diverse role models and develop leadership skills. Women can build self-awareness and connect with their individual drivers of purpose, happiness and fulfilment using The Female Lead's online resources.

The Female Lead aims to unlock the full potential of women and build allyship across the board to drive fulfillment for all.

For more stories, insight and resources go to TheFemaleLead.com