

# News Release

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## V&A East Storehouse to open 31 May 2025

- The first of two new V&A East sites – **V&A East Storehouse** – will open on **31 May 2025**, offering visitors unprecedented access to the behind-the-scenes world of its busy working stores
- Home to over half a million creative works – from **The Glastonbury Festival Archive** to **PJ Harvey** and **Elton John’s** costumes, **vintage football shirts**, **Dior** and **Schiaparelli haute couture**, **Roman frescos**, **Samurai swords**, **Mid-Century furniture** and the **iPhone**
- In addition to an extensive self-guided visitor experience, V&A East Storehouse’s world-first **Order an Object** experience means anyone can book to see any object they like, seven-days a week
- Over **100 mini curated displays** ‘hacked’ into the ends of storage systems reveal new stories and connections – from **east London’s** rich heritage of making, artistry and activism to **recent acquisitions** by fashion designer **Imane Ayissi**, photographer **Mariette Pathy Allen** and artists **Xanthe Somers** and **Sanaa Gateja**
- **Co-produced displays, new works** and **commissions** with **young east Londoners, communities** and **creatives** bring new perspectives to objects throughout, including a fragment from **Robin Hood Gardens**, a former residential estate in Poplar, east London, and the extraordinary 17th century **Agra Colonnade**
- V&A East Storehouse’s **David Bowie Centre** will open on **13 September 2025** – with a series of rotating displays, installations, guest-curated content and the opportunity to book to see anything from The David Bowie Archive
- Over **70 new jobs** created across V&A East’s two sites as part of a commitment to bring new opportunities to those living in the four Olympic boroughs

Today, the V&A announces that its new working store and free visitor attraction, designed by world-renowned architects Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, **V&A East Storehouse, will open to everyone on 31 May 2025**, as part of **East Bank**, the new cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. A world-first in size, scale and ambition, and new source of inspiration for all, V&A East Storehouse will immerse visitors in over half a million works spanning every creative discipline, from **Biba** and **Balenciaga** to the **Ballets Russes** and the **Sex Pistols** to **Samurai swords**.

Through a revolutionary new seven-day-a-week **Order an Object** service, V&A East Storehouse will make it easy for everyone to access all objects onsite, by booking in advance online for a time that suits them. Whether working on a school art project, starting a business, looking for inspiration for a DIY project, creating a new fashion collection, designing for stage or screen, or just wanting to see something that makes them happy, *Order an Object* exists to bring people closer to objects on their own terms, at a scale not possible anywhere else in the world.

A **working store** and hive of activity, through an extensive self-guided experience, visitors can explore **why objects are collected, how they are cared for, conserved and displayed** and the **latest research emerging from the collections** – as well as **newly commissioned works and performances** inspired by them. Alongside **experiential installations** and over **100 small, curated displays** ‘hacked’ into the collection stores, there will be an ever-changing **programme of live events and creative workshops** and **activities** across two creative studios and two workshop spaces. There will also be spaces to **relax and socialise**.

Spanning four levels, and at 16,000m<sup>2</sup> – **bigger than 30+ basketball courts** – V&A East Storehouse is home to over **250,000 objects, 350,000 library books** and nearly **1,000 archives**. Taking over a large section of the former London 2012 Olympics Media and Broadcast Centre (now Here East), it’s designed to give unprecedented access and greater transparency, breaking down physical barriers and removing glass cases to get visitors closer than ever before to their national collections, and take them behind-the-scenes.

Empowering young people and opening pathways into the creative industries is fundamental to V&A East. To date, the team has **engaged with over 30,000 local people and creatives** through consultation, its flagship *Your Collection: V&A East in Schools* programme, Youth Collective, career and mentoring initiatives, preopening events and activities, artist retreats, and drop-in making sessions. Across its two sites, V&A East will create over 70 new jobs for those living in the four Olympic boroughs, with recruitment beginning in October 2024.

V&A East Storehouse is the first of V&A East’s two new sites to open. The second, V&A East Museum, is scheduled to open in spring 2026, and celebrates making and creativity’s power to bring change. Created with young people and rooted in east London’s heritage, V&A East Museum explores what’s shaping our world with the voices that lead contemporary culture.

**Tim Reeve, Deputy Director and COO of the V&A, and Chair of the East Bank Board, said:** *“The opening of V&A East Storehouse next May delivers on our ambition to create a new standard for access to national collections, in an area of London with such a rich creative heritage and vibrant and talented creative community. As a key part of East Bank and the London 2012 Olympic legacy, V&A East resonates powerfully with our original mission to inspire creativity and support the creative industries. Through V&A East Storehouse, visitors will be encouraged to immerse themselves in the magical behind-the-scenes world of museums and empowered to make their own journeys*



*through the V&A's global collections. Our world-first Order an Object experience opens up the V&A's collections to everyone on their own terms, and on a scale never possible before. We hope this will shift the dial in creating more transparent and personalised experiences, and for everyone to find their own inspiration in V&A East Storehouse."*

**Arts Minister, Sir Chris Bryant, said:** *"Opening up access to our cultural assets for people from all backgrounds is very important to this Government, so I'm thrilled that V&A East Storehouse will open next year. With more of our national collections on display, its unique and personalised experience will allow more people to better understand the rich creative heritage of our country."*

**The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said:** *"The opening of V&A East Storehouse next year will be a wonderful addition to our capital's cultural landscape. The working store will offer Londoners and visitors unprecedented free access to a wide variety of creative works, from Roman artefacts to modern-day music archives. It's another hugely significant moment in the creation of our powerhouse for innovation, creativity and learning at East Bank, as we build a better London for everyone."*

**For further PRESS information about V&A East, please contact Laura Mitchell, [l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk](mailto:l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk) + Abigail Francis, [a.francis@vam.ac.uk](mailto:a.francis@vam.ac.uk) / 020 7942 2502 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk).**

## ABOUT V&A EAST STOREHOUSE

### Self-guided experience

V&A East Storehouse's central Weston Collections Hall stretches across three levels. Anchoring the Collections Hall are six large-scale objects – many have not been on display for decades due to their size. Following major conservation, these include the 1930s **Kaufmann Office**, the only complete **Frank Lloyd Wright** interior outside of the US, an exquisite **15th century carved and gilded wooden ceiling** from the now lost Torrijos Palace near Toledo in Spain, and a full-scale **Frankfurt Kitchen**, which transformed kitchen design in the 20th century. Others include an architectural fragment from **Robin Hood Gardens**, a former residential estate in Poplar, east London, the 17th century **Agra Colonnade**, which is an extraordinary example of Mughal architecture from the bathhouse at the fort of Agra, and a monumental **Ballets Russes theatre stage cloth** standing over 10 metres high.

These large objects are brought further to life with a series of co-production projects in collaboration with young east Londoners, communities, and creatives, highlighting multiple new voices and perspectives across the space.

Two co-productions shed new light on the Agra Colonnade. The first, facilitated by artist Adam Williamson, based at Bow Arts in Tower Hamlets, includes a series of making-based workshops with local community participants creating new artworks for displays exploring the architecture, patterns and stone carving techniques used by the original Mughal artisans. The second, with Akademi Dance and a group of young



dancers, will create a new performance in response to the Colonnade. Robin Hood Gardens' displays will include oral history recordings, produced in collaboration with community leaders and former residents, documenting the personal experiences and perspectives of the people who lived there, and a film co-produced with young creatives, to spark conversations around social housing, community action and city-living today.

Throughout the Weston Collections Hall, over **100 mini changing curated displays** are literally 'hacked' into the sides and ends of storage racking for visitors to explore themselves. Sharing more diverse, topical, and meaningful stories about the V&A's collections, displays centre on three key themes: ***Collecting Stories***, ***Sourcebook for Design*** and ***The Working Museum***.

A flexible 'kit of parts' system means objects can come on and off display more easily and frequently. Multiple small displays focus on east London's rich heritage of making, artistry and activism. Others explore the V&A's new acquisitions for the collection and reveal the work of V&A teams, from scientific research to protecting cultural heritage around the world, and the latest findings from the V&A's working groups.

Mini displays include:

- *African Textiles: Archives of Knowledge* unites fashion ensembles by **Imane Ayissi**, **Xanthe Somers'** 2022 sculpture *Fruits of our Forefathers* exploring the legacy of colonial history in Zimbabwe, and **Sanaa Gateja's** intricate wall hanging *Ripe and Ready*, 2022, reflecting on the importance of beads in African history from trading to adornment and spiritual practices.
- *Transgender and Non-Binary Artists – Art Fund New Collecting and Research* brings together a series of new acquisitions, supported by Art Fund, by creatives including photographer **Mariette Pathy Allen**, artist **Nicki Green**, and **Mx Justin Vivian Bond**, a singer-songwriter and actor at the forefront of trans visibility and activism.
- *Conservation – Modern Materials* explores how synthetic materials deteriorate over time. Spotlighting objects from **Vivienne Westwood's** 1990s rubberised cotton raincoat, **false eyelashes**, and electronics from headphones to **iPhones**, the display reveals how the V&A's conservation teams actively preserve objects.
- *Collecting Protest* explores the power of creativity to bring about social change. From a 1993 **Hackney Pride** t-shirt to a c.1910 'VOTES FOR WOMEN' scarf attributed to the **Women's Social and Political Union**, and a 1980s poster by **Docklands Community Poster Project**, campaigning for the needs of local people during the development of London's Docklands.

### Go behind-the-scenes

V&A East Storehouse offers a rare opportunity to watch, listen and get up close to the day-to-day activity of a busy working museum store. From intricate conservation work to new acquisitions arriving for processing, and objects being carefully packaged up to go in and out on loan, there's always something new to see.



V&A East Storehouse is home to four new multi-purpose conservation studios. Through a glass overlook visitors can see what's happening in the studio, while a live feed screen and mobile cameras allow conservators to show what they are doing and talk to visitors. The in-house photography team will capture the V&A's collections and latest acquisitions in new photography and post-production studios using advanced image-making techniques for research and large-scale photography rigs in the stores. The Collections Care and Access teams will undertake technical and logistical activities across V&A East Storehouse, using specialised equipment to move and install objects. At every opportunity, when safe to do so, Museum Technicians will move threshold gates so visitors can get as close to the action as possible.

### The Study Centre

V&A East Storehouse's Study Centre is home to the V&A's new *Order an Object* service, and the meeting point for daily drop-in *Object Encounters*, a series of serendipitous sessions led by staff and visiting experts that spotlight different aspects of the collection.

V&A East Storehouse's Study Centre is made up of a welcome space and four multi-use areas, including **The Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion** to explore the intricacy of the V&A's 100,000+ items of fashion, accessories and textiles. It also hosts **The David Bowie Centre**, and a dedicated **space for viewing digital collection material**, including the V&A's **National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP)**, which holds over 300 live performance recordings made since 1992, including Royal Court Theatre's production of *Jerusalem* by Jez Butterworth (2009) and Bush Theatre's *Strange Fruit* by Caryl Phillips (2019), among others.

### The David Bowie Centre

Opening **on 13 September 2025**, V&A East Storehouse's free to access **David Bowie Centre** will be the new home of **David Bowie's Archive**, recently acquired by the V&A through the generosity of the David Bowie Estate, the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Warner Music Group. For the first time, the archive of **90,000+ items**, which traces Bowie's creative processes as a musical innovator, cultural icon, and advocate for self-expression and reinvention, will be accessible to everyone. Highlights include stage costumes such as Bowie's breakthrough **Ziggy Stardust ensembles** designed by Freddie Burretti (1972), **lyrics** for songs including **Fame** (1975), **Heroes** (1977) and **Ashes to Ashes** (1980), as well as examples of the **'cut up' method of writing** introduced to Bowie by the writer William Burroughs.

Split into three separate zones, The David Bowie Centre will have a mix of small, curated displays and audio-visual installations. There will also be quieter study areas, where visitors can delve into all aspects of Bowie's archive on their own. From Bowie's iconic costume to musical instruments, make-up charts, stage models, Oblique Strategies card decks, personal notes, writings, lyrics and music, sketches, designs and more, at V&A East Storehouse, visitors can get closer to David Bowie than ever before.



To develop the inaugural David Bowie Centre displays, the curatorial team consulted with 18–25-year-olds from the four Olympic Boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest through London Legacy Development Corporation and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park’s Elevate Youth Voice. The small displays spotlight the wide range of objects within the archive and Bowie’s multi-dimensional creative approach, including his unrealised projects, collaborations, and influences. They also reveal the stories behind the creation of some of Bowie’s iconic albums and personas from Aladdin Sane to The Thin White Duke, and his significant influence on creatives from **Lana del Rey** to **Lil Nas X** and **Issey Miyake**. A series of rotating guest curators – including Bowie’s collaborators, experts, contemporary creatives, and young people from **V&A East’s Youth Collective** – will also be invited to share their insights and perspectives on the archive.

### V&A East Youth Collective

V&A East’s Youth Collective – a rolling 10-month paid opportunity for east Londoners between 16 and 24 that helps participants develop their own creative practice – is now recruiting for its fifth cohort. The Youth Collective plays a key role in shaping V&A East, from programming to gallery design, developing a manifesto for the V&A East brand, interviewing consultants and co-producing displays and creative commissions for V&A East’s two sites. A mixed media artwork, *How We Make* – a reimagined east London tube map highlighting cultural places that are important to Youth Collective members – in collaboration with artist Olivia Twist, will feature in V&A East Storehouse’s opening displays.

### Jobs and opportunities

V&A East will create 70+ new permanent roles across its two new sites – from Front of House to Creative Studio Managers, Collections Access Officers and Volunteer Coordinators – and include part time and flexible working options. Recruitment, beginning in October 2024, will be inclusive, creating opportunities for those living in the four Olympic boroughs, with emphasis on potential and behaviours that mirror V&A East’s values of equity, creativity, collaboration and generosity.

As part of the process, the team will partner with Good Growth Hub’s Creative and Cultural Opportunities Programme, a pre-employability bootcamp. From CV and confidence building workshops to interview techniques and meet the team sessions, all candidates participating in the programme will get a guaranteed interview.

### Supporters

*V&A East Storehouse opens on 31 May 2025, and is supported by Garfield Weston Foundation, The Foyle Foundation, Frédéric Jousset, the Wolfson Foundation, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, Clore Duffield Foundation and many other generous supporters. We would also like to thank The Department for Culture, Media and Sport.*



*The acquisition of The David Bowie Archive and creation of The David Bowie Centre has been made possible thanks to the David Bowie Estate and a generous donation from the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Warner Music Group.*

### About V&A East

- V&A East is dedicated to creative opportunity and its power to bring change. Two free cultural destinations – V&A East Storehouse, which opens on 31 May 2025, and V&A East Museum, scheduled to open in spring 2026– will open up the V&A collection for all, celebrate making in all its forms and create new possibilities for everyone.
- Diller Scofidio + Renfro are lead architects for V&A East Storehouse. IDK are the designers of The David Bowie Centre and the flexible ‘kit of parts’ object display system throughout V&A East Storehouse’s self-guided experience. Fieldwork Facility are the wayfinding and interpretation designers. We Not I are the external signage designers.
- In September 2024, V&A East launched *back2back*, its pre-opening live events programme, celebrating east London’s creative community and amplifying diverse local and global stories through live performance, films, installations, talks, hands-on workshops and more. The first, *InBetween: A Latinx Takeover*, took place on 28 September 2024, in collaboration with UCL East.

### About East Bank

- East Bank is the UK’s newest cultural quarter at the heart of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The place where everything happens – entertainment, inspiration and discovery – and open to everyone who visits, lives and works in East London.
- East Bank represents the biggest ever cultural investment by the Mayor of London, with support from HM Government and the four Olympic boroughs.
- East Bank is made up of BBC Music Studios; London College of Fashion, UAL; Sadler’s Wells East; UCL (University College London); V&A East Museum & Storehouse.
- London College of Fashion, UAL, and UCL East (University College London) opened the doors of their new campuses in Autumn 2023. Sadler’s Wells East will open February 2025, V&A East Storehouse opens on 31 May 2025, V&A East Museum is scheduled to open in spring 2026, and BBC Music Studios in late 2026/early 2027.
- A powerhouse for innovation, creativity and learning in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, East Bank is rooted in the diverse communities of East London and is a reflection of the creative spirit and the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

