

News Release
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V&A opens first major exhibition on Korean pop culture, *Hallyu! The Korean Wave*

Hallyu! The Korean Wave

24 September 2022 – 25 June 2023

Gallery 39 and North Court

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism - Republic of Korea and Genesis

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On Saturday, the V&A opens the landmark exhibition *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* – the first exhibition of its kind to celebrate the colourful and dynamic popular culture of South Korea, following its early origins to its place on the global stage today.

From K-pop costumes and a newly revealed interactive K-pop dance challenge, to K-drama and cinema props and posters, alongside photography, sculpture, fashion, video and pop culture ephemera, the exhibition invites visitors to delve into the phenomenon known as ‘hallyu’ – meaning ‘Korean Wave’. Hallyu rose to prominence in the late 1990s, rippling across Asia before reaching all corners of the world and challenging the currents of global pop culture today.

Hallyu! The Korean Wave explores the makings of the Korean Wave through cinema, drama, music and fandoms, and underlines its cultural impact on the beauty and fashion industries. The exhibition features around 200 objects across four thematic sections – including some loans never seen in the UK before – alongside pop culture ephemera and digital displays.

Highlights include an immersive re-creation of *Parasite*’s bathroom set, and an array of iconic costumes and props seen in K-drama, film and music – including from hit Netflix series *Squid Game*, and outfits worn by different generations of K-pop idols, from PSY, to aespa and ATEEZ. It also presents monumental artworks, including by Nam June Paik, Ham Kyungah and Gwon Osang; excerpts from well-known K-cinema, drama, and K-pop music videos; around 20 high fashion looks by Tchae Kim, Miss Sohee and Minju Kim among others; as well as early examples of advertising and branding, including an original poster from the Seoul Olympics, and the first Korean branded cosmetic from the 1910s. In the exhibition, hallyu will also be used as a

gateway to explore traditional and contemporary Korean culture by connecting historic objects with popular culture and socio-political events.

A new highlight – revealed today – is an **interactive K-pop dance challenge** created in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture, inviting visitors to try their hand at K-pop choreography for **PSY's** 'That That', co-written and co-produced with **SUGA** from **BTS**.

Rosalie Kim, curator of *Hallyu! The Korean Wave*, said: *"South Korea has captivated the world over with hallyu, its vibrant and creative popular culture, which has transformed the country's image from one devastated by the Korean War to that of a leading cultural powerhouse in the era of social media and digital culture today. This phenomenon has been amplified by tech-savvy and socially conscious global fanbases, further raising the profile and relevance of hallyu around the world, and we're delighted to be bringing its energy and dynamism to the V&A this autumn in the first exhibition of its kind."*

About the Exhibition:

The exhibition opens with a familiar example of hallyu: **PSY's** viral 2012 hit single 'Gangnam Style', with his iconic pink suit jacket on display. The song and its quirky dance moves were an overnight sensation, and it became the first music video to reach 1 billion views on YouTube. The hugely successful video was an early reflection of hallyu's international appeal that went on to launch a global phenomenon, inspiring parodies and cover versions across the world, several examples of which, filmed across multiple continents, also feature in this introduction.

Section one, **'From Rubble to Smartphones'**, provides historical context to the meteoric rise of hallyu, highlighting how – within living memory – South Korea rapidly evolved from a country ravaged by war in the late 1950s to a leading cultural powerhouse by the early 2000s. Korea's 20th-century history is marked by the Japanese colonial occupation, the territorial division that led to the Korean War, and the subsequent 27 years of military rule. In the 1960s and 70s South Korea experienced rapid industrialisation and economic growth, and the country was propelled onto the international stage in 1988 with the Seoul Summer Olympics, changing Korea's image overseas for the first time. Despite the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, bold strategies and IT innovations turned South Korea into one of the most digitally connected countries in the world by the late 90s. Korea's modern history is represented and explored in the exhibition through photography, posters and archive materials, alongside objects ranging from Olympics posters to early examples of electronics – including the world's first commercial MP3 player – and a monumental 1986 video sculpture by artist **Nam June Paik**, featuring 33 TV monitors.

Section two – **'Spotlighting K-drama and Cinema'** – focuses on the remarkable success of K-drama and film, charting in turn their rise in popularity from the late 1990s to the present day, through multimedia, installations, posters, props and costumes. Highlights in this section include the iconic pink guard costumes and green tracksuit from hit Netflix series ***Squid Game***,

and a recreation of the bathroom set from Bong Joon-Ho's Oscar-winning film **Parasite**. This is the first time the bathroom in the Kim family's *banjiha* – or semi-basement apartment – has been re-created, under the guidance of its acclaimed Production Designer Lee Ha Jun. Traditional Korean costumes and props are also on display, including hats seen in Joseon era zombie series **Kingdom**, and the grooming kit from **The Handmaiden**. Finally, this section showcases webtoons, a Korean innovation of digital cartoons designed for mobile devices, as a source of inspiration for many K-dramas. It explores recurring themes in TV series, mixing genres and local narratives, such as the country's relationship with North Korea as depicted on screen.

'Sounding K-pop and Fandoms', the third section, delves into the explosion of K-pop music around the world, as well as underlining the crucial roles social media and fandoms play in increasing their reach. Visitors enter the gallery through a corridor lined by fan lightsticks, then are greeted by posters, ephemera and album covers from early K-pop bands like **Seo Taiji and Boys** and **BoA**, before progressing through to explore the concept of 'Idols' in K-pop. This immersive room hosts music video excerpts by the likes of BIGBANG, NCT and BLACKPINK, surrounded by artworks, ephemera and costumes. Highlights include a monumental three-metre-high sculpture of **G-Dragon** by **Gwon Osang**, whilst costumes on display include **aespa's** original iridescent outfits from the music video 'Next Level', and British punk fashion-inspired ensembles worn by four members of **ATEEZ** in the music video 'Fireworks'. The V&A has also worked with celebrated K-pop Style and Visual Director **Gee Eun**, who has styled idols like **BLACKPINK** and **BIGBANG**, and Style Director **Balko**, who has worked with **BTS** and **NCT**, to display two 'Idol' looks each. A highlight in the 'Sounding K-pop and Fandoms' section is an interactive K-pop dance challenge, which invites visitors to try their hand at the dance moves for **PSY's** 'That That', co-written and co-produced with **SUGA** from **BTS**, with choreography by **B.B Trippin**. The challenge was created in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture Lab, with visitors' renditions becoming part of an evolving collective dance displayed in the space. Finally, the section also explores the hugely important role that K-pop fandoms play in popularising and spreading K-pop around the world, and suspended from the ceiling are a selection of K-pop banners acquired for the museum as part of a public call-out for submissions.

The final section in *Hallyu!*, titled **'Making K-beauty and Fashion'**, presents K-beauty and fashion, underlining their origin whilst showcasing their innovative and experimental approach that led to new aesthetic standards both inside and outside of Korea. It also highlights how product placement in K-dramas and endorsements from K-pop idols have amplified the international profile of K-beauty and fashion. Featuring cosmetics packaging from the 13th century to the present day, the exhibition traces packaging's design evolution, from ornate porcelain pots to items including face mask wrappings boasting idols as superheroes. *Hallyu!* concludes with K-fashion, showcasing over 20 looks by contemporary hanbok and fashion designers from Korea and the Korean diaspora. Whilst K-fashion is often characterised by its fun, fast-moving streetstyle and gender fluid outfits as illustrated by **Kye**, **D-Antidote** and **Blindness**, other designers are reimagining the silhouette of hanbok, the national costume of Korea. On display is a look specially created for the V&A by acclaimed

stylist **Suh Younghee**, alongside a K-pop hanbok by **C-ZANN E**, a pink jacket by **Danha**, and a purple *cheollik* dress by **Tchai Kim**, drawing their inspiration from traditional garments and patterns. The section also features hanbok-inspired daily wear designed for and by a younger generation, including looks by **Ji Won Choi**, **Darcycom**, and a contemporary hanbok overcoat by **Baek Oak Soo**, worn by **RM** from **BTS** in 2018. The final display of the exhibition is dedicated to contemporary Korean fashion designers creating colourful, showstopping garments, including looks by **Minju Kim**, **Münn**, and **Miss Sohee**.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* please contact Sophie Steel on s.steel@vam.ac.uk / 020 7942 2279 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* runs from 24 September 2022 – 25 June 2023.
- Adult tickets £20, student and under-26 tickets £13. Tickets are on sale at vam.ac.uk/kwave
- The exhibition has been curated for the V&A by Lead Curator Rosalie Kim and Project Curator Yoojin Choi.
- The exhibition is accompanied by a new V&A publication edited by Rosalie Kim. RRP £30.
- The exhibition design team consists of Na Kim as Creative Lead, with Studio MUTT as 3D designers.
- The V&A has been collecting Korean art and design since 1888, and now holds one of the largest collections of contemporary Korean craft and design outside Korea, including graphic design, fashion and digital art. It was the first European institution to host the seminal exhibition the National Art Treasures of Korea in 1961, and opened London's first permanent gallery devoted to Korean arts in 1992.

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Support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition supporters, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism - Republic of Korea; and Genesis, with additional support from the Bagri Foundation, Google Arts & Culture, LG Electronics Business Solutions Company, LG Display, Netmarble Healer.B, and YouTube Shorts.

About Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism - Republic of Korea

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) develops and implements a wide range of policies to promote culture, arts, sports, tourism and religion so as to provide cultural opportunities both to Korea and the world.

Situated under MCST, the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS) operates 33 cultural centres around the globe in 28 countries. Their goal is to further enhance Korea's national brand through the promotion of Korean heritage, the arts and creative industries. Based just off London's Trafalgar Square, the Korean Cultural Centre UK has operated in the capital since 2008.

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism: www.mcst.go.kr/english

Korean Culture and Information Service: www.kocis.go.kr/eng

Korean Cultural Centre UK: www.kccuk.org.uk

About Genesis

Genesis is a global luxury automotive brand that delivers the highest standards of performance, design, safety and innovation while looking towards a more sustainable future. With a commitment to hospitality and great service, Genesis strives to build sincere relationships with customers and, above all, to respect the greatest luxury – their time. Genesis designs customer experiences that go beyond products, embodying audacious, progressive and distinctly Korean characteristics within its unique “Athletic Elegance” design identity. With a growing range of luxury models — including the G70, G80, GV60, GV70, and GV80 — Genesis aims to lead the age of electrification by focusing on a dual electrification strategy involving fuel-cell and battery EVs, starting with its G80 and GV60 electric models. Genesis has stated its commitment to becoming a 100% zero-emission vehicle brand by 2030 and pursuing carbon net zero by 2035. Since its initial launch in Korea, Genesis has emerged in key global markets. For more information, please visit the official website at <https://www.genesis.com>.

About the Bagri Foundation

The Bagri Foundation is a UK registered charity whose main mission is to realise unique, unexpected ideas from and on Asia, weaving traditional culture with contemporary thinking. The Foundation provides support towards artistic and educational projects and establishes collaborative partnerships with institutions that range in scale—from small cultural organisations that share our ethos and mission to large national and international partners like the British Museum and Hayward Gallery in London, Artes Mundi Prize in Cardiff, The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, and La Biennale di Venezia. The Foundation's supported projects include film, visual arts, music, literature, courses and lectures, and each of them aims at giving artists and experts from across Asia and the diaspora, or those inspired by the continent, wider visibility on the global stage. www.bagrifoundation.org

About Google Arts & Culture

[Google Arts & Culture](https://www.google.com/culture) puts over 2,500 museums at your fingertips. It's your doorway to explore culture in all its diversity. Discover stories about cultural heritage ranging from [Van Gogh's bedroom paintings](#), [Puerto Rico's heritage](#), [Sports in Australia](#) or the [women's right movement](#) to [ancient Maya temples](#), [Japanese Food](#) and [Indian Railways](#). The Google Arts & Culture app is free and available on [the web](#), on [iOS](#) and [Android](#). The team has been an innovation partner for cultural institutions since 2011. Google Arts & Culture develops technologies that help preserve and share culture and allow curators to create engaging exhibitions online and offline.

About LG Electronics Business Solutions Company

The LG Business Solutions Company is a trusted partner offering innovative products and solutions for diverse industries worldwide. With a portfolio of unique offerings, such as industry-leading OLED signage, LED signage and commercial TVs, LG is a respected name among customers around the world. For more on LG's Business Solutions, visit www.LG.com/b2b

About LG Display

LG Display is the world's leading innovator of display technologies, including thin-film transistor liquid crystal and OLED displays. The company manufactures display panels in a broad range of sizes and specifications primarily for use in TVs, notebook computers, desktop monitors, and various other applications.

For more news and information about LG Display, please visit www.lgdisplay.com.

For more information about OLED technology, please visit www.oledspace.com

About Netmarble Healer.B

As a subsidiary of global IT & game developer Netmarble, Netmarble Healer.B is founded with the mission of bringing beauty into the lives of people around the world. Netmarble Healer.B have launched contemporary art & beauty brand 'V&A Beauty' under a global licensing agreement with the V&A. The collaboration involves the joint development of skincare and beauty ranges, inspired by the V&A's decorative arts collections.

About YouTube Shorts

YouTube Shorts allows you to create, edit, and share short videos (think 60 seconds or less) with the world. Whether you're sharing your voice with the masses or just making funny videos for your friends, all you need is your phone and an idea, and you're in the mix. Averaging more than 30 billion daily views, YouTube Shorts is helping creators connect, share and grow their global communities and play with a new format on YouTube. To learn more about how to create a YouTube Short [see here](#).

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