

# V&A East Storehouse

## The Order an Object Experience

Redesign the V&A / Experience Design Open Call brief

**Agency brief to design and deliver a new enticing and memorable experience that enables people to have direct, up-close engagement with museum objects and the stories behind them.**

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The logo consists of the letters 'V', '&', and 'A' in a large, elegant, serif font. The letters are rendered in a light pink or rose gold color. The 'V' and 'A' are tall and narrow, while the '&' is smaller and positioned between them.

# What is included in this creative brief?

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# Summary

## What?

We are looking for a partner to collaborate with us on designing and delivering a new enticing and memorable experience that enables people to have direct, up-close engagement with museum objects and the stories behind them.

We want to create a unique selling point for the V&A East Storehouse and a new kind of cultural experience for London.

## Where?

V&A East Storehouse is a new cultural destination in east London. Opening at Here East in 2024, **V&A East Storehouse** offers a new immersive experience, taking visitors behind the scenes and providing unprecedented public access to V&A collections housed within. V&A East Storehouse will host displays, events, courses and more. This experience will be one part of that public offer.

## Who?

Our target audience is 16–24-year-olds, largely from the six Olympic boroughs. We aim to welcome new audiences that would not ordinarily come to museums.

## Why?

We want to reimagine the way people engage with the V&A's collections of art and design, increase access to those collections and diversify our audience.

## We are looking for

A creative partner who has devised interactive experiences, ideally with a long-term run, operating within complex physical environments and for our target audience.

## Context

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 5,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire, and inform.

The V&A family is expanding. Over the next three years, the V&A family of sites will be joined by a transformed Museum of Childhood, renamed Young V&A, in 2023 and V&A East Storehouse and V&A East Museum; these two new sites are currently under construction in Stratford's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park opening in 2024 and 2025 respectively. Through this expansion, our aim is to grow and diversify our audience, and mean more to more people.

During this period of transition, we are undertaking a series of projects that reimagine how the V&A works and the services and experiences it offers. One of these projects is Order an Object, which aims to enable more people to explore the behind-the-scenes of our sites and to engage in unique ways with collections that are not on display, facilitating visitors to create an experience with objects that is meaningful to them. The Order an Object Experience strand at V&A East Storehouse is one of the offerings under this banner.

## Brief

### 1. Audience

This new interactive experience will be available to all our visitors at V&A East Storehouse, but we are prioritising the interests and needs of our target audience, namely 16–24-year-olds, mostly local, who are motivated by seeking leisure experiences. They're typically culturally engaged but are not interested in museums.

### 2. Objectives

We would like the experience to:

- facilitate meaningful encounters, moments of connection and interactions with stored collections that are entertaining, personal, fun, and surprising.
- foster a sense of ownership and agency amongst the public over the V&A's collections.

- Large-scale participation (min. 5,000 people pa) at the V&A East Storehouse, aimed at 16–24-year-olds within the first year of opening (summer 2024)

A successful interactive experience will be one that is

- of value to our target audience, providing a gateway to other museum experiences, resources, and services
- a unique selling point that motivates an audience who are typically uninterested in museums
- a new kind of cultural experience for London
- scalable

### **3. Features**

We have done some preliminary exploration and research around the form the experience might take, working with creative agency Flying Object. This exploratory work serves to inform the direction the interactive experience may take.

We would like the new experience to:

- Be a social experience that you do with others
- Be free to the public, and financially sustainable to run
- Play to the audiences' excitement for going behind the scenes
- Be built for serendipitous discovery, with no required advanced planning or booking
- Motivate repeat visits, not just one-offs (e.g., through changing content)
- And repeat visits to the wider offer at the V&A East Storehouse
- Align with the V&A East Storehouse's narratives and wider V&A East Storehouse curatorial programme and experience
- Be inclusive, with minimum barriers to participation

### **4. Budget and phasing**

The fee for this partnership is £60,000 GBP to be paid in arrears in four instalments.

### **5. Deliverables**

#### **Concept and proposition**

A clear expression of the core idea, that aligns with V&A's project goals, constraints and audience needs, wants, motivations and behaviours.

Deliverable: presentation, research findings.

### **Content**

Design and creation of the content of the experience or experiences and interactions, whether it's storytelling, images, instructions, film, graphics, or something else. This may be in collaboration with V&A curators.

Deliverable: creative output, tools, and guidelines.

### **Operating model**

Design of a robust and cost-effective operating model, including recommendations on people, technology and infrastructure needed to support the experience. This will be created in collaboration with teams across the V&A.

Deliverable: report

### **Service design**

Collaborate with a service designer appointed by the V&A, who will work with you to develop the visitor journey and touchpoints. This is to ensure that the interactive experience works alongside other services that help people access objects in storage and the wider offer at the Storehouse – both facilitated programmes and the self-guided visit.

## **6. Experience and expertise we are looking for**

### **Essential**

- Successful delivery of public-facing experiences that have had an extended run time (rather than short-term installations)
- Experience and interaction design
- Audience research and user-testing
- Proposition development
- User journey mapping and design
- Operational modelling
- Ability to work in complex environments and with complex requirements

### **Desirable**

- Co-design
- Understanding of east London Communities

- Service design and blueprinting
- Experience working with museum or heritage sector

## 7. Timings

**Appointment:** September 2022

**Deliverables provided (in agreed phases):** October 2022 - May 2023

**The Experience opens to the public:** 2024

## 8. Work that has been done to date

We have been collaborating with our audience as we develop V&A East and undertaking market research.

The creative agency Flying Object have been working with us, exploring the possible directions for the interactive experience at the V&A East Storehouse, and testing them with a focus group.

### **Our findings:**

The target audience for this experience do not visit museums:

- They do not think of museums as places for them.
- They associate museums with learning rather than with connection, joy and excitement.
- They do not know what a storehouse is, nor what is expected to happen there.
- They are not familiar with the breadth of the V&A collections.

Our target audiences are seeking entertaining experiences: they see museums as educational spaces and immersive experiences as entertainment.

Their responses to interacting with the V&A stored collections:

- Start with what you know: the collections can be overwhelming, and it is easier to start a search with what is familiar.

- The collections generate surprise and delight: the Storehouse is home to some of the more weird and wonderful objects, and respondents went through layers of enjoyable surprise as they explored the collections.

Their responses to interacting with museum objects:

- Their emotional responses create social interactions and dialogue
- Objects that provoked an emotional response from our participants led to interesting discussions – even if those emotions were not always positive
- They valued enabled autonomous exploration and given the permission to roam people engaged more deeply.
- Nostalgia is powerful even for young people: personal, nostalgic memories connect and add emotional depth to objects in the collections.
- Touching and using is a compelling offer: getting ‘hands-on’ with objects significantly elevates the experience.

Flying Object proposed that we develop a range of physical experiences with different objects, with each experience involving active engagement from the visitor, e.g., posing, listening, sharing, viewing, playing.

**We want to develop what these interactions might be, for example, how might we:**

- facilitate an encounter that could inspire a 17-year-old musician?
- create an encounter that could connect someone to their heritage who migrated to east London 10 years ago?
- design an experience that could delight a *Bridgerton* enthusiast?

We expect that there are some experiences that are easily scalable and can be undertaken by hundreds of people, while others may only be undertaken rarely due to intensive staffing requirements, or the nature of the object involved.

Flying Object described the proposition as a pyramid of experiences, with the most resource intensive and logistically challenging experiences at the top undertaken by the fewest visitors, and simpler, less resource intensive, less complex, experiences at the bottom of the pyramid. We are especially interested in the experiences that focus on the lower tiers of that theoretical pyramid.



## 9. Constraints

### Financial

A cost or feasibility assessment is not included with the proposal, but we will be working within existing budgets and so consideration should be given to the upfront and ongoing operational impacts. We are seeking a proposal that can be scaled cost-effectively.

Due to the financial constraints, we imagine it might not be feasible to create new digital products as part of this experience.

### Collections care and access

We have security, conservation, collections care and collections management policies and procedures. Our team of experts in these areas will work with the appointed partner to find ways to create the most extraordinary experiences possible for the public while mitigating potential challenges and opportunities.

### Building

The V&A East Storehouse building has been designed and is being constructed. Interventions are possible, particularly in wayfinding, messaging, digital content, staffing, and furniture, but we do not foresee a significant additional construction or 3D intervention in the space to facilitate this experience.

### Access to site

During the construction of the Storehouse and the installation of the collections to the site, there is limited access to both the site and collections. We will work with internal teams to facilitate as much access as possible.

## How to apply

### Stage 1: entry submission

If you would be interested in partnering with us on this work, please download an entry form and submit it by **Sunday 4 September 2022** to [redesign@vam.ac.uk](mailto:redesign@vam.ac.uk).

If you would like further clarifications, there will be a [Teams Live Q&A session](#) led by the V&A team on **Tuesday 23 August 2022 at 12:30 pm BST**.

## Stage 2: interviews

Interviews will be held at V&A Museum South Kensington, Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2RL, on **Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 of September 2022**. If you are selected to attend an interview, you will be asked to design and deliver a 1h30m workshop or interactive presentation that covers the following:

- a) Share your initial creative response to the brief. What possibilities would you be interested in exploring? What type of experience do you think might create a meaningful interaction with our stored collections for our target audience?
- b) An outline of, how you would develop a proposition and creatively develop ideas
- c) An initial high-level proposal for audience engagement describing how you would research/test your idea

The successful partner will be confirmed on **Thursday 29 September 2022** and is expected to begin their onboarding from Monday 3 October and attend the first meeting with V&A staff on Tuesday 11 October 2022.

If you are unsuccessful at the interview stage, an honorarium of £500 will be paid.

For any enquiries, please contact the V&A Redesign team at [redesign@vam.ac.uk](mailto:redesign@vam.ac.uk).

# Appendix

## V&A East Storehouse

At V&A East Storehouse, we are creating a new type of museum experience that is designed around and within the V&A's stored collections, spanning 5,000 years of art, design, and performance.

Designed by New York-based practice Diller, Scofidio + Renfro and supported by Austin-Smith: Lord, the Storehouse is a purpose-built space for 250,000 objects, 350,000 library books and 1,000 archives, and will be a constantly changing hive of activity, offering visitors something new every time they visit. There will be self-guided routes taking visitors behind the scenes and we will open up access to the V&A's collections like never before. We want to blur boundaries between public and traditionally 'back of house' museum spaces, so we are bringing together conservation labs, working stores, research and reading rooms, galleries, displays, performance spaces and creative studios to form a 360-degree view of museum life and a unique and experiential experience for visitors to return to.

This facility will revolutionise access to our collections, both as a museum experience and as a local, national and international collections hub. Our visitors will be invited behind the scenes to see the work of the V&A, showing them why and what we collect as well as how we care, conserve and store and research it.

Visitors will freely explore the public areas of V&A East Storehouse, seeing the breadth of our collections from fashion, textiles, furniture, theatre, and performance; to painting, sculpture, ceramics, glass, design, architecture, and digital. For the first time we can display some of the V&A's largest objects, including a complete Frank Lloyd Wright-designed office and stage cloths from famous theatrical and dance performances. Further areas will be dedicated to object and archive study, practical workshops, and event spaces.

V&A East Storehouse is a space for our visitors to use the collection as a creative sourcebook. We want our visitors to feel that the V&A's collections are for everyone and represent everyone.

Along-side many other offerings, Order an Object will help deliver on the promise of the Storehouse, to enable people to engage with all the collection, collapsing the distinction between what is on display front of house and what is in store behind the scenes.

## What we are looking for in a partner

### We want a partner who:

- 1. Challenges, and generates curiosity.** We are looking for a visionary partner who can demonstrate innovation. We are also looking for a partner that knows how to challenge us to become better and to better understand what people want.
- 2. Commits to delivering against the V&A's 5 strategic objectives.** Whilst we are not looking for a twin, it is important that our partner understands and helps us drive our mission, vision and values forward, so we achieve our objectives.
- 3. Works with emotional intelligence and excels at communication and teamwork.** Our partner needs to work seamlessly and collaboratively with a variety of staff, including project managers, museum experts and operational teams across the V&A, adapting and tailoring methods as required.
- 4. Designs and tests in context and practice.** We are looking for a partner who will continuously design, test, and iterate with all parties involved in the delivery, from start to finish, and support us to incrementally deliver value as we progress.
- 5. Thinks and works in consideration of our financial, operational, and technical constraints.** We are looking for a solution that is ambitious, but achievable.
- 6. Fosters an environment of inclusion, diversity and equality.** We would only work with a partner that champions these principles in their workplace and in all their working activities.
- 7. Prepares for growth.** Our partner will help us to design an experience that can scale over time as we expand and evolve.
- 8. Delivers outputs and activities in line with V&A policies.** This includes Information Governance, Safeguarding, EDI, People, Health and Safety, Climate and Sustainability, Security & Vetting, Finance, IT and Cybersecurity and best practise in audience research and community engagement.
- 9. Co-designs with our audiences and empowers them.** This experience must be centred on our message, mission and principles; for our visitors to feel part of one V&A community.

## Principles for Public Access to Collections not on display

The V&A believes easy, safe, equitable, and meaningful access to the V&A collections should be enabled for as many members of the public as possible. Access fosters greater appreciation and understanding of the collections, which in turn ensures their future relevance and investment in their care and preservation.

Our commitment to access is underpinned by the following principles:

1. The public has the right to access the collections held in trust for their benefit, including when not on display. Our presumption is towards enabling access to any object or material in the collections, for any given reason, free of charge.
2. We have a dual responsibility to provide access for current audiences and to care for and preserve the collections for future generations. This balance underpins our access principles.
3. We will strive to make both digital and physical access to the collections useful and meaningful. What is considered useful or meaningful is determined by the individuals, and their needs or situation.
4. We will follow a risk assessment-based approach to determine the extent to which access can be provided through viewing, handling, examination, or other forms of engagement, to appropriately manage and prevent the risk of harm or injury to our staff, our visitors, and our collections.
5. The provision and form of access will be determined in accordance with the factors outlined in the V&A Public Access Triage Procedure and the V&A Collections Handling Policy. These include object availability, condition, resource, and safety.
6. If requests for access must be prioritised, our staff will take the following factors into account, judgement of which must be based on the spirit of the above principles:
  - The scale of wider direct or indirect public benefits of access
  - Members of the public who have not used the service before and those who are prioritised in our audience strategy
  - The degree of significance or impact of access to the individual's needs

Exceptions to this policy may be made only with the approval of the Head of Collection Access.

## V&A Experience Principles

**Invitation:** People feel welcome, included and like they belong

- Whoever they are, wherever they're from, people experience a warm generous welcome at the V&A
- The measure of our welcome is our humanity, clarity and the ease we create for our visitors
- We're participatory, inviting, and open

**Tailoring:** People understand what the V&A can offer them, where and when

- We do the work to make things easy for people, with the right information at the right time, at the right point in their journey with us
- People are really clear about what the V&A means to them
- We shape our offer around people's needs and interests

**Ownership:** People believe the V&A is theirs, to own and to shape

- People feel that the V&A belongs to them and is a resource they can tap into – whether that's our physical spaces, our online offer, our insights and knowledge...
- Everyone who wants to, can help shape the V&A – they're invited to influence and change what we do (and how), and in meaningful ways
- People are aware that the V&A's collections are their collections

**Inspiration:** People leave inspired

- We work every day to share the power of creativity with everyone
- Whether they encounter us online or come to visit, people come away feeling inspired by creativity – its power to entertain and move, to enrich our lives, open our minds and change the world