

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Harper's Bazaar
The new V&A East: Five things you need to know
Charlotte Brook
1 July 2021

BAZAAR

The new V&A East: Five things you need to know

Diversity and dynamism will be at the heart of the museum's major new Stratford outpost



Image: O'donnell + Tuomey / Ninety90, 2018123

The venerable Victoria & Albert, which has stood in South Kensington, west London for over 150 years, has long positioned itself as the vanguard of art and design, but yesterday, 30 June, we were given insight into its most modern manoeuvre yet. The museum's new outpost, which will open in 2024 and 2025, comprises two sister sites in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, V&A East Storehouse and V&A East Museum. Speaking of the importance of this new, dynamic site for the arts, Justine Simons, the deputy mayor for culture and the creative industries said: "Over the past year, we have all, universally, found comfort in nature, and culture: we painted rainbows, we danced in our kitchens. As we come out the other side, we need cultural institutions – and they need us."

Here are five things you need to know about this new museum, containing a collection of treasures owned by us all.

It aims to make art for everyone...

The founding mission is simple - to make the arts accessible to all, says museum director, the British cultural historian, writer and broadcaster Gus Casely-Hayford. The ambition is for the site to be a place of connection, solace, reflection and inspiration, or in Casely-Hayford's words, "a spa for the soul".



Image: Copyright Jamie Stoker, Courtesy Of Victoria And Albert Museum, London

It'll offer a library like no other.

The Storehouse, one part of the site, will be the permanent home to 350,000 books and 250,000 treasures of the museum's collection, spanning 5,000 years of creativity, where lines are blurred between behind-the-scenes back-of-house and public showcasing: visitors can see items being restored and prepared for exhibition. The purpose-built warehouse, designed by the New York architectural practice Diller Scofidio + Renfro, will feel like a large-scale library. Along with books, guests can expect to see items including a pair of ancient Egyptian shoes, a walk-in Frank Lloyd Wright interior to the Glastonbury Festival archives.

Balenciaga inspired the museum building.

The museum, a soaring edifice inspired by Balenciaga's designs and masterminded by the Dublin-based O'Donnell + Tuomey, will contain ever-changing exhibition spaces and galleries displaying objects traversing time and space, from Eames furniture to Rei Kawakubo's clothes.

THAT Molly Goddard dress will be on show.

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Molly Goddard's legendary Daria dress, in hot pink, is one of the V&A East's most exciting founding acquisitions. Made from 61 metre of tulle, one of only a handful ever made, it will be on show as a powerful, feminine, feminist statement, asking questions about female empowerment and self-representation.

Image: Ben Broomfield

It will be an ode to East London...

It is not by chance that the V&A's latest project is opening in E20, at the centre of the four boroughs Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. V&A East is an ode to the spirit of its area. As Casely-Hayford put it: "Long before Yinka Shonibare and Molly Goddard set up their studios here, before Alexander McQueen came to study, before David Bailey was born here, even before Dickens came this way for creative inspiration, East London was a place of immigrants, of artists, and of shifting populations." All this is reflected in V&A East's DNA, plans and community work.