

THE EVOLUTION OF 'IMMERSIVE' EXHIBITIONS AT THE V&A MUSEUM, LONDON – 2008-2021

By Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh

1. Introduction

GCDN members have expressed interest in the potential of 'immersive' exhibitions and related 'experiences' as programmatic elements that can meet their ambitions for broadening the base of their audiences. Audience analysis does demonstrate that these 'experiences' offer the opportunity of a cost-effective option with the ability to attract larger and more diverse audiences. As a result, there is particular curiosity about whether there is a basic underlying methodology, which can, however, create varied outputs that are faithful to the character and mission of their own districts.

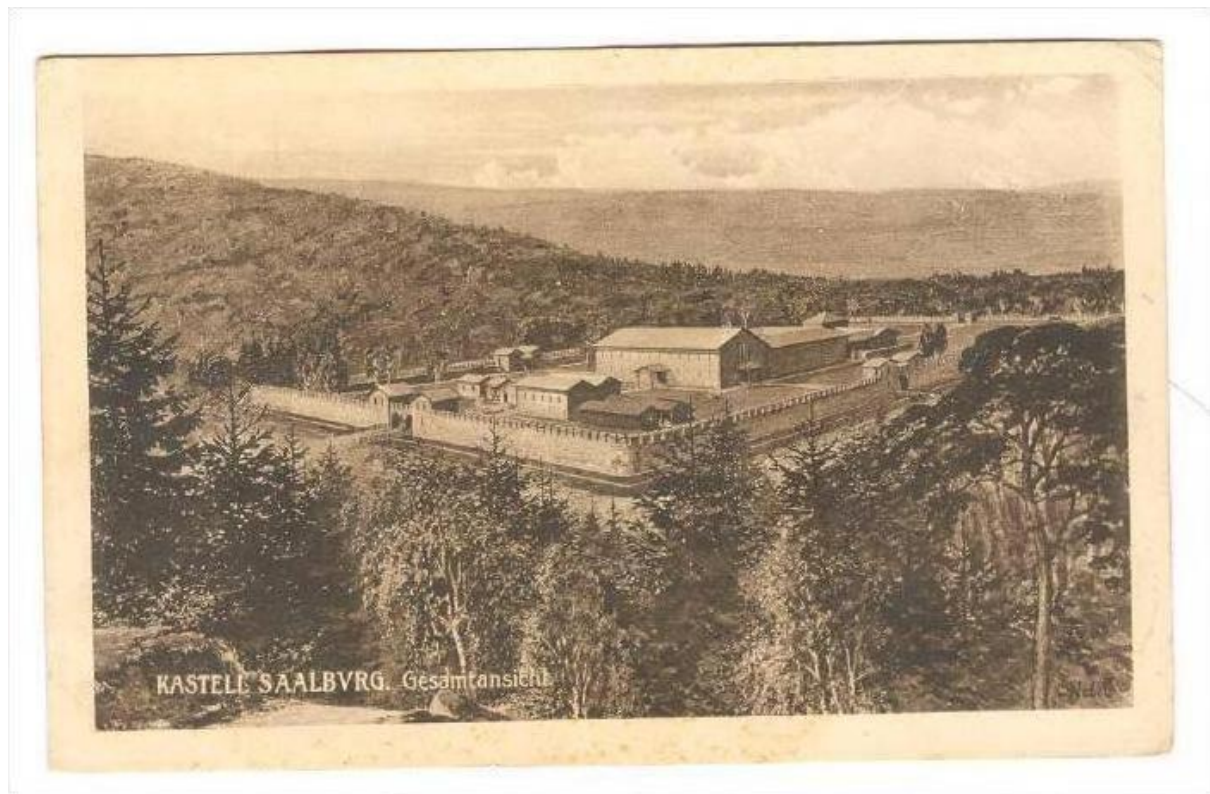
A comprehensive study of immersive exhibitions would require a book, so, as a starting point, this review examines the experience of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London – where we and colleagues have curated a series of immersive exhibitions over the last fifteen years. It stresses this was an evolutionary journey where skills, opportunities and confidence built up over time. However, the growth of a (semi-) commercial immersive exhibition market over this period means that GCDN members may have the opportunity of short circuiting such a process by connecting to an increasing number of 'off the peg' products, systems and creators in the post-Covid world.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 trace the evolution as it happened, not simply as a matter of record but also to illustrate the interplay of opportunities, technology, sponsorship and other factors that impacted what was produced. Those seeking a summary overview may best move directly to Section 5 onwards.

2. A (very) brief history of immersive exhibitions

If one defines immersive exhibitions as interior spaces which seek to transport an audience from their actual physical environment into other worlds, then there is a long history. This evolution is intertwined with the development of theatre/opera set design and all manner of mechanical special effects developed from the 17th century. By the late 19th century, large stage crews could create spectacular performances and 'transformations' using complex rope/pulley controls. The introduction of electric lighting, notably the lensed spotlight (1880s onwards), added sophisticated lighting effects to the designer's palate. At the same time, the great world 'Expos(itions)', held in many major cities, particularly in Paris (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, 1900), frequently provided immersive experiences. A frequent feature was the reconstructed 'native' village lauding European colonisation. Even the Liberty department store in Regent Street brought over Indian craftsmen to work in its 'Eastern Bazaar'. Such physical exhibitions were paralleled by the work of late 19th century painters in creating highly accurate (for the time) reconstructions of biblical, classical and other historical scenes in paintings and wall decorations for civic buildings.

In 1897, Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered the reconstruction of the Saalburg Roman fort in Germany. This became so popular that the tram company in the nearby spa of Bad Homburg constructed a rail link, the *Saalburgbahn*, to transport visitors there, with the terminus designed in the 'Roman provincial style'. At the same time, French archaeologist Theodore Reinach built the *Villa Kerylos* (1902-08) on the Riviera at Beaulieu-sur-Mer, as a reconstruction of a classical Greek home. In parallel, Scandinavian museums, most famously Skansen in Stockholm (1891), pioneered open-air museums consisting of vernacular historic buildings removed from their original locations and re-erected together in a parkland setting.



Postcard c. 1900 of the restored Roman fort at Saalburg.

The post-WW1 world and the economic/political dislocation that followed saw the shift to modernism. However, at Ypres in Belgium, where the entire town had been flattened by artillery fire, the Cloth Hall and the Town Hall were reconstructed as close to the originals as possible using money from German war reparations as a clear political statement. Interestingly, the French proposed to keep the badly damaged Rheims Cathedral as a war memorial, although in the end this too was restored with major support from the Rockefeller Foundation. The inter-war period saw many museums displaying reconstructions of historic rooms or entire structures brought from elsewhere, but these exhibits whilst immersive were essentially static. For example, the Cloisters Museum in New York, with its large sections of medieval monastic buildings, was developed in the 1920s/30s opening in 1938. During the late 1920s the 'reconstruction' of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia also began. Both projects were funded by the Rockefeller family. The latter is now billed as the 'world's largest living history museum', and its feature of costumed interpreters has now been taken up by museums around the world. While the 1930s saw the rapid development of the 'talkies' in cinemas and the introduction of electric loudspeaker systems, such technology usually lay outside the interest of museums.

Following WW2, entire historic areas of devastated cities such as Warsaw were 'reconstructed' particularly in Eastern Europe. However, it was the development of film/projection technology that ushered in a new era of exhibition making. Generally speaking, prior to the introduction of cheap video in the mid-1970s, it was not financially or technically practicable for museums to incorporate showing film in exhibitions, other than as special events. A key innovation was the introduction of the Kodak 'carousel' projector in the early 1960s, which used a continuous 80/140 rotary slide unit, allowing an escape from the static photo album to a new communication approach of moving still

images creating stories. As Don Draper says in the fictional account of the carousel's development in *Mad Men* (Season 1 Episode 13¹ – well worth watching on YouTube), "it's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone.....this device isn't a spaceship, it's a time machine", which allows us to go "around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved". For exhibitions, it offered a cheap accessible technology, which most museums could master if they wished.



The carousel projector, introduced by Kodak in the early 1960s revolutionised the potential for moving images in exhibitions

The carousel's arrival coincided with the futuristic Expo '67 in Montreal, considered the most successful of the 20th century Expos with 55 million visitors. It was the third post-1945 Expo after Brussels in 1958 and the New York World Fair in 1964. Like all modern Expos, there was a lot of film at these exhibitions, but it was the multi-screen shows and the humble carousel projector which took things forward in terms of audience engagement. The Czechs were pioneers in this area with Joseph Svoboda and Milos Forman of the National Theatre showing their '*Lanterna Magika*' system at Brussels (you can still visit the modern equivalent in Prague). Such creative innovation continued at Montreal, where the '*Kinoautomat*' in the Czechoslovak Pavilion allowed the audience to make decisions on the plot evolution of a film. It was described as the "guaranteed hit of the World Exposition, and the Czechs should build a monument to the man who conceived the idea, Radúz Činčera." It is a moot point whether the contemporary fascination with transcendental meditation,

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq3n2sJ43Hg>

'inner space' and the counterculture, flowing from the hippie drug culture, played a part in attracting audiences to these 'experiences'.

As Jeffery Stanton, a child in 1967, recalls:

DIOPOLYECRAN - Czechoslovakia Pavilion, Expo '67, Montreal

"Diopolyecran was one of the most fascinating audio-visual experience that I had personally ever seen. You entered a large room and sat on the carpeted floor where you watched a wall of 112 cubes whose ever shifting and changing images moved backwards and forwards. Inside each cube were two Kodak Carousel slide projectors which projected still photos onto the front of the cubes. In all there were 15,000 slides in the 11 minute show. Since each cube could slide into three separate positions within a two foot range, they gave the effect of a flat surface turning into a three-dimensional surface and back again.



***Diopolyechran* show of 112 blocks, shown in the Czechoslovakia pavilion at Expo '67, Montreal**

The show was about 'The Creation of the World of Man'. On the 112 part screen, the Earth came awake, flowers bloomed, tigers suddenly appeared, the first men walked the earth, then machinery was invented. Sometimes the image sequences would first appear complete, then be broken up abstractly in a modern art composition. It was pure multi-visual technique than enchanted the viewer."

It is worth noting that IMAX film system, although part of cinema rather than exhibition evolution, was developed in Canada in 1967 by experimental film makers involved with Expo '67, with the first film shown at Expo '70, Osaka, Japan.

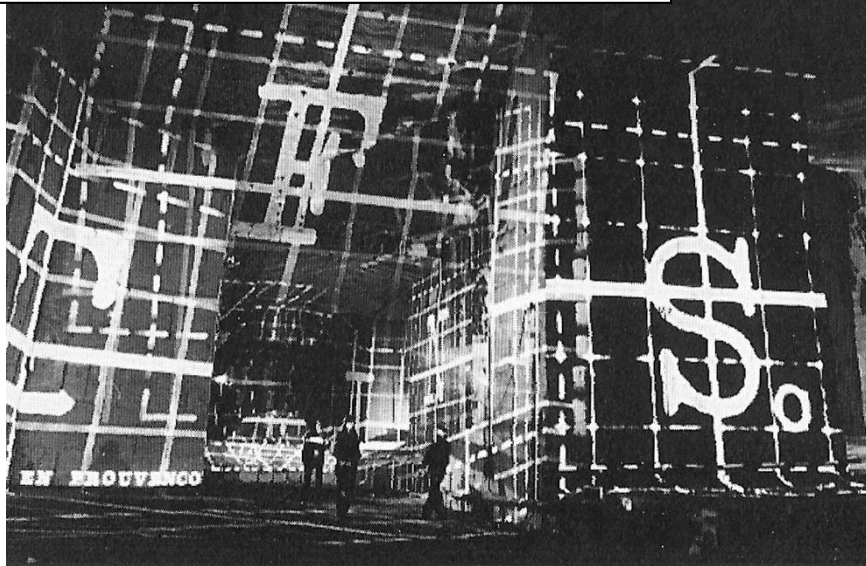
In Europe, Albert Plécy (1914-1977), the French journalist and image theorist saw the potential of the carousel slide projector and after various experiments, including the remarkable *Bestiaire 2000* at the Thoiry safari park and the *Féerie des Tuileries* in Paris (both 1970), opened:

'the 'Cathedral of Images' in the white limestone quarries of Les Baux-de-Provence, in 1977; it was a novel and, for the time, advanced production of luminous frescoes of automatically changing imagery on the white stone walls from dozens of carousel projectors, with accompanying soundtrack, that enveloped the contours of the walls and the ceiling of the quarry, producing a 3-dimensional vision, and the viewers themselves, being illuminated and integrated into the vividly coloured imagery. It attracted international visitors.'



Interior of Cathédrale d'Image, Les Baux, France showing underground quarry without projection.

Interior of Cathédrale d'Image, Les Baux, France showing underground quarry with b/w projection.



Interior of Cathédrale d'Image, Les Baux, France showing *Magie du Vitrail* (1991) by I.M. Blanchard and P. Cacoye.

The post-WW2 development of out-door evening *Son et Lumière* shows in France, the first at the chateau of Chambord in 1952, probably made Plécy's innovation seem less novel in France than it would have been in other countries. Over the next decade, many museum exhibition designers visited the '*Cathedral of Images*' and were impressed by its potential of combining cheap carousel slide technology with complementary music to create a new compelling thirty minute show each year. While audience reaction was highly positive (see the '*Cathedral of Images*' current Trip Advisor comments, rating 4.5, note the site is now renamed the *Carrières de Lumières*), the museum world was generally dismissive about an 'experience' which had no objects. One of the authors borrowed this approach for the design of the new Imperial War Museum-North at Trafford in the 1990s, working with architect Daniel Libeskind and the late Steve Simons of Event Communications as exhibition designer. This approach was appropriate to the large film/image collections of the IWM and seemed particularly complementary to Libeskind's deconstructed architecture, not to mention a very tight budget. The 'Big Picture Show' has remained a key part of the IWM-North's offer since it opened in 2002. Importantly, the interior displays demonstrated that it was perfectly possible to integrate object exhibits with large screen projection.



Interior of the Imperial War Museum-North in Trafford, Manchester showing the 'Big Picture' show.

Ironically perhaps, it was the French commercial heritage organisation Culturespaces, who took over managing the '*Cathédrale d'images*' at Les Baux in 2012, who recognised the enormous audience and commercial potential of immersive 'image totale', projected in huge spaces over numerous surfaces. Having converted the original carousel slide system at Les Baux to digital projectors, Culturespaces then opened the *Atelier de Lumières* in Paris in an old factory in 2018, which clocked up an annual attendance of over 1,000,000 paying visitors. The same presentations could be adapted to shown at both venues, reducing creative costs substantially. This commercial and creative success, heavily focussed on the work of high profile 'brand name' artists (Klimt, Breughel, Dali, Chagall, Cezanne (2021), etc.), has led to similar projects in Bordeaux (the largest '*Les Bassins de Lumières*' in the old U-boat pens) and Jeju, South Korea, with others now planned for Dubai and Seoul (2021) and New York and Amsterdam (2022). The same 'immersive' shows can, therefore, be

brought to an increasingly global audience. Culturespaces still use the creative team of the Venetian Gianfranco Iannuzzi and Renato Gatto, who started at the original *Cathédral d'Images* operation in the 1990s. While our favourite presentations remain *Magie du Vitrail* (1991) and *Michel-Ange à la Sixtine* (1996), their ability to rework the space each year is impressive. Interestingly, in complete contrast, Culturespaces also operate the *Villa Kerylos*. Smaller temporary copycat image driven presentations have appeared in other cities with large tourist markets, including Venice and Berlin. This commercial take-up has mushroomed in the last couple of years, and it is said that there are now five touring Van Gogh shows in America. The phenomenon even warranted a review in *The Economist* in April 2021, which also highlighted the growing number of immersive contemporary immersive art installations. A key popular success in this sector was Random International's *Rain Room*, installed at the Barbican Art Gallery in London in 2012 and following a world tour now exhibited in a purpose-built building in Sharjah (2018). May 2021 saw the opening of Superblue, Miami with installations by Es Devlin, James Turrell and teamLab.

It should be noted that these immersive shows are not without their problems, which are discussed further below in section 5. In particular, rather like IMAX films, these presentations are most effective with 'big' image subjects. They are far less effective exploring subjects at human figure scale. For example, *Mémoire du Cirque* (1994) at the '*Cathédrale d'image*' which one thought might be very high impact turned out, in reality, to be visually underwhelming.

3. Immersive exhibition making at the V&A Museum

Having developed an 'image totale' approach at the IWM-North, one of the authors was appointed director of the V&A's Theatre Museum in Covent Garden 2002. In theory, this seemed an excellent opportunity to explore combining projection with music and theatre design. For reasons which lie outside this article, the museum was closed in 2006 and the operation moved to the main V&A Museum at South Kensington. However, with the support of the then Director Sir Mark Jones, an exhibition about Kylie Minogue was also transferred, opening in February 2007.

This exhibition had been originated by the Arts Centre in Melbourne and the available space meant that large screen projections were not possible. However, the integration of film and music with a popular culture subject was then a first for the V&A. It even provoked a public poll in the *Guardian* newspaper about the suitability of Kylie as the subject for a major public museum. The results spoke for themselves, over 270,000 visitors came, many of whom had never been to the V&A before, with an average daily attendance of 2,143. *Kylie-The Exhibition* demonstrated that carefully programmed music alongside film and iconic exhibits such as costumes could not only engage visitors but prompted a high level of interaction between them.

Six years later, in March 2013, *David Bowie Is* opened and went on to be not only the V&A's most successful recent exhibition, seen by over 2,000,000 visitors on its world tour, but possibly the most attended recent special exhibition outside China. Many people have and continue to say to the authors that it remains their favourite exhibition ever. While this is gratifying, it is important to state that scenographically it developed from ideas and experiences of a number of people working in and alongside the Theatre & Performance Department on exhibition projects in the five years 2008-2012. These included Jane Pritchard/Geoffrey Marsh's *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes* (2008), Vicky Broackes/Geoffrey Marsh's *Story of the Supremes* (2010), Deborah Landis/Keith Lodwick's *Hollywood Costume* (2012) - with its backing 'film score', Vicky Broackes/Anna Landreth Strong's *The House of Annie Lennox* (2011) - with the subject occasionally on display and Katie

Mitchell/ Kate Bailey's *Five Truths* (2011). The last, an immersive multi-screen video installation, revealed the power of intense sound/multi-screen imagery even in a small space and the creativity of a then newly formed design company 59 Productions, who went on to design *David Bowie Is*. The individual videos of Michelle Terry as Ophelia can be viewed on YouTube², but unfortunately these cannot convey the impact of them playing simultaneously all around the visitor. M

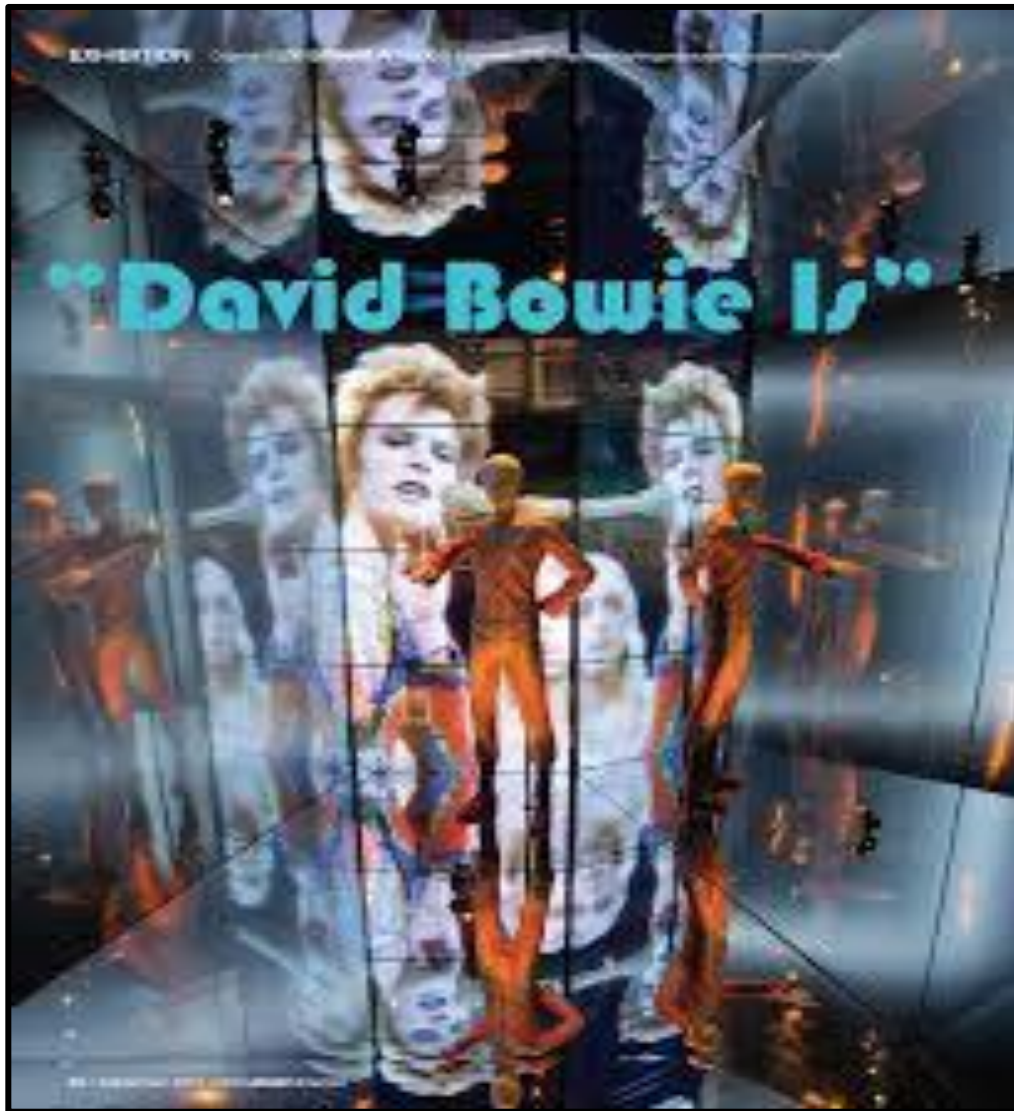
Several museum directors, designers and theorists commented that *David Bowie Is* set a new benchmark for museum exhibition design, curatorial process and public engagement. The exhibition even has the honour of its own Wikipedia site. Such was the popularity of the exhibition that the V&A experienced touts and forged tickets for the first time.

Details of these and other exhibitions are provided in the Appendix, but the short summaries cannot convey the excitement of working in highly focused teams, increasingly following the creative processes used in stage design. There were numerous arguments over approach and many thought that David Bowie would not work as an exhibition subject. Fortunately, the late Martin Roth backed the project when he arrived as the V&A Director in 2012 and was responsible for moving the exhibition to the Museum's then main gallery space. Whilst theatre designers had been recruited previously to contribute to an exhibition's design, notably for *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes*, 59 Productions was the first theatre design practice to be employed by the V&A as the lead designer on a major exhibition, (in that case partnered with Real Studios for the objects display), although many more, including Stufish, Nissen Richards and Tom Piper, have now followed.

However, in many ways, the biggest thanks must go to Sennheiser GmbH, the German specialist audio company who sponsored the *David Bowie Is* exhibition by providing their 'guidePORT' headset system and a huge amount of technical support. The exhibition, as experienced by visitors, could not have happened without them. It was somewhat ironic that this location specific sound system had

been produced by Sennheiser for many years and was, in fact, coming to the end of its shelf life. Unfortunately, the museum sector, with a few exceptions had not picked up on its potential.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OD7phopWWk> –Stanislavski, with the other four, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski and Brook usually adjacent.



David Bowie Is, evocation of Top of the Pops, 5 July 1972. As Bowie sang Starman, "I had to phone someone so I picked on you ooh ooh", he pointed at the camera, engaging the audience directly, which one fan recalled, "It was as if Bowie actually singled me out...a chosen one...it was almost a religious experience.



Sennheiser's guidePORT system was fundamental to the success of *David Bowie Is* and subsequent immersive exhibitions at the V&A. Audiences found it simple to operate and soon forgot they were wearing headphones

In summary, therefore, there was nothing essentially new from a technological standpoint in *David Bowie Is*. What was innovative was the mixing down of visual and audio techniques in a variety of new combinations, interwoven through and around a stunning collection of objects and stories. As an example, one part was a hybrid 1950s bedroom/ living room set, with 35 individual film and sound components projection mapped onto 17 surfaces to create a seamless six-minute film experience soundtracked by Bowie himself from early interviews from the BBC sound archive. Visitors were mostly oblivious to the combination of curatorial discovery and technological

complexity in this and much of the show, but they were nonetheless transported by and highly appreciative of how it made them feel. .

There had been a background 'film score' in the *Hollywood* Exhibition in 2012, but Sennheiser's system allowed say *Life on Mars* to be heard alongside the original light blue suit, mounted alongside Mick Rock's great film, or to view handwritten lyrics of 'Five Years' whilst hearing the song. It was clear from visitors' comments that the 'intimate' and individualised nature of the sound experience was fundamental to their engagement. The effectiveness of sound in this way needs detailed



Visitors queuing in Berlin to see *David Bowie Is*, 200 yards from where he recorded *Heroes* in 1977 in the Hansa by the Wall studio.

research. Was it the memories evoked by key songs that connected with visitors, connecting with their own life stories, or did music overall simply help people relax? Or it was combination of both and other factors? Certainly, it was a novel sight to not only hear people singing in an exhibition but also dancing, laughing and crying, patterns of behaviour that continued in the subsequent Sennheiser 'guidePORT' supported shows.

The success of *David Bowie is* resulted in a flood of offers from performers and managers of bands, who wanted to follow in his exhibition footsteps. We, however, did not want to duplicate the original concept, so two years were spent researching a somewhat different approach, looking still to use music and sound as the point of connection, but broadened considerably from an approach to the work of a single artist to a massive collection of ideas and change generated in a key period when popular music and societal change went hand in hand. The result was *You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-1970* (2016) which, in many ways, was the exhibition the authors felt was every bit as ambitious, linking as it did the 1960s to the present day, from the Vietnam War and the rise of Black Power to Feminism, Consumerism, Hairdressing, LSD and the Beatles.

This success of the exhibition (243,000 visitors at the V&A) and *Pink Floyd: Their Mortal Remains* in 2017 (352,000 visitors at the V&A) demonstrated that *David Bowie is* was not a fluke. Rather the three exhibitions, all supported by Sennheiser, showed that immersive exhibitions combining imagery, sound and music along with intriguing objects could attract large, diverse and high spending audiences, meaning that the exhibitions could cover their increased production costs, especially with subsequent touring. In *Revolutions*, the late radical Jim Haynes appeared as a living exhibit for the first week. They also showed that it was possible to deal with serious subjects such as feminism, gay rights and racial conflict through and with music, in a meaningful, thought provoking yet compelling way. Subsequently, Kate Bailey's *Opera: Passion, Power, Politics* (2017) also delivered through location sensitive headsets, demonstrated that success was not simply down to 'pop music' but could be achieved with music of all sorts. Meanwhile, fashion curator colleagues created two extraordinary shows, *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2015: 493,00 visitors) and *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* (2019: 595,000 visitors), that while focusing largely on costumes created a highly emotional effect through the sheer intensity of the costume displays, mixed with relevant film footage.



Evocation of Woodstock Festival 1969 in the *Revolutions* exhibition. Visitors could sit on the (fake) grass floor or just dance.

Not surprisingly, given the attendances, other organisations were attracted to try a similar formula, notably The Rolling Stones with their touring exhibition *Exhibitionism*, which started at the Saatchi Gallery in London in August 2016. It received major sponsorship from DHL and a second tour is planned around Europe once Covid restrictions are lifted. There have also been some interesting alternative approaches, notably the *Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything* exhibition at MAC in Montreal which integrated contemporary art installations inspired by the singer/poet's music, songs and words (still available digitally – Canada only). Montreal has developed as a centre in recent years for big image projection with its *Quartier de Spectacles* (a GCDN member), described "as a sort of public showroom for the city's expanding multi-media sector [Cirque de Soleil, Momentum, etc.] while simultaneously promoting an image of Montreal as the type of technologically developed, creative and design-intensive urban centre that is deemed attractive to foreign investment." 2017 saw the installation of the permanent *Aura* projection/light show in the Catholic Notre-Dame Cathedral as an anchor for the district. Several other cities have experimented with exterior light/projection festivals, eg Lyons' *Fête des lumières*, although some locations have found it difficult to maintain a strategic creative focus for such events over a number of years.

In retrospect, by 2019, two parallel approaches had emerged, i. big multi-screen projections, requiring large 'ex-industrial style' space, usually with no original objects and ii. museum/gallery housed exhibitions integrating sound/image with authentic objects. Since museums generally lack big enough spaces for large multi-screen projections, they have tended to use other a/v approaches. However, at the V&A, a 10m high space has allowed dramatic projection effects in several exhibitions, notably the highly popular 'sitting on the grass' at the multi-screen evocation of the 1969 Woodstock Festival in *Revolutions*. Of course, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and there is a common link in the extensive use of sound. Indeed, music/sound effects seems to be one of the essential ingredients in the popularity of immersive exhibitions.

4. 2020, Covid, and the immediate future

As of January 2020, the V&A's commitment to immersive exhibitions, alongside more traditional formats, was strong. *Revolutions* and *Opera* had scheduled touring venues in Paris, Venice and Russia, while an entirely new project, *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser*, was being curated by Kate Bailey with theatre designer Tom Piper. The latter is perhaps best known to the general public for his art installation *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* (2014), which consisted of 888,246 ceramic poppies located in the moat of the Tower of London to mark the centenary of WW1.

Having been closed by Covid, the V&A opened on 19 May 2021 with the *Alice* exhibition as a main attraction. It has received excellent press coverage, five stars in the Guardian and The Observer and runs until 31 December 2021 for those who would like to see it, before touring. However, Covid has had a more fundamental impact on the museum sector. Most immersive exhibitions require fairly major visitor throughput to generate the income to cover the productions costs. It is unclear to what

extent social distancing, whether legally or culturally required will undermine this model. Also, with the decline of the tourist market, many museums are facing financial problems, which may lead to a concentration on cheaper exhibition making for the foreseeable future.

Set against this, is the commercial sector nibbling at the edges of what in the past has been largely a public sector museum monopoly. Visitors to London in Autumn 2021 will be able to make direct comparisons with *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* at the V&A, Kusama's mirrored infinity rooms at the Tate Modern and two 'commercial' Van Gogh shows, *Van Gogh Alive* in Kensington Gardens and *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* in Brick Lane. One wonders what Vincent would have made of it all?

5. The challenges of immersive exhibitions

'Conventional exhibitions', objects in cases and pictures on walls have been around for centuries and are not going to disappear. They have the advantage of relative simplicity and with the right subject can deliver 'blockbuster' results (visitor numbers, admission income, associated retail, sponsorship) without integrating special immersive effects. Some would argue that looking through the frame at a painting is an immersive experience, similar to the proscenium arch of a theatre.

Furthermore, the heavy marketing of the immersive industry often fails to highlight some key problems. Eight important issues to consider are:

- i. **technology:** there is the cost of acquiring (renting is not usually cost effective) maintaining and updating of equipment, particularly the increasingly sophisticated but complex computer servers which link everything together. TeamLab's *Borderless*, billed as the world's first Digital Art Museum, at the MORI building in Tokyo for example, requires 520 computers and 470 projectors;
- ii. **music and IP:** music, for whatever reason, is fundamental to the public engagement with these immersive exhibitions. The detailed rationale for this needs proper research and it may be that reactions are culturally specific. However, most music is owned by someone. In our experience, it is not so much the cost (although this can be significant) but the organisation of IP clearances that is often challenging for inexperienced museums. It is worth remembering that music rights holders want to market their assets, but exhibitions are a very unfamiliar world to them, especially the concept of 'not for profit' operations. It often takes time to find a middle ground for negotiating;
- iii. **visitor numbers and throughput:** these exhibitions can get big numbers 200-500,000, resulting in daily throughputs of 2,000 people a day or 200+ an hour. Leaving aside the Covid issues of social distancing, such numbers can put a major strain on operations – from staff burn-out to the physical infrastructure, not to mention recharging and maintaining equipment. One should not underestimate the importance of the 'must see event' feel in attracting visitors. Disney have made a fine art out of their queues and entertaining the resulting captive audiences;
- iv. **length of run and object conservation:** due to the cost and the time required to install immersive exhibition technology, it makes sense to run them for as long as possible, say up to six months. This is longer than typical museum exhibitions of 3-4 months, which

tend to be tied to an autumn, spring, summer calendar cycle. Long run times combined extensive touring soon raise issues around conservation of fragile objects;

- v. **visitor attitudes:** so far visitor responses have been overwhelmingly positive, (eg, see Tripadvisor comments for the Culturespace projects):

“If you are even remotely interested in art history, digital art, immersive art, or experiential art, you MUST go to the Atelier des Lumieres!! The installation is inside a former smelting plant, which has been reconfigured to accommodate projected images, videos and sound. Nothing you see online on their website can prepare you for what it is like to walk into the space, where you are immediately surrounded by moving images and accompanying music. (US visitor)”

Whether visitors get more critical as the sector develops remains to be seen. It is frustrating that in the UK at least, exhibitions rarely get proper reviews as exhibitions (rather than the subject matter).

- vi. **visitor expectations:** Many of the commercial shows have used heavy duty marketing, far beyond the resources usually available to the public sector. There is a clear overlap with the marketing of music tours, with the associated emphasis on online pre-booking, etc. It could be argued that public exhibitions/galleries benefit from a lot of ‘free’ editorial in the media and that this is merely a necessary corollary from a new sector competing for the same broad audience. Given that most museum special exhibitions now charge, it will be interesting to see whether, in the longer term visitors, apart from a small elite, recognise or are bothered by the difference.
- vii. **Potential of non-popular culture subjects:** the subject of the majority of ‘immersive shows’ to date have been established ‘cultural brands’, whether artists, musicians, clothes designers or established personalities/locations. It remains to be seen whether the approach can be applied to anything, although the original *Cathedrale d’Image* did quite a diverse range of subjects. Could one do an ‘immersive exhibition’ on Empire furniture as opposed to the ‘World of the Napoleon’ and would one want to? The problems with human scale have already noted above and this impacts on many historical subjects.
- viii. **the digital pivot:** one thing is unclear. Clearly visitors under 35 enjoy these shows, but with the aging of audiences who are total ‘digital natives’, will there be a shift to ‘home’ forms of exhibitions which can be consumed ‘on the move’ rather than requiring a special visit, usually to a major city centre? In retrospect, will ‘immersive exhibitions’ be seen as an interim stage between traditional museum-based 3D exhibitions and fully digital experiences consumed totally online? It is often said that the experience of ‘live’ theatre and ‘live’ exhibitions (as in live audience) cannot be replicated on line and that AR/VR and associated digital systems are very clunky. However, that was also said of the first trains, cars and planes. Filmed theatre shown in cinemas has proved popular in the UK, particularly for people who cannot access high quality live theatre locally. The issue of attracting people out of their ‘home’ environment into city districts is fundamental to GCDN members and it is perhaps worth ending by noting that there is very little research into visitor motivation/impact with ‘immersive’ exhibitions. We suspect, as always, that

the quality of the social interaction between visitors (including travel to, attraction welcome, catering, retail offer, etc.) is fundamentally important to the popularity of 'immersive' exhibitions – the sense of going to an event. This is something that is central to all GCDN members' work and may be a key guide as whether this sort of exhibition can work for your cultural district.

6. Recording the exhibitions

Much of this innovative exhibition work at the V&A now only survives as visitors' memories, museum publications, photographs, comment books or as recordings on visitors' mobile phones. However, some material is available for those who are interested:

Five Truths: as noted the individual videos are viewable on You Tube. The exhibition is still available to borrow and has been shown at a number of celebrations of cultural video installations (South Bank, London: Kennedy Centre, Washington).

David Bowie is Happening Now film: Released commercially 2013-2018. Because the music rights have expired this film is currently not available for screening. However, individual researchers can view it at the V&A. Sony also created an App of the exhibition at its final touring location at the Brooklyn Museum, available on the App store for £9.99.

You Say You Want a Revolution?: an in-house created film is available to view at the V&A.

In terms of other aspects mentioned:

All major exhibitions at the V&A have an associated book, available to order online. This includes the current *Alice: Curiouser and Curiouser* exhibition.

There is a considerable amount published about the Montreal Expo '67 and the various innovative 'immersive' related exhibitions.

Albert Plécy: *Hommes d'Images* (Actes Sud, 1997) provides an overview of his career and a summary of the *Cathedrale d'Images* shows from 1977-96. Unfortunately, the book is out of print, but second-hand copies are available from the usual sources – often at over £100.

Lanterna Magika still continues as part of the National Theatre, Prague.

7. Other developments over the period

This article has been written from the perspective of one department, in one museum, in one country. There is not the space to consider other developments in detail, but it is worth noting the following:

- immersive computer gaming: huge with quality constantly improving. How will this influence the exhibition market?;

- The commercial immersive market in theme parks: the major driver of physical immersion, in parallel to computer gaming. Operators have the deep pockets to develop and refine new ideas;
- AR, VR, etc: – given how fast these have advanced in the last decade – from ‘magic’ to reality - it is sobering to think what will be available by 2030. A VR section is included in the V&A’s *Alice* exhibition and has proved very popular;
- The last decade has seen much innovation in theatre, notably Punchdrunk’s ‘immersive experiences’, of which *Sleep No More* (based loosely on *Macbeth*) has been running in New York since 2011. If you are in the city, it is well worth visiting and if you cannot get there, the Wikipedia site gives a good description;
- Immersive art installations: Looks like a sector with strong growth potential.

8. Summary

In conclusion, the developments at the V&A have demonstrated that there is a ‘boiler plate’ curatorial/operational/financial model for high quality immersive exhibitions of around the 1,000m² size, focused on popular culture (music, fashion, literature, personalities, etc.) which can deliver a £500,000+ net profit with an appropriate retail offer. This assumes 250,000+ visitors at an average income per head of £12-£15 from ticket and retail profit (excluding relevant tax). There is clearly a considerable international appetite to take these as touring shows. However, while touring is good for institutional profile, the economics are still somewhat opaque, particularly post Covid.

The rewards with particular subjects can be significant. Visitor spend at David Bowie was around £5 per head in additional income and enhanced by limited edition publications of the catalogue. Notably, visitors bought special vinyl at the exhibition itself, showing behaviour more similar to that at gigs and festivals, where a strong desire for a souvenir of the experience is primary. This underlines the importance of the must see ‘event’ in planning such exhibitions.

In terms of a fully commercial market, the situation is less clear, since compared to museums there are additional costs, notably the venue itself. This is usually at nil/low cost in the public sector. Our view, at present, is that the cost of a significant number of authentic exhibition objects (conservation, casing, security, shipping, etc.) would not make such shows attractive as purely commercial ventures, without significant sponsorship, as was the case with the Rolling Stones’ *Exhibitionism* Tour.

A key problem is the shortage of venues. Music tours are built around well-established ‘circuits’ of venues, each targeting different segments of the market. Bands can move from venue to venue, knowing that there will be a reasonably standard set of facilities. Such ‘circuits’ do not really exist in the museum world, where most institutions only operate one site. The length of forward planning time also makes stitching together financially efficient tours difficult. However, this was the case with music venues until the 1980s and more and more new museum venues are offering better and more standardized exhibition spaces, typically around the 10,000ft² mark. It is interesting to see how Culturespace are building up a portfolio of venues which can take the same basic shows and doubtless more companies will follow this route.

Once Covid related issues have hopefully disappeared, one might envisage a two-tier 'immersive' exhibition market with object rich 'museum' exhibitions and image focused 'commercial' exhibitions. However, the situation may be complicated by i. a degree of overlap, ii. contemporary immersive art installations (which are both an original object but arguably also a presentation technique), iii. exhibitions based on history themed-films, where the objects, such as costume, are modern replicas and iv. commercial organisations who want to do projects for other than profit related reasons such as image, etc. A concern must be that cash poor governments will claim that museum exhibition operations should break even/make money when the real situation is far more complicated and profit-making exhibitions are beyond the reach of most smaller institutions.

However, a focus simply on likely income generation obscures the biggest potential of immersive exhibitions for GCDN members. This is their potential to attract diverse audiences, particularly from groups who may not typically visit museums/galleries. It seems likely that public sector and trust funding will be increasingly linked to 'culture for all' and immersive exhibitions are a potentially powerful tool to achieve this in what is otherwise quite a bare larder.

9. Further information and contact details

There is remarkably little information published on 'immersive exhibitions', hence this paper.

If you are interested in opportunities for your own cultural district, we are very happy to provide further information from our experiences but would make the point that the results in the UK may be very different to other locations and cultural settings.

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Geoffrey Marsh: geoffreymarsh1616@gmail.com

or get in contact through:

Gregorio Scapello at GCDN: gscarpella@gcdn.net

or AEA Consulting: info@aeaconsulting.com

10. Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX: V&A EXHIBITIONS – WHICH HELPED DEVELOP ‘IMMERSIVE’ APPROACH

Kylie – The Exhibition

8 February – 10 June 2007

1. Storyline

The exhibition featured costumes and memorabilia collected over Kylie Minogue's performance career and was inspired by her donation to the Arts Centre's Performing Arts Collection in Melbourne, Australia in 2003, who mounted the original show. The exhibition was developed and extended at the V&A.

2. Design



3. Production credits

Curator – Janine Barrand, The Arts Centre Melbourne
Assistant curator – Margot Anderson, The Arts Centre Melbourne
Exhibition producer - Victoria Broackes, V&A
Director and content development - Geoffrey Marsh, V&A
Exhibition co-ordinator - Laura Shaw, V&A
Exhibition Design – Arnaud Dechelle, Event Communications
Exhibition Graphics - Eamonn O’Sullivan, Event Communications
Exhibition Sound Design - Peter Key Sound Design
Exhibition Lighting - DHA Design
Exhibition Contractor - Equinox Design

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 270,000
Daily Average: 2,143
Weekly Average: 15,000

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

The Story of the Supremes from the Mary Wilson Collection

13 May – 19 October 2008

1. Storyline

This exhibition featured performance costumes of The Supremes, one of the most successful groups of all time. On show were over fifty outfits that charted the changing image of the group from their dresses in the early days when they were known as The Primettes to the glamorous Hollywood designs they wore at the height of their fame. The exhibition set these against the backdrop of the meteoric rise of Motown Records, and the turbulence of the American civil rights movement in the 1960s. The display explored the inspirational role The Supremes played in changing racial perceptions, attitudes to female performers and their influence on today's music.

http://media.vam.ac.uk/media/documents/legacy_documents/press_release/44505_press_release.pdf

2. Design





3. Production credits

Curators – Geoffrey Marsh, Victoria Broackes, V&A
 Howard Kramer, Jane Hammond, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
Curatorial Adviser – Carol Tulloch, V&A
Curatorial Assistant – Anjali Kothari, V&A
Exhibition Co-ordinator – Laura Shaw, V&A
Exhibition Design – Peter Brooks Design Limited
Exhibition Graphics – Peter Brooks Design Limited
Video Producer – Jill Evans, V&A
Video Editor – Bob Cassidy
Exhibition Sound Design - Peter Key Sound Design
Exhibition Lighting – DHA Lighting
Exhibition Contractor – Devonshire House Associates

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 57,176
 Daily average: 360
 Weekly average: 2,486

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£5.00

Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes, 1909-1929

25 September 2010 – 9 January 2011

Major exhibition in G39, North Courts

1. Storyline

This exhibition explored the world of the hugely important artistic director Serge Diaghilev and the most influential dance company of the 20th century, the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev imaginatively combined dance, music and art to create 'total theatre'. A consummate collaborator, he worked with Stravinsky, Chanel, Picasso, Matisse and Nijinsky. The exhibition focused on combining an exploration of music and dance with the stunning costumes which survive. Contextual material included pages from *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* and *A la recherche du temps perdu* to highlight Diaghilev's presence at the famous 'Dinner at the Majestic' in Paris in 1922.

2. Design





3. Production Credits

Exhibition Curators – Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh

Research Assistant – Sarah Sonner

Exhibition Organisation – Diana McAndrews and Penny Wilson with Anu Ojala and V&A Technical Services Department

Exhibition Design – Hatley Drinkall Dean

Graphic Design – Chris Bigg

Exhibition Lighting – David Atkinson

Exhibition Contractor – The Hub

Specialist Construction – Souvenir

Parade Constructions made by Hannah Brown, V&A

AV Production - Jill Evans, V&A, with Diana Damian, Charles Chabot and Martin Rosenbaum, David Bickerstaff and Simon Cherry, New Angle

AV Software and Hardware – Sysco

Project Management – Flemming Associates LLP

Exhibition Editor – Mark Kilfoyle

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 115,531

Daily average: 1,078

Weekly average: 7,221

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£10.00

My Generation: The Glory Years of British Rock, Photographs from Top of the Pops 1964, 1973, by Harry Goodwin

30 April – 2 September 2010

Display: Theatre & Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

Top of The Pops was launched by the BBC on New Year's Day in 1964. On that night, The Rolling Stones were the opening band; the photographer was Harry Goodwin. This exhibition brought together Goodwin's most striking and memorable photographs from the show alongside fascinating material from the BBC's archives. From a shocked Bob Dylan (temporarily blinded by Harry's flash in punishment for his grumpiness) to a dramatic shot of Jimi Hendrix playing the guitar with his teeth, these images captured the mood and style of the '60s and '70s and the impact of its musical stars on the era.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Curator – Victoria Broackes, V&A

Curatorial Consultants – Alwyn W Turner and Keith Badman

Exhibition Design – Peter Brooks Design Limited

Exhibition Graphics – Peter Brooks Design Limited

Exhibition Sound Design – Stuart Aird, V&A

Video – Peter Kelleher and Maike Zimmerman, V&A

Exhibition Assistants – Veronica Isaac, Kathryn Johnson, Magda Konopka, Richard Horley, Amy Lewis, Sara Nuzzi, V&A

4. Visitor Numbers

Not recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

Five Truths

12 July – 29 August 2011

Theatre & Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

What makes performance truthful? *Five Truths* examined the relationship between theatre and truth in contemporary culture by bringing theatrical process into the gallery space, alongside interviews with leading figures in the theatre world. The exhibition featured a video installation revealing the process behind the making of one scene—Ophelia's madness scene from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—in five theatrical methodologies.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Creative Team

Curator – Kate Bailey (V&A)

Director – Katie Mitchell

Actress – Michelle Thierry

Cinematography and video design – Leo Warner

Installation design – Vicki Mortimer

Sound design – Gareth Fry

Lighting design – Paule Constable

Music composed by Paul Clark

Installation technical design by Jonathon Lyle & Andy Coates

Research and exhibition assistant – Diana Damian (V&A)

Installation coordination – Anna Landreth Strong (V&A)

Content development – Dr Kate Dorney (V&A)

Film Crew

Director – Katie Mitchell

Director of Photography – Leo Warner

Lighting – Jonathon Lyle

Sound – Gareth Fry

Props & Costume – Vicki Mortimer

Assistant director – Ellen McDougall

Props & Costume assistant – Molly Einchcomb

Production Manager – James Roxburgh

Production assistant/runner – Masoud Arabi

Exhibition Build – Hawthorn Theatrical Solutions and Qwerk

Exhibition AV – 59 Productions and Hawthorn Theatrical

4. Visitor Numbers

Not recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

Edward Gordon Craig: Space and Light

11 September – 13 March 2011
Theatre & Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

Space & Light: Edward Gordon Craig explored the career, life, and continuing legacy of this pioneering British director, designer, theoretician and print-maker. The display included a specially commissioned play and interactives to bring Craig's work to life.

Space & Light consisted of two parts. The first, an immersive white box experience, featured a cutting-edge stage set interactive in which visitors could recreate Craig's alignments of form and light. It explored his various working and private relationships, including his famous mother Ellen Terry; his father, designer and architect Edward William Godwin; his lover, the dancer Isadora Duncan; actress Eleonora Duse; and director Konstantin Stanislavski.

The second part of the exhibition displayed 41 wood-engravings, wood cuts, etchings and wash drawings by Craig from the V&A's collections.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Curator – Kate Bailey, V&A
Content Development – Jim Fowler, V&A
Exhibition Research and Coordination - Zoë Perry
Exhibition Design – Simon Donger
Exhibition Graphics – BCMH
Exhibition Interactive – AllofUs
Exhibition Sound Design and Production – Peter Key
Audio Script – Jane Collins

Audio Vocals – Anton Lesser

Audio Pianist – Paul Webster

Video Timeline – Simon Pugh

Exhibition Contractor – Hawthorns

Exhibition Assistants – Veronica Isaac, Beth McDougall, Katerina Pantelides, Thea Stevenson, Rhiannon Wilkins

4. Visitor Numbers

Not recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

The House of Annie Lennox

15 September 2011 – 26 February 2012

Display: Theatre & Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

The House of Annie Lennox consisted of an immersive and intimate environment which explored the image and creative vision of one of the most successful female artists in British music history. Organized in collaboration with Lennox, the exhibition included costumes and accessories designed and worn by the artist, iconic photographs, personal treasures, awards, ephemera from the causes she has championed, music videos and a specially commissioned film. The house, where Lennox could work and be an exhibit, was based on the design of her website.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Curator – Victoria Broackes

Exhibition Coordinator – Anna Landreth Strong

Exhibition Design and Graphics – Peter Brooks Design

Projections – Peter Brooks

Exhibition Build and AV – InteractUn Limited

Archivist for La Lennox – Rosie Crombie

Annie Lennox Interview – National Video Archive of Performance, V&A

4. Visitor Numbers

Not recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

Halfway to Paradise: The Birth of British Rock, Photographs by Harry Hammond

13 October 2012 – 3 March 2013

Display: Theatre & Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

Harry Hammond (died 2009) was Britain's leading showbiz photographer for nearly two decades. Starting in the late 1940s, he captured the definitive images of virtually every leading British musician, as well as those of many visiting American artists. From Tommy Steele to the Beatles and Shirley Bassey to Dusty Springfield, Harry Hammond captured the emergence of the British rock 'n' rollers. This exhibition comprised over 80 photographs which took audiences back to the birth of British Rock. It included a soundtrack and interactive which explore the music, musicians and fashion of the time. A successful V&A publication (of the same title) by Alwyn W. Turner accompanied the exhibition.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

4. Visitor Numbers

Not recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

Hollywood Costume

20 October 2012 – 27 January 2013

Major exhibition: G38, G39, North Courts

1. Storyline

This ground-breaking exhibition included over one hundred of the most iconic and unforgettable film characters from a century of Hollywood filmmaking, 1912–2012. *Hollywood Costume* took the visitor on a three-gallery journey from Charlie Chaplin through the Golden Age of Hollywood to the cutting-edge design for 'Avatar (2009, Costume Designer Mayes C Rubeo, Deborah L Scott) and 'John Carter of Mars' (2012, Costume Designer Mayes C Rubeo): Act 1, Deconstruction, put visitors in the shoes of the costume designer and illuminated the process of designing a character from script to screen; Act 2, Dialogue, examined the key collaborative role of the costume designer within the creative team; Act 3, Finale, celebrated the most beloved characters in the history of Hollywood and the 'silver screen'.

The galleries were filled with cinema costumes most of which had never left their private and archival collections in California. Many had never been seen beyond the secure walls of the studio archives. A 'film score' was commissioned to play throughout the exhibition.

2. Design





3. Production Credits

Guest Senior Curator – Deborah Nadoolman Landis

Senior Curator – Sir Christopher Frayling

V&A Curator – Keith Lodwick

Exhibition co-ordinator – Claire Everitt

Exhibition Design – Casson Mann

Exhibition Graphics – Bibliotheque

Exhibition Sound/ Music design – Julian Scott

AV Design – Squint / Opera

Exhibition Lighting – DHA

4. Visitor numbers (including events)

Attendance: 251,738

Daily Average: 2,517

Weekly Average: 16,783

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£14.00

6. Touring

ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image), Melbourne, Australia

24 April – 18 August 2013

VMFA (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), Virginia, USA

9 November – 17 February 2014

Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, USA

26 March – 6 July 2014

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, USA

2 October – 2 March 2015

Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces

16 March 2013 – 5 January 2014
Theatre and Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces explored the lost world of music hall through the eyes of Grace (a fictional character), a retired performer who looked back on her life on the stage with her sisters. A specially commissioned play written by Tanika Gupta in response to the archive brought objects and memories to life in a space that integrated Sickert's paintings of the Bedford Music Hall with sound and video design, alongside Grace's room in a retirement home - a theatrical set with her piano and music hall ephemera.

2. Design





3. Production Credits

Curator and Producer – Kate Bailey, V&A

Director – Katie Mitchell

Exhibition Design – Nissen Richards Studio

Graphic Design – Mar Mar Co

Lighting Design – Studio ZNA

Build and Scenic Art – Factory Settings

Video Design – Finn Ross

Audio Visual – Mesmer

Sound Design – Peter Eltringham

Exhibition Coordinator – Anna Landreth Strong, V&A

Research Assistants – Holly Harris, Laura Mitchison, Lowri Palfrey, Jean Cooney

4. Visitor Numbers

Not Recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

David Bowie Is...

23 March – 11 August 2013

Major exhibition: G39, North Courts

1. Storyline

David Bowie's career as a pioneering artist spanned nearly 50 years and brought him international acclaim. He continues to be cited as a major influence on contemporary artists and designers working across the creative arts. The V&A was given unprecedented access to the David Bowie Archive to curate the first international retrospective of the extraordinary career of David Bowie.

Sound delivered by Sennheiser guidePORT system.

2. Design



3. Production credits

Curators – Geoffrey Marsh, Victoria Broackes

Project Assistant Curator – Dr Kathryn Johnson

Exhibition Design – 59 Productions

Exhibition Graphics and Lighting – Real Studios

Exhibition Sound Design – Sennheiser

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 310,760

Daily Average: 2,188

Weekly Average: 14,798

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£14.00

6. Touring

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto - 146,500 visitors

Museum of Image and Sound, Sao Paulo - 80,000 visitors

Martin Gropius-Bau, Berlin - 151,000 visitors

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago - 193,000 visitors

Philharmonie de Paris, Paris – 196,650

Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne – 160,462

Groninger Museum, Groningen – 201,301

MAMbo, Bologna – 131,811

Warehouse Terrada G1 Building, Tokyo – 120,000

Barcelona Design Museum, Barcelona – N/A

Brooklyn Museum, New York - N/A

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

14 March – 2 August 2015

Major Exhibition: G38, G39, North Courts

1. Storyline

This extraordinary exhibition, one of the most famous and remembered at the V&A, recounted the career of Alexander McQueen who died in 2010 aged only forty. Renowned for his radical designs and dramatic shows, the exhibition succeeded in capturing the intensity of his imagination and his practical skills by mixing costume with a/v presentations. Hugely popular in London, the exhibition did not tour.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Senior Curator - Claire Wilcox

Exhibition Creative Director - Sam Gainsbury

Production Designer - Joseph Bennett

Exhibition Producer - Anna Whiting, Gainsbury & Whiting

Music Director - John Gosling

Head treatment and Mask Designer - Guido

Lighting Designer - Daniel Landin

Graphic Design – Michael Nash Associates

Scenic Contractor - Simon Kenny, Souvenir Scenic Studios

Consultant, London Gallery - Katy England

Senior Exhibition Research Assistant - Kate Bethune

Exhibition Research Assistant - Louise Rytter

V&A Exhibition Management - Rachel Murphy

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 493,043

Daily Average: 3,472

Weekly Average: 23,478

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£16.00

You Say You Want a Revolution?: Records and Rebels, 1966-1970

10 September 2016 – 26 February 2017

Major Exhibition: G39, North Courts

1. Storyline

This exhibition looked at the late 1960s as a moment when youth culture drove an optimistic idealism, motivating people to come together and question the established power structures across every area of society. The social and cultural climate for the late 1960s was represented through approximately 250 objects, film, and music, and with a view to considering how the finished and unfinished revolutions of the sixties have changed the way we live today and how they affect the way we think about tomorrow. Objects included fashion, design, graphics, photography, and will also reflect the music of the time.

Sound delivered by Sennheiser guidePORT system.

2. Design



3. Production credits

Curators – Geoffrey Marsh, Victoria Broackes, V&A

Curatorial Project Assistant – Corinne Jones

Research Assistant – Elisa Bailey, V&A

Exhibition Design – Nissen Richards Studio

Exhibition Graphics – Candy Wall

Video Designer – Finn Ross, FRAY

Exhibition Sound Design – Carlyne Downing

Exhibition Lighting – Zerlina Hughes

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 243,387

Daily Average: 1,457

Weekly Average: 10,141

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£16.00

6. Touring

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan

ING Gallery, Brussels

Grand Hall, La Villette (canceled due to Covid)

Glastonbury: Land and Legend

10 September 2016 – 26 February 2017

Display: Theatre and Performance Galleries

1. Storyline

An immersive film and sound installation about the Glastonbury Festival through time, space and people. Showcasing footage captured onsite in the idyllic Somerset countryside at Worthy Farm in 2014, the installation deconstructed the festival tapestry to create an epic kaleidoscope of performances and experiences, intimate and spectacular. It gave a celebration of the festival from different perspectives and through changing environments and happenings; from hard work to revelry, sunrise to sunset, spring to winter, mud to green fields, the seen to the unseen.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Exhibition Curator and Producer – Kate Bailey

Film Installation Director – Emily Harris

Video Design – Zsolt Balogh

Sound Design – Gareth Fry

Graphic Design – Marc Jennings

Assistant Curator – Helen Gush

Exhibition Build and Audio-Visual – Hawthorn Theatrical Ltd

Location Film Crew at Glastonbury Festival – Rod Anderson, Zsolt Balogh, Jonathan Bentovim, Leanne Dimant, Gareth Fry, Sara Hill, Gabrielle Levine, Candida Richardson, Nick Gordon Smith

Onsite Festival Assistant – Maria Ilyevskaya

Banner artwork – Areté Visual Arts

4. Visitor Numbers

Not Recorded

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

Free

Pink Floyd: Their Mortal Remains

13 May – 15 October 2017

Major exhibition: G39, North Courts, G38, G38a

1. Storyline

This major exhibition was a collaboration between the leading museum of art, design and performance with one of the world's most successful and enduring British bands: Pink Floyd. Marking fifty years since the band's first single Arnold Layne, and pivotal Games for May performance, the exhibition charted the band's half-century career, uncovering how their continuously pioneering approach to experimentation with new sounds and music technologies, their ambition to make their live performances theatrical spectacles, and their collaboration with artists, designers, photographers, architects and engineers has cemented their stature as one of the most influential and forward-thinking bands of all time. Bringing together more than 350 objects, the exhibition spans music, performance, art, design, architecture, and engineering, from rarely or never-seen-before objects from the band's own archives, loans from across the globe, and objects from the V&A's own collections.

Sound delivered by Sennheiser guidePORT system with a special room 'surround sound' room as the conclusion.

2. Design



3. Production credits

Curators – Victoria Broackes, Anna Landreth Strong, Aubrey 'Po' Powell, V&A
Paula Stainton, Pink Floyd Team

Curatorial Project Assistant – Catriona MacDonald

Research Assistant – Corinne Jones, V&A

Exhibition Design – Ray Winkler, Rachel Duncan, Jasna Javremovic, Stufish

Exhibition Graphics – Peter Curzon

Photographer – Rupert Truman, StromStudios

Video Designer – Richard Turner, Lucky Frog

Exhibition Lighting and Sound Design – Sennheiser

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 352,189

Daily Average: 2,258

Weekly Average: 15,313

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£22.00

6. Touring

Although the exhibition has toured, this has been done separately from the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome

Dortmunder U, Dortmund

IFEMA Espacio 5.1, Madrid

Vogue Multicultural Museum, Los Angeles

Opera: Passion, Power, Politics

30 September 2017 – 25 February 2018

Major exhibition: First exhibition in the V&A's new Sainsbury Gallery (10,000ft²)

1. Storyline

Together the V&A and the Royal Opera House created a landmark exhibition that told the vivid story of opera from its origins in late Renaissance Italy to the present day. Focusing on seven premieres in seven European cities, this immersive exhibition took the visitor on a journey through nearly four hundred years, culminating in the international explosion of opera in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The exhibition revealed how the creation of a new opera can reflect the social, political, artistic and economic conversations that define cities, and the process of making opera from libretto to score, from design to performance. The cities and premieres explored were: Venice and Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, 1642; London and Handel's *Rinaldo*, 1711; Vienna and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, 1786; Milan and Verdi's *Nabucco*, 1842; Paris and Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in its revised version, 1861; Dresden and Richard Strauss's *Salome*, 1905; and St Petersburg and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, 1934.

Sound delivered by Tonwelt. Design by David Sheppard.

2. Design





3. Production credits

Exhibition Curator – Kate Bailey
Research Assistant – Jule Rubi
Exhibition Design – Curious Space
Graphic Design – SocioDesign
Exhibition Lighting – Paule Constable
Video Design – FRAY Studio
Sound Design – David Sheppard
AV Hardware – Hawthorns
Exhibition Contractor – Qwerk
Project Management – Fraser Randall

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 143,709
 Daily Average: 984
 Weekly Average: 6,843

5. Full Adult Ticket Price

£19.00

6. Touring

House of Musical Arts, Royal Opera House Muscat, Oman
CaixaForum, Madrid, Spain
CaixaForum, Barcelona, Spain
Venice, Italy - cancelled due to Covid
Moscow, Russia - cancelled due to Covid

Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams

2 February – 9 September 2019

Major exhibition: Sainsbury Gallery

1. Storyline

Spanning 1947 to the present day, this exhibition traced the history and impact of one of the 20th century's most influential couturiers, exploring the enduring influence of the fashion house, and Dior's relationship with Britain. It presented over 200 rare Haute Couture garments drawn from the V&A's couture collection and the extensive Dior Archives alongside accessories, fashion photography, film, vintage perfume, original make-up, illustrations, magazines, and Christian Dior's personal possessions. In terms of visitors at the V&A, South Kensington this was the most successful exhibition in recent years, but it did not tour. Strictly speaking this was not an 'immersive' exhibition with a soundtrack but the sheer number and density of the costumes, coupled with dramatic scenography, created a unique atmosphere.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Exhibition Curator - Oriole Cullen

Assistant Curator - Connie Karol Burks

Research Assistant - Emma Treleaven

V&A Exhibition Management - Rachel Murphy, Sarah Quantrill, Nikki Caxton

Exhibition Design - Agence NC – Nathalie Crinière, Anne Lebas

Graphic Design - Anamorphée

Lighting Design - François Austerlitz, Matthieu Blaise

Film editor - S75 – Séraphin Ducellier

AV Production and 3D mapping - La Méduse

Hats and Headdresses - Stephen Jones
Diorama Scenography and Mounts – Alighieri

4. Visitor Numbers

Attendance: 595,000

5. Full adult ticket price

£24.00

Alice: Curioser and Curioser

22 May 2021 – 31 December 2021

Major exhibition: Sainsbury Gallery

1. Storyline

Exploring its origins, adaptations and reinventions over 157 years, this immersive and theatrical show charts the evolution of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* from manuscript to a global phenomenon beloved by all ages. The exhibition mixes a variety of immersive and a/v techniques including a section with VR headsets and moving projections on dramatic scenography.

2. Design



3. Production Credits

Lead Curator – Kate Bailey

Assistant Curator – Harriet Reed

Illustration Curator – Annemarie Bilclough

Theatre & Performance Curator – Simon Sladen

Exhibition Management – Gemma Allen, Cameron Crawley, Mairia Evripidou, Ruth Law, Olivia Oldroyd

Exhibition Design – Tom Piper, Alan Farlie, RFK Architects

Exhibition Graphics:

Concept Design – Northover & Brown

Graphic Production – Bret Syfert for Hyde's Lovelies

Exhibition Sound Design – Gareth Fry

Exhibition AV Software Production – Luke Halls Studio

Exhibition Lighting – Studio ZNA

Mount Making – V&A Conservation and Technical Services

Interpretation – Lenny Cherry, Asha McLoughlin, V&A Interpretation

Project Management – Greenway Associates

Exhibition Contractor – Factory Settings

AV Hardware Production – Blue Elephant

VR Experience Design – Preloaded