

We remain extremely grateful to the Trustees of The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generous grant of £60,000 awarded in July 2019 towards the V&A’s delivery of three accessible learning and interpretation projects: *Performances for families with interpretation for deaf audiences*; *Young people’s SEND programming development: Hospital Schools*; and *Accessible interpretation for V&A FuturePlan Projects*. This report provides an overview of 2023/24 actives and describes how the Foundation’s support has had a positive impact.

### Activities to be supported in 2023/24:

Programme	Donation (£)
Performances for families with interpretation for deaf audiences	6,000
Accessible interpretation for a V&A FuturePlan project	6,000
Young people’s SEND programming development: Hospital Schools	8,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,000</b>

### Performances for families with interpretation for deaf audiences

#### Project Overview

The V&A Families team continued to work with Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children, London, to co-design a performance with Deaf children in years 5 and 6 (8 to 11 years-old). Potential themes were discussed with Lisa Smith, the Deaf Instructor at the school, including Health, and Deaf Identity, with Wellbeing being the chosen theme.

We also worked with two dance performers based in Scotland, Clare Adam, a deaf British Sign Language (BSL) user who also uses spoken English and uses a hearing aid; and Lesley Howard who is autistic, uses spoken English and is a BSL user. The performers self-identify as queer disabled artists who create work that connects their values of friendship and playfulness.

Their practice advocates for deaf identity, teaching basic British Sign Language holistically with D(deaf) and hearing families, through movement workshops that explore storytelling and choreography.



A planning document from performers for co-design sessions at Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children, London.

The V&A Families team worked with Clare and Lesley to create a deaf-led Pop-up Performance with a focus on BSL, co-produced with nine students from Frank Barnes School, the Deaf instructor Lisa Smith and the school's in-house interpreters. It was decided by the performers to add a spoken English voiceover for lyrics for some of the music and the interactive elements of the performance.

The performers planned and delivered two half-day co-production workshop sessions at the school in September and October 2023, to explore ideas. The content for the performances was then developed through a series of creative performative and creative exercise workshops. An introductory and evaluative session with V&A staff was also included in the workshops to look at the wider context of children's expectations and experiences of the museum.

Following the workshops, the performers devised a script, which they rehearsed in Scotland and onsite in the days leading up to the performance in mid-November 2023. We also worked with the performers to create a BSL welcome video.

## The Performance

The final performance called *Pop Up Performance: Ba/ance* took place at both Frank Barnes School and V&A South Kensington.

On 15 November 2023, performances took place at Frank Barnes School. There was a morning performance for students aged 5 to 9 years-old and an afternoon performance for students aged 9 to 11 years-old, including participants that worked with the performers. Children were excited to see how Clare and Lesley created the performance from their ideas. 48 people (42 children and 6 adults) attended the performances during the day.

The recording of the performance will also be posted on Frank Barnes School's Seesaw app, a platform that creates a powerful learning loop between students, teachers, and families, and between 40 to 80 parents will have it pre-downloaded it on their devices.

On 18 November 2023, performances took place in the Daylit Gallery (Room 64b) at V&A South Kensington at 11:00, 13:00 and 15:00. The performances were participatory and accessible and enjoyed by D/deaf and hearing families and families who spoke little or no English. 142 people (92 children and 50 adults) attended over three performances.

[Click here to view the participatory performance and accompanying activities.](#)

## Family Day at the British Library, London

On Saturday 23 September 2023 the V&A's Learning team took part in *Family Day: Our World* at the British Library, an exciting family day of activities delivered in BSL and spoken English celebrating community, language, nature, and travel. The event was organised in partnership with Frank Barnes School, Camdem Family Learning, and the British Museum.

Several organisations took part in the delivery of the activities including the V&A, the British Museum, Sadler's Wells, London Zoo, Foundling Museum and Holborn Community Association. The activity organised by the V&A was called *Pattern is Everywhere* and encourages families to explore shapes and patterns to construct a unique pattern book.

## The BSL Welcome Video

The BSL welcome video developed with performers Clare Adam and Lesley Howard is aimed at families with a D(d)eaf child, and families with a member that is D(d)eaf, who are considering visiting the V&A.

The script for the video covers:

- Intro to V&A South Kensington for families
- What the V&A is
- What you can see and do
- Access information.

This video will sit on the V&A South Kensington *Plan your visit* page and/or *Access information* page and it will be family-friendly in tone. We filmed an initial draft of the welcome video at the end of 2023 and more shooting took place in January 2024.



*A moment of teaching students from Frank Barnes School sections of the performance of Ba/ance.*

## Feedback

The whole project, from the school sessions at Frank Barnes School and performance, to the upcoming BSL welcome video, and the British Library's Family Day aimed at D(d)eaf families, has been a celebration of D(d)eaf performance culture. Full number of engagements is included in the table below.

Event	Date	Children	Adults	Total
Family Day at the British Library, London	23.09.23	123	123	246
Co-production sessions with Frank Barnes School	27.09.23 and 11.10.23	27	12	39
Performances at Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children	15.11.23	42	6	48
Performances at V&A South Kensington	18.11.23	92	50	142
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>475</b>

All partners felt that d/Deaf culture was respected and welcomed at the V&A. The children at Frank Barnes School, performers that collaborated with the team at V&A South Kensington, and visitors gave very positive feedback about their experience.

The project will also have ongoing engagement and reach with parents from Frank Barnes School once the performance is uploaded into the Seesaw app.

### Quotes from the students on the co-design process:

*“It was very peaceful and there was a lot to do and watch, but I enjoyed it.”*

*“It was fantastic working with friends, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the conversation.”*

*“I liked learning and gaining more knowledge. I have ideas and I liked talking about emotions as well.”*

*“I felt all my work and ideas were in the performance”.*

### Feedback from the performers:

*“The project was super fun, and the V&A team was so welcoming.”*

*“We just wanted to say how lovely it was working with you. Thank you for making us feel so welcome (actually to your whole team, everyone was so friendly). We enjoyed working with the young people a lot and sharing their ideas with others, bridging the gap on disability representation and language.”*

## Young people’s SEND programming development: Hospital Schools

*Museum in Your Room*, a project supporting object-based learning beyond the museum walls and using the latest 3D scanning and printing technologies, started in 2019/20 as a digital outreach pilot with Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). After being suspended until October 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme was reignited with an online refresher session for teachers at GOSH to explore ways of engaging students with the objects remotely via Zoom.

Students and their families responded creatively with a wide range of outputs, using craft or digital tools, delivered remotely or in-person. Their creations included: animations using the 3D scans or printed objects, drawings, poems, or stories.

Since then, we have continued to work towards expanding the pool of loan objects available and building new relationships with other hospital schools. In 2022-23, the second group of objects and resources (the elephant and rhinoceros) went on loan to GOSH, while the first group (bears, crab, and octopus) was introduced to the Royal Marsden Hospital School in a creative artist-led session in late 2022.



For the third phase, the theme of mythical beasts was used to choose the objects, and three from the V&A Japanese collections (two shishi incense burners and one netsuke) were 3D scanned and printed by ThinkSee3D.

After in-person and online feedback sessions with teachers from both hospital schools, a new accompanying learning resource for these objects was also created and tailored to the teachers and students' needs. These included updated info on the V&A, object stories, how both the original object and its 3D printed copy were made, as well as providing a range of creative activities linked to the objects.

Two new features were also added to the resource. These consisted of new laminated **'Meet the Object'** cards, which are easier to hold for students in hospital beds, and an additional **'Meet the Experts'** card with information on the 3D object designer, artist Gayle Chong Kwan and a V&A museum curator.



*Top: The two 'shishi' incense burners that were 3D printed as part of the third phase of the resource.  
Bottom: Great Ormond Street Hospital School's students engaging with the Museum in Your Room objects.*

In addition, new multisensory and creative making elements were included, such as an incense 'smell box' and some wipe-clean materials for activities. GOSH teachers participated in a live

webinar to introduce them to the new objects and theme, as well as encouraging them to explore the new resource to be used with their students. We received positive feedback from hospital teachers on the new elements of the project:

*'The sensory aspect is what makes this project work so well; it's actually more than the students would get at the museum, looking at the objects behind glass – they're actually getting to hold them, and we find that the students sometimes keep just holding them even after we've moved onto something else, because they're so interesting... their sensory experience can be so limited, being mainly in their room and in their bed, so this brings a lot to them.'*

In 2024, we plan to redesign the second group of objects ((the elephant and rhinoceros) and update their learning resources for use by Royal Marsden Hospital School. We also hope to expand the 'lending library' to a new hospital school in 2024.

## Accessible interpretation for V&A FuturePlan Projects

### V&A FuturePlan Project: Young V&A

Young V&A is a museum for young people (aged 0 to 14 years-old) to imagine, play, and design, and get inspired by the V&A collection of 2000 toys, characters, objects, and artworks from around the world and throughout history. It was unveiled on 28 June 2023 by our Royal Patron, HRH The Princess of Wales, after eight years of planning, design, collaboration, and construction. Rooted in its local community with 150-year heritage as East London's first museum, Young V&A works to energise young creators, as well as empower everyone to promote creativity for the next generation and support the teaching of art and design education for all.

Designed by AOC Architecture and De Matos Ryan, Young V&A now offers three new immersive and innovative permanent galleries *Play*, *Imagine* and *Design* which introduce children and their accompanying adults to inventive displays on themes from storytelling and self-expression to game design and climate change. Additionally, it offers a dynamic temporary exhibition space, beautifully restored Grade II listed architectural features, an expanded Clore Learning Centre and new Studios.

Since reopening, Young V&A has welcomed 452,000 people through its doors in Bethnal Green. Perhaps one of the greatest successes for Young V&A in its first months after reopening has been the overwhelming number of visitors who have rated their experience as 'excellent' (74%). A further 23% rated their experience as 'good', with none rating it as 'poor' or 'very poor'.



*The Play Gallery at Young V&A*

## Young V&A Tactile Spaces

We are developing two areas of Young V&A that will provide access to the collections and themes of the museum through touch – improving access for those with visual impairments, who are neurodiverse, who have learning disabilities and for our younger learners.

In the *Play* gallery we are working with an artist who will develop a tactile surface that explores key objects in the gallery. Surrounded by seating this space provides a welcome space for visitors who benefit from tactile learning.

In the *Design* gallery we will be getting inspiration from the processes explored in The Factory, a space which is helping children to explore how things are made, and with the help of a designer, we will give visitors the opportunity to handle and touch material samples so they can feel first-hand the differences between design processes. Both tactile spaces will benefit from development workshops with members of the community which are being supported by the Learning team.

## The Future

We are extremely grateful for the Foundation's continued support of accessible interpretation in the museum's permanent galleries. We would like to direct the Foundation's next contribution of £6,000 towards the FuturePlan Project: The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries.

The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection is one of the finest collections of decorative arts formed by private collectors in the 20th century. It spans a range of exquisite and expertly crafted objects from the 15th century to the modern period, covering four main types: gold and silver, snuffboxes, portrait enamels, and glass and stone mosaics. This project is currently looking at how we increase and improve the gallery space as well as growing the number of objects on display and telling new stories. As the project develops over 2024, we will grow our understanding of where the greatest need and best opportunity is for a dedicated access strand of interpretation for the new gallery.

## Thank You

We remain extremely grateful to the Trustees of The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their longstanding support of the V&A, in particular your generous support of our accessible learning and interpretation projects.

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