



Report on Accessible Learning Prepared for The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

March 2025

Thank you 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 activities carried out over the past year and summarises the impact that the Foundation's support helped us to achieve.

We remain extremely grateful to the Trustees for their longstanding support of the V&A and for pledging further support to this important programme for the next three years. We look forward to keeping you updated as the project develops.

Activities supported in 2024/25:

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
Total	20,000

Performances for families with interpretation for deaf audiences

Project Overview

This performance project for deaf families at V&A South Kensington is a celebration of performance culture and the D/deaf community. This project includes the production and delivery of storytelling performances with BSL interpretation, a pop-up stall at the British Library BSL Day, and the creation of the V&A's family friendly BSL Welcome video on the museum's website.

Pop Up Performance: BSL Storytelling

This year storytelling sessions took place on Saturday 1 and Sunday 9 March 2025 in the Hochhauser Auditorium at V&A South Kensington. Performances ran at 11:00, 13:00 and 15:00 for 40 minutes each, and were both participatory and accessible.

Led by author and storyteller Wendy Shearer, families were invited to hear Caribbean and Nigerian stories and to celebrate the heritage linked to the Caribbean and African objects in the V&A's collection.

Participating families listened to two tales. The first of which was 'The Grumpy Gecko/The Rainforest at Night', a Caribbean tale, set at nighttime where a Gecko complains about animals in the forest and makes a journey through the night discovering the importance of animals in nature and building connections. The second was "Why the Sky is Far Away", a

Nigerian folk tale exploring the rainforest in daytime and our connection and harmony with earth and nature.

All performances had BSL interpretation so they could be enjoyed by both D/deaf and hearing families and were suitable for children age 5+. Across the two dates, 88 participants took part in the event (47 children and 41 adults).

Feedback from participants

“The storyteller was amazing! So lovely to have something so special that it’s free for all.”

“Such a beautiful and engaging storytelling session. Thank you!”

“Very engaging stories well prepared and presented in an accessible form.”

“Joyful and happy creative atmosphere.”



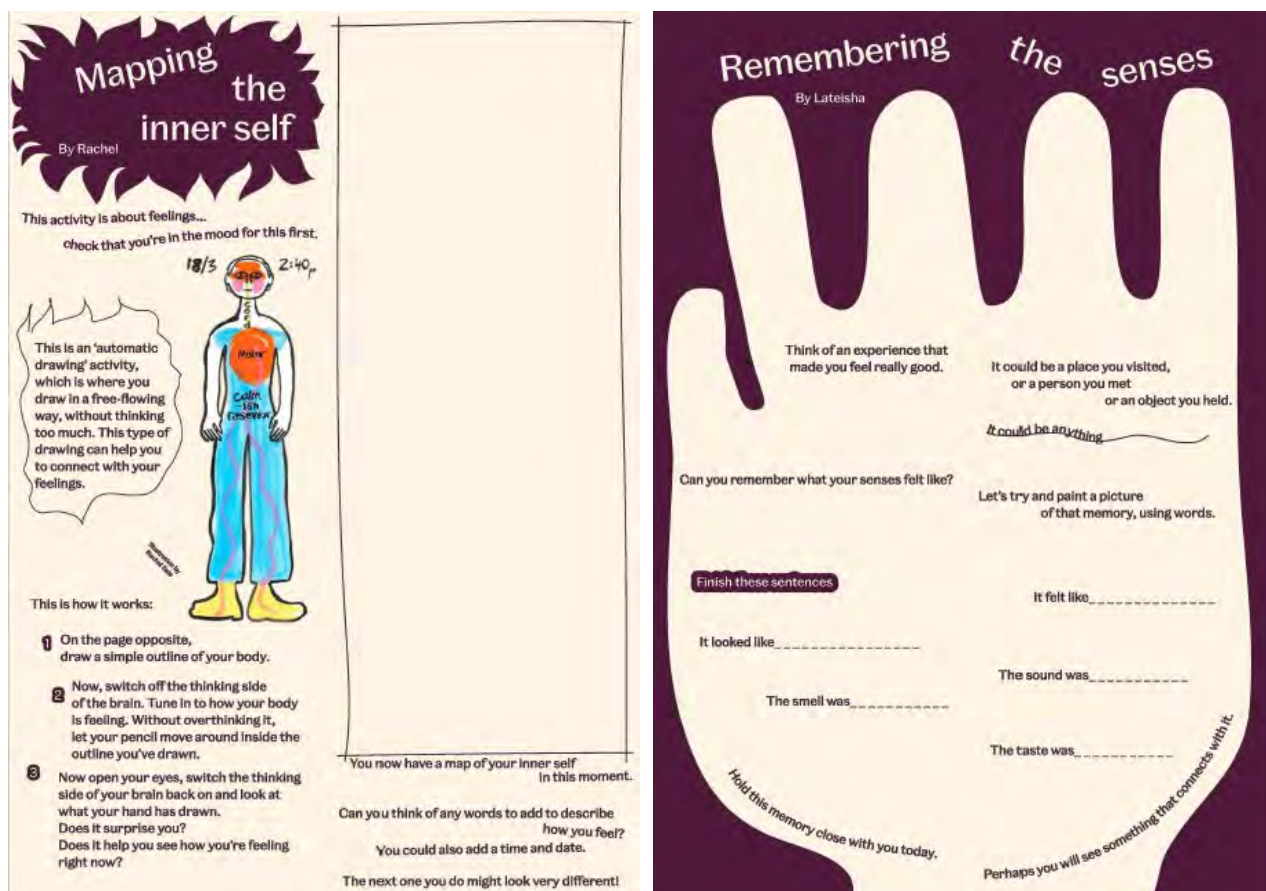
Pop-up Performance: BSL Storytelling event with participatory storytelling led by Wendy Shearer.

Deaf Discovery Family Day at The British Library

The 2024 *Deaf Discovery Family Day: Marvellous me* at the British Library took place on Saturday 21 September 2024, from 12:00 to 16:00.

The aim for the event was to celebrate the uniqueness of every child through creative activities that celebrate individuality, discovering what inspires us and makes us unique, as well as championing others.

The V&A learning team showcased an activity named 'Inner Worlds', which invited families to get creative through an activity that explored mindfulness and inner selves. In addition, a BSL welcome film introducing the V&A was shared with families on the day. Throughout the day, 326 people took part in the activities.



Activities that the V&A Families team supported families to engage with at the Deaf Discovery Family Day.

V&A BSL Welcome Video

The BSL Welcome video is now published on the V&A website's Access Page. The video is a BSL interpreted 'welcome' film aimed at families with a D/deaf child, and families with a member that is D/deaf, who are considering visiting the V&A.

The video covers what the V&A is, what you can see and do and where you can access information. In the development of the film, the draft content was shared with BSL interpreters and individuals who identify as being part of the D/deaf community to get their feedback.

We remain extremely grateful to the Trustees for enabling us to write and produce this short but important film. The video continues to be accessed with increasing views on the V&A website, and since publishing on 16 September 2024 there have been almost 700 views.

The video can be found here: [V&A South Kensington welcome video](#); and the Access page can be found here: [Access at V&A South Kensington · V&A](#)

Number of Attendees

Over the past year, the various activities have been extremely successful with 1,079 instances of engagement across the programme:

Event	Date	Location	18 plus	Under 16	Total
Family Day at the British Library	21 September	Offsite	163	163	326
Welcome film	16 September	Online			665
Storytelling with BSL interpretation	1 March	Onsite	21	20	41
	9 March	Onsite	20	27	47
Subtotal			204	210	1,079

Young people's SEND programming development: Hospital Schools

Project Overview

Museum in Your Room is an iterative project supporting object-based learning beyond the V&A walls and using the latest 3D scanning and printing technologies. The project started as a digital outreach pilot with Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), but after the pandemic, was reignited with an online refresher session for teachers at GOSH to explore ways of engaging students with the objects. Students and their families responded creatively with a wide range of outputs, using craft or digital tools, delivered remotely or in-person.

Over the years we have continued to expand the list of objects and have worked to connect with more hospital schools. In 2024/25, two shishi incense burners and one netsuke went on loan to Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton and were launched with an in person Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session in April 2024, led by artist Gayle Chong Kwan and a member of the V&A learning team. We worked again with 3D printing experts ThinkSee3D to scan and print the new replica objects.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Feedback from Royal Marsden Hospital, who have been using the objects with children throughout the academic year, has been very positive and demonstrates a real range of creative responses. Teachers have been particularly pleased with the way in which the objects open up conversations and support cross-curricular learning:

Heze (Year 3) was keen to handle the shishi object blindfolded and commented on how it felt 'spiky' and 'rough', and that it could be an animal. Heze explored creating his own mythical creature using pastels and described it as part lion and part puffer fish with the ability to swim underwater.

Francis (Year 3) was reluctant to engage initially as he was very upset following a hospital procedure. However, after seeing a demonstration with the torches he independently

explored making different sized shadows of the two shishi objects. He then drew around the projected shapes and carefully cut out and assembled the shadow puppet shapes.

Emmanuel (Year 3) was excited to be introduced to the netsuke replica. Initially blindfolded, he described the object as 'very small and smooth'. He was also surprised to see what it was and commented that it looked very bird like. We explored threading string through the holes, and whilst Emmanuel struggled initially, he persevered with good results. Inspired by the original object being made of wood, we explored everyday wooden objects and Emmanuel successfully either named or described the purpose of all objects. He then independently cut and ordered several wooden objects in real-life size order.

We are pleased to share feedback from a teacher from the Royal Marsden Hospital School:

"We've really enjoyed having the objects and the fantastic study resources to guide us. There was genuine excitement about being able to handle the models which provoked lots of really great conversation. The objects added a real level of awe and wow, especially when introducing them blindfolded. Parents were also impressed by the project and happy that their children could be involved".

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

In 2024-25 we also worked with a new hospital school, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, south London. Teachers were introduced to the objects with an in person CPD session that took place in April 2024 with Gayle Chong Kwan, and they have also used the objects weekly over the course of the past year. We also took part in their annual end of summer term party for children and parents in July 2024, where we had a table running drop-in craft activities inspired by the three objects that they have been using in the classroom throughout the summer term.

We are pleased to share feedback from one of the teachers from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital School:

"They've (the objects) been such an integral part of the class, and we have used them in a number of units. We have found the items to be valuable learning tools because they are so tactile and beautiful.

They've been on display and we've also used them in the small world area (sensory play area) and have created openers for many conversations with young people and very often the adults with them."



Hospital School, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich

Resources

In 2024-25, we also revised and updated the resource for some of the objects. In response to recent teacher feedback about how much they value the multisensory aspect of the objects, and with the flexible activity planner and cross curricular activities being so important, we updated some of the older object's resources.

We worked with Alice Bednarova, an artist and designer with experience of working with children with SEND, to design a new suite of activities such as introducing marine scent to accompany some of the objects. We also worked with ThinkSee3D to develop pilot storage boxes, to make objects more easily stored and therefore transportable. We are working with ThinkSee3D to create bespoke boxes with CNC plastazote foam in the shape of the objects to ensure safe transportation.

Accessible interpretation for V&A FuturePlan Projects

The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection

The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection is one of the 20th century's most celebrated and comprehensive collections of decorative arts. Comprising around 1,000 works, it includes iconic pieces of stone and glass mosaics, gold and silversmithing examples, enamel portraits and gold boxes.

The galleries at V&A South Kensington are being redeveloped and expanded. The number of rooms for display will increase from four to seven and this will allow more of the collection to be on display, existing stories to be told in more depth, and new stories to be introduced to visitors.

The Gilberts were intrigued by the illusions of painting that micromosaic (glass mosaic) creates, along with its status as a mostly forgotten craft. Two of the seven galleries are dedicated to showing their collection of micromosaic, exploring the range of images and objects that micromosaic features in, and explaining the processes and techniques involved in its production.

As part of the project, we are developing an interactive table which will interpret the process of making micromosaics for all visitors, including those who are blind or partially sighted. The table will deconstruct the process of making micromosaics, laying out the stages in a 3D step-by-step process.

We will create replicas of each stage which can be touched and include tactile images of some of the micromosaic objects on display next to the table.

We will invite visitors to touch these with clear symbols and Braille titles. We are also creating audio descriptions of each of the touch exhibits which visitors will be able to access by scanning raised QR codes embedded into the table alongside each object. By supporting this accessible interpretation provision, the Foundation will make it possible for more people to engage with this fascinating and innovative part of the permanent display.

Young V&A

In addition to the latest interpretation project, we would like to share an update on the Young V&A project that the previous year's funding has supported. We have commissioned a set of tactile stools to go into the Design Gallery at Young V&A. The aim was to improve our offer for visitors with visual impairments, to increase seating options in the gallery and to develop new partnerships.

We undertook two workshops with families that have special educational needs and disabilities, in order to learn more about how this audience engages with different materials through touch. We partnered with the Together Space, a social enterprise that offers an inclusive environment for disabled and non-disabled children, young people and families. Working with our commissioned designer, Max Lamb, we tested a materials library and challenged families to create sculptures using the tactile samples we provided. This gave Max an insight into what materials were most popular, how different textures could work together, and how families reacted to tactile engagement more broadly.

After the first workshop Max was able to create some initial designs for the tactile stools and then had an opportunity to test his ideas further with a second workshop. The final four stools were recently delivered. Each made from a different core material (wood, plastic, metal and fabric) with different processes reflected in the construction. They feature a wealth of tactile surfaces, moving parts to discover and fun elements (often found, reused or thrifted pieces) attached in unusual ways. The Interpretation team are hoping to kick-off the second stage of this project, looking at how the stools themselves can be interpreted in a more accessible way audio description.



The final objects designed by Max Lamb

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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