

## Exhibitions at the V&A

Exhibitions of objects from the Museum's collections (both within the Museum and on tour) and of objects loaned by private owners and organisations have always been held to complement permanent gallery displays: the first recorded exhibition, 'Examples of false principles in decoration', ran from September 1852 to July 1853 in V&A's predecessor, the Museum of Ornamental Art at Marlborough House. The V&A Archive has a variety of resources available for the study of exhibitions held in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington, the Bethnal Green Museum and the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden. These may be consulted in the Blythe House Reading Room.

A list of exhibitions and displays shown at the V&A between 1852 and 1996 can be found in Elizabeth James, **The Victoria & Albert Museum: A Bibliography and Exhibition Chronology, 1852-1996**. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.

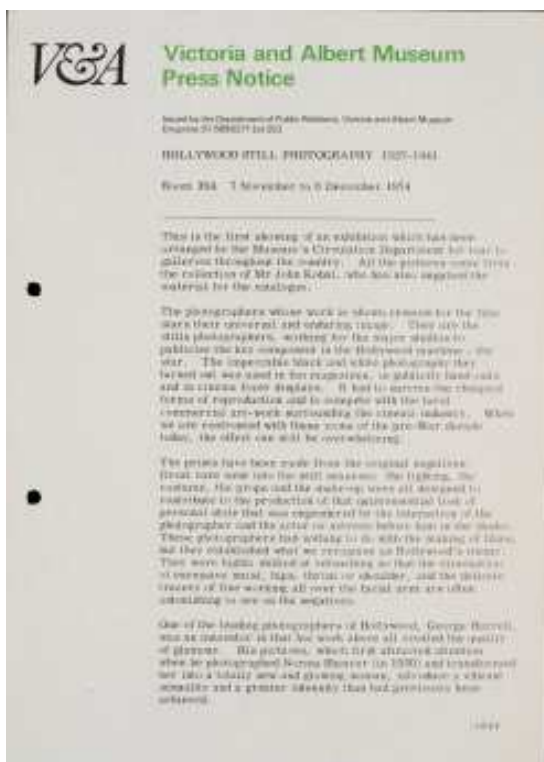
The resources available in the V&A Archive depend upon when the exhibition was held, and the amount of information about each exhibition varies, but the following record series will be of use:

### Exhibition files, from 1863 (MA/28)

These files relate to the planning and administration of exhibitions held in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Bethnal Green Museum and the Theatre Museum. Files may contain general administrative papers, correspondence with lenders and sponsors, object lists, press cuttings, object transportation papers, plans and designs, display photographs and leaflets, and a copy of the exhibition catalogue.

Please note that the National Art Library holds a complete run of V&A exhibition catalogues. To locate material in the National Art Library, please search the Library Catalogue:

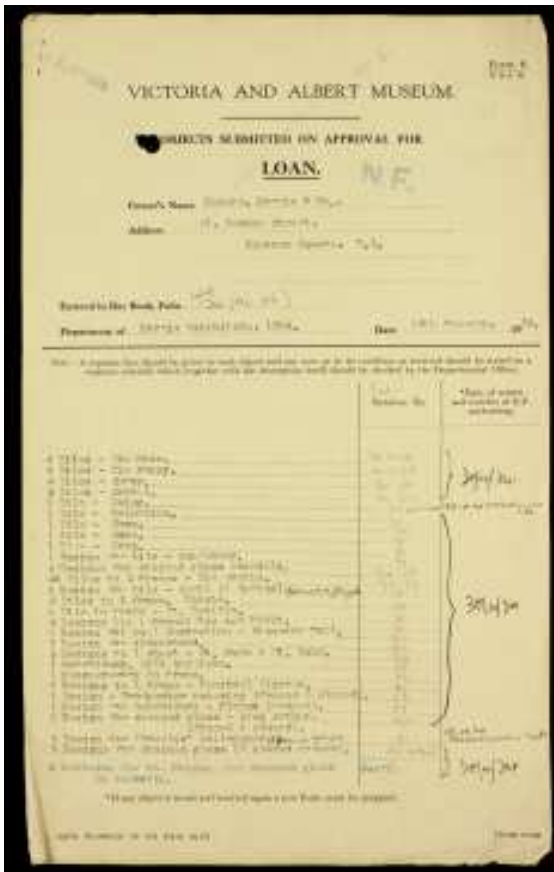
<http://catalogue.nal.vam.ac.uk/#focus>



### Press Office exhibition and event files, 1923-1994 (archive ref. MA/29)

These files relate to publicity for exhibitions. Files can include preview/opening papers, object lists, photographs of objects, display photographs, posters, and press notices.

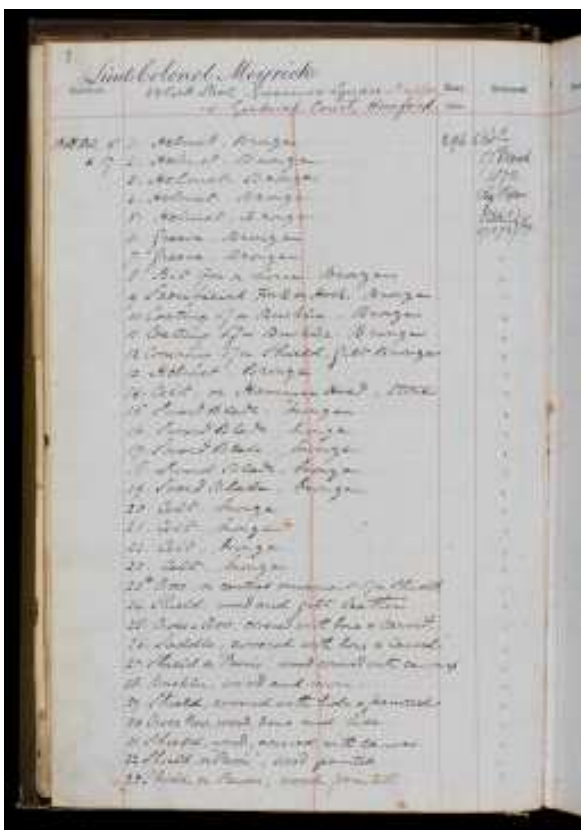
*Press notice for Hollywood still photography, 1927-1941, from the collection of John Kobal, 7 Nov - 8 Dec 1974, V&A Archive, MA/29/186*



### Nominal files, 1852-1995 (MA/1)

The Nominal File series is the main series of correspondence files in the V&A Archive, and correspondence with lenders is often found here. There is currently no online catalogue available for this series, although the V&A Archive staff can check the database for a particular individual or organisation on your behalf.

*Loan form for objects loaned to the William Morris exhibition, 1934, V&A Archive, MA/1/M2828/4*



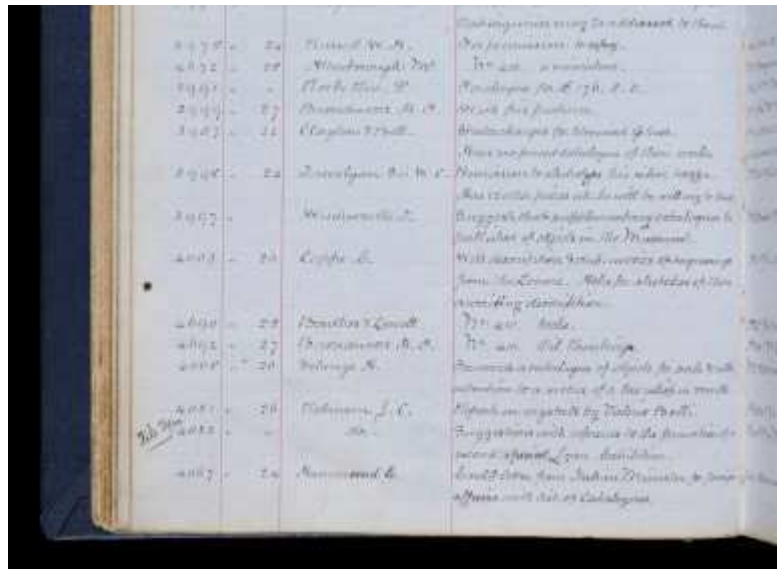
### Registers of Loans in, 1858-1939 (MA/31)

The registers in this series record loans in to the Museum by individuals and organisations. They contain the following information: date object was received, description of object, name and address of lender, general remarks, and date of return of object. There is a consolidated list of names in the V&A Archive.

*List of objects in the Meyrick loan, V&A Archive, MA/31/4*

### Abstracts of correspondence, 1863-1914 (MA/4)

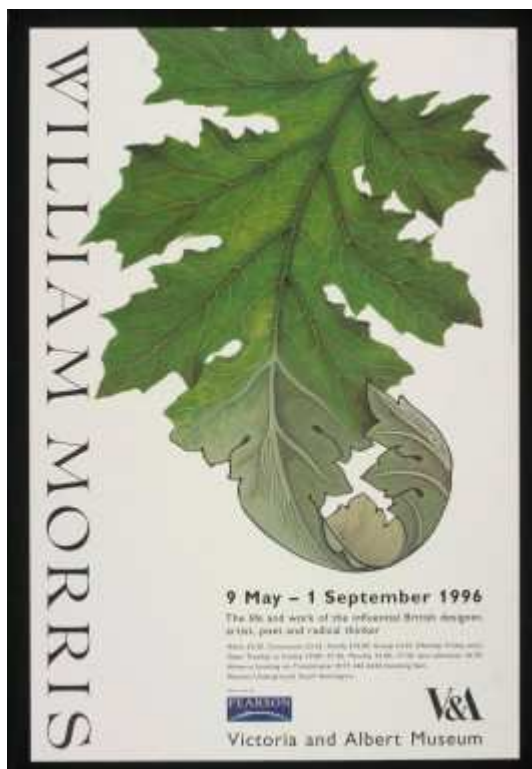
Between 1863 and 1914, Registry clerks numbered each item of correspondence which entered the Museum and recorded it, along with the name of the correspondent, date or receipt, and a summary of the content's letter, in Annual Registers. Little of the earliest correspondence survives, so these Registers provide a unique resource for the reconstruction of the Museum's earliest activities. There is currently no detailed catalogue available for this series, although the V&A Archive staff will check the Archive's holdings for a particular individual or organisation.



*Abstract of J. C. Robinson's letter – suggestion with reference to the formation of a second special Loan Exhibition, V&A Archive, MA/4/1*

### Exhibition publicity posters, 1954 to date (MA/23-27)

The V&A Archive has a growing collection of over 1200 posters amongst which are exhibition publicity posters from 1954 to date. These can be used, together with other ephemera, to study the history of marketing at the V&A and the V&A brand (see the subject guide *Sources for the study of marketing in the V&A Archive*) as well as tracing the presentation of museum objects through time.



*William Morris 9 May – 1 September 1996, V&A Archive, MA/24/376*



*Versace 17 October 2002 – 12 Jan 2003, V&A Archive, MA/24/419*



*Five V&A Canon Photography Gallery exhibition publicity posters*

The posters collection has been arranged in the following series:

- MA/23 General publicity posters
- MA/24 Exhibition publicity posters
- MA/25 Circulation Department publicity posters
- MA/26 Bethnal Green Museum publicity posters
- MA/27 Theatre Museum publicity posters

### **Ephemera (MA/52) and Press Office ephemera (MA/51)**

The collection of Museum-related ephemera covers the period 1964 to the present and includes promotional leaflets, brochures and flyers, postcards and maps. The Press Office ephemera comprise press releases and press view invitations, and media packs (press releases, notes for editors etc).

### **Photographic guard books (MA/32)**



*William Morris exhibition photograph, V&A Archive, MA/32/231, neg. 69955*

The V&A Archive has over 900 photographic guardbooks which contain photographs taken by V&A photographers between the 1850s and 1996; these include photographs of objects on display in galleries and images of exhibitions. These photographs were mounted in volumes in negative number order.

Please note that the index is not in the V&A Archive; it is held by staff of V&A Images at South Kensington. Requests for a search of the index should be sent to V&A Images:

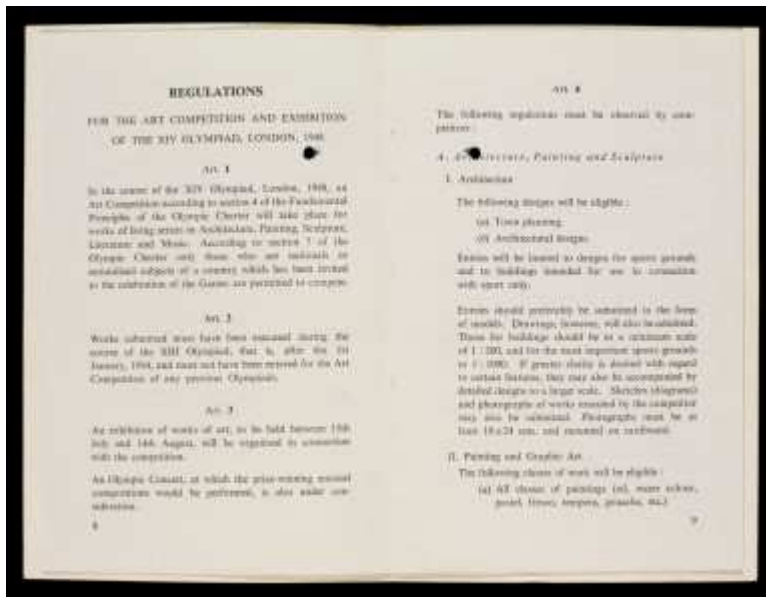
Email: [vanda.images@vam.ac.uk](mailto:vanda.images@vam.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)20 7942 2479

### **Press cuttings albums (MA/49)**

These cover the period 1831 to 1955 and include cuttings relating to a wide variety of events, including exhibitions. Some of the albums are devoted solely to V&A exhibitions.

## Files relating to the early history of the Museum and its buildings (ED 84)



This series includes notices to the Press, papers relating to the arrangements and regulations for exhibitions, and files for exhibitions held at the V&A (ED 84/322-367).

*Printed regulations for the Olympic Games exhibition, 1948, V&A Archive, ED 84/327*

## Records of the Circulation Department, 1909-1977 (MA/6-19)

Established in the 1850s, the V&A's Circulation Department was responsible for organising exhibitions which were loaned to provincial Museums, Art Galleries and Schools. These exhibitions drew upon the Department's own extensive collections (separate from those of the main Museum departments but covering the same fields) and placed a particular emphasis on contemporary work. The following series are relevant:

MA/13 'Set' files which were routinely produced by the Circulation Department as a working record of the V&A's touring exhibitions. The files contain information on the "sets" of objects assembled for each particular exhibition.

MA/17 Exhibition and loan collection prospectuses

MA/18 Exhibition catalogues and handlists

MA/19 Photographs and press cuttings

## Exhibition Attendance Figures

A list of attendance figures (when known) for exhibitions that were held between 1863 and 2001 is available in the V&A Archive. More recent statistics are included in the Museum's Annual Reports: [http://www.vam.ac.uk/about\\_va/reports\\_plans/index.html#annual\\_reports](http://www.vam.ac.uk/about_va/reports_plans/index.html#annual_reports).

## Access to records at the V&A Archive

Please note that although the archives are public records and are generally available for public consultation, some information in them, such as personal data or information supplied in confidence to the V&A, may be restricted under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/f/freedom-of-information/>.

## Other V&A sources

The V&A Prints and Drawings department has a number of early museum posters which can be viewed in its Study Room: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/links/study-rooms/>. Exhibitions since 2000 may have a microsite on the V&A website: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/api/logotron/past-displays>.

**Contact details**

V&A Archive, Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London, W14 0QX

Tel: +44 (0)20 7602 8832

Fax: +44 (0)20 7602 0980

Contact us online at <http://vam.altarama.com/reftooo.aspx>