**Preserving history**

**The V and A museum is a perfect example of modern-day success**

**[Noor Ali](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/noor-ali)**

February 21, 2023

The foundation of Victoria and Al­bert was laid in the 1850s after the immaculate success of the Great Exhibition. The Great Exhibition introduced this remarkable idea of showcasing culture, clothing and even industrialised ma­chinery all on display under one roof to portray Britain’s superiority over other na­tions, attracting an audience of nearly six million people. Fol­lowing its footprints, Prince Albert promoted the establishment of a similar museum, known as the South Kensing­ton Museum. Later in the early 1900s, it was renamed Victoria and Albert, de­veloping into a powerful civic institu­tion of public education dissemination. In the years to come, it transformed into the world’s leading art museum with a collection encompassing over 2 million objects preserving knowledge of more than 5000 years. These objects, arte­facts, and galleries portray people of every walk of life belonging to differ­ent civilisations across the globe. This extensive diversity of the collection is a hallmark of this museum, further en­riched by its virtual presence in the form of 3D/4D virtual tours.

[PM to chair federal cabinet meeting](https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2023/pm-to-chair-federal-cabinet-meeting)

V and A still represents the values of Great Britain, the era of colonisation and British dominion. This notion is evident from the fact that cultural ar­tefacts and paintings have been trans­ferred from the poor colonies to the British thus, depriving nations of their rich history. Often this is given a com­plex meaning altogether totally differ­ent from its native history. Further­more, the concept of portraying women as an inferior gender is shown to be a product of colonisation as evident from Anim Addo’s cultural references in her poetry, however again the question arises of how true these depictions are considering the political impact.

At the 2007 bicentenary, V and A pre­sented different ways of analysing the controversial topic of slavery in the form of Uncomfortable Truths: The Shadow of Slave Trading on Contem­porary Art and Design. This artwork fo­cused on the concept of art interven­tion where pieces from different times and situations are interacted with ex­isting artefacts to produce specific ef­fects. The Uncomfortable Truths gives a whole new meaning to the history of slave trade practice by diverging onto financial profits and the standards of human equality that we have today so that the audience is engaged in under­standing why it was prevalent at that time rather than focusing on the aspect that who is to be blamed? Overall aes­thetic sense is used to digress the audi­ence from what is transparently visible: the racial divide and inhumane treat­ment of black people in the slave trade. What was once considered as a clear in­justice to Black people has been trans­formed into a mere educational guide in the Discovery of Trails also known as Traces. V and A tried to overcome the racial gap by including Black Trail guides but still, it fails to take into ac­count the equal representation of wom­en in the Shadows exhibition showing a gender gap at the very least.

[Mainly dry weather expected in most parts of country](https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2023/mainly-dry-weather-expected-in-most-parts-of-country)

Moreover, the importance of V and A as a revenue-generating entity can­not be neglected especially when the Finance Bill provides it with no ex­emption in the form of taxation. The government believes it to be an essen­tial source of tax generation leading to fiscal benefit and curtailing budget­ary pressures otherwise the govern­ment would have exempted the land on which it is situated This shows that not only V and A is used as a tool to make the people think about the British su­premacy but to also pay for it to admire its culturally aesthetic beauty.

In addition to political significance, V and A museum is built in a way that sat­isfies the ritualistic character of a muse­um as the magnanimous building gives it a majestic look. As the visitor enters the gate, it automatically catches the at­tention of the visitor by its exclusive ar­chitecture, developing zeal, and passion among the audience to explore fur­ther. One simply cannot deny the mu­seum’s spiritual feel with its high-glass ceiling, long corridors and unique arte­facts reminiscing the era of prehistor­ic civilisations. It allows the person to transition beyond the realms of mun­dane life and get detached from the out­side world. The deep-rooted connection which is established between the visi­tor, artwork and structure signifies the ritualistic effect V and A possesses.

[In year of war, US gives Ukraine $30B worth of weapons](https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2023/in-year-of-war-us-gives-ukraine-dollar-30b-worth-of-weapons)

Just as one is lost in the spiritual world due to V and A’s mesmerising atmo­sphere, the soothing ambience inside the museum connects the visitor with civilisations that date back even a thou­sand years. He is bound to share a feel­ing of self-identity that makes him feel like belonging to the same community. Moreover, the ritualistic effects of VandA cannot be denied as the person feels a sense of purification by connecting to its Creator thus, offering a blend of art, val­ues and beliefs. The placement of arte­facts follows a guided pattern combined with its decorum making the feeling of transitioning from the world even more prominent. Structured pathways and grand doors further strengthen the feel­ing. In short, the V and A museum ful­fils all the basic requirements that an art museum is supposed to. Along with it, its educational purpose attracts all types of museum-goers like professionals, the explorer, the spiritual seeker, the experi­ence seeker and the facilitator.

[Russia suspends its participation in New START nuclear arms treaty](https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2023/russia-suspends-its-participation-in-new-start-nuclear-arms-treaty)

Realising the importance of the online system the V and A museum started tak­ing steps to provide a better online dis­play of its collection. The department established its factory project in No­vember 2007 to digitise the collection step by step. Digitisation will attract more people to visit the museum who can’t get the chance to visit it person­ally. In addition, it will help research­ers and students to study the artefacts in detail compared to personal visita­tion as there is no limitation on time and the number of visits. The 3D and 4D tours provide visitors with a unique ex­perience, especially during times of co­vid-19. Thus, it will attract many po­tential digital customers as it will help in developing interest among the youth by re-connecting history with technolo­gy which is also visible from an upsurge in online content during covid-19 pan­demic. This has already enhanced the museum’s knowledge-providing quali­ty because the artefacts are available in closer dimensions than in real life. Fur­thermore, V and A is planning to make as much collection accessible to the pub­lic as possible embarking on its centu­ries-old mission of educating the public. This educational aspect is evident from giving students access to “Green Drag­on”, the famous Gothic bench exhibited at the Department of Woodwork. More information can be gained by studying Parker’s “Domestic Architecture in Eng­land” by displaying knowledge of Eng­land’s Old Oak Furniture.

[Usman Mukhtar's 'Gulabo Rani' earns seven international film festival awards](https://www.nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2023/usman-mukhtar-s-gulabo-rani-earns-seven-international-film-festival-awards)

Hence, the V and A museum is a per­fect example of modern-day success as it is one of the pioneers in adapting technology. Further, it is well ahead of its time in attracting potential visitors through its dynamic physical and virtu­al presence. Not only this, but its large collection covers artwork, artefacts, and exhibitions from across the world dis­tinguishing itself as a global entity.

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