



*Together we make it V&A*

V&A South Kensington  
VARI Creative Fellowship 2025-26  
National Art Library Collections

V&A

<b>Reports to</b>	Chief Librarian
<b>Department</b>	V&A Research Institute, National Art Library and Archives
<b>Line Management</b>	None
<b>Principal Location</b>	V&A South Kensington
<b>Working hours</b>	part-time (min. 2 days/week or equivalent over the fellowship period of 9 months)
<b>Fellowship Stipend</b>	£14,000 for 9 months plus a production and public engagement budget of up to £5,000
<b>Contract</b>	Fellowship (9 months)





# Who we are

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the **power of creativity**. Our mission is to **champion design and creativity** in all its forms, advance cultural knowledge, and inspire makers, creators and innovators everywhere. We share a 5,000-year-old story of creativity through **exhibitions, events, educational programmes, digital experiences, conservation, research,** and an ever-evolving national collection of over 2.8m objects spanning **every creative discipline**.

Our Collections Division consists of six curatorial, research and collections management teams. One of these is the **V&A Research Institute (VARI), National Art Library (NAL) and Archives**.

The V&A Research Institute, National Art Library and Archives team leads research projects, academic programmes, and access to library and archive collections across the V&A family. Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we work with a wide range of partners and researchers, **including academics, makers, designers, museum professionals, and other practitioners, creating a unique research environment**. One of our key aims is to incubate new methods for interdisciplinary collections research.



The **National Art Library (NAL)** holds the **UK's most comprehensive public reference collection of literature on the fine and decorative arts**. Located in historic reading rooms overlooking the John Madejski Garden at V&A South Kensington, we are **open to the public** three days a week.

The NAL collection focuses on the **art and design of the book**, ranging from **illuminated manuscripts** to **comics**, and from unique **book bindings** to **artists' books**. Developed in tandem with the Museum's collections since the 1850s, the library also has immense manuscript holdings, including the largest part of the authorial oeuvre of **Charles Dickens** and the writings of art historians **Crowe and Cavalcaselle**; many **early printed books**, from drama to philosophy to festival books; annotated **auction catalogues** and much more.

Since its origins, the library has collected contemporary as well as historic material, and we still do so today.



Our library materials are available to all who wish to consult them in the NAL's Reading Room at V&A South Kensington, with further collections opening up from 31 May 2025 at V&A East Storehouse.

However, they are **less well known to wider visitors to the V&A**. The scale of the collections and their sensitivity to light mean that only selected books can be put on display for a limited time, and so **they can often remain invisible** to those not already aware of them.

With the **VARI Creative Fellowship 2025-26**, we invite you to work closely with NAL and VARI colleagues **to shine a new light on the collections of the National Art Library through your creative practice**.

# About the role

**We are looking for an independent artistic voice to help us explore new ways of engaging with the NAL's special collections as well as with members of the public.**

We welcome applications from creative practitioners working in any medium within the art and design community, particularly if you are interested in exploring library collections as part of your creative practice and would also be interested in the following:

- How creative practice can reveal and interrogate the many layers of meaning contained in library collections, engage with their spaces, structures and knowledge systems and the unique combination of text, image and materiality they embody.
- How creative approaches to library collections can engage and inspire existing and, especially, new audiences.
- Exploring, through the NAL's collection materials, narratives that relate to the themes of legacies of colonialism; information structures, systems and their accessibility; the materiality of books and their discoverability in a digital culture.

# About the role

Your **key responsibilities** as VARI Creative Fellow 2025-26 will include:

1. Developing and delivering a practice-led research project that responds to the NAL collections and the narratives they tell. The outputs will depend your creative practice.
2. Working closely with colleagues in the VARI and NAL teams to co-design and test new approaches to engaging with the NAL's collections through creative practice while co-developing frameworks for practice-led approaches to the library collections beyond the Fellowship itself.
3. Delivering one or more public engagement/outreach events with V&A audiences, such as through the Museum's Friday Late programme or through VARI, NAL and Archives events.
4. Spending at least 2 days per week (or equivalent) throughout the duration of your Fellowship, carrying out research, meeting with and presenting ideas to museum staff and developing/delivering your creative response to the library collections.
5. Developing an online presence for your practice on the V&A website, including blogging (we will offer technical support).
6. Writing a reflexive document outlining your methodologies, processes and findings that can be a contribution to museum research.

# What we're looking for

The VARI Creative Fellowship would suit you if you are a practitioner who is inherently self-reflexive, responsive to the range of library material in the V&A's collections and meet the following **essential criteria**:

- A demonstrable interest in the relationship(s) between contemporary practice and library collections.
- A genuine eagerness to work collaboratively with both the public and the museum community.
- Creative originality and professionalism in your work.
- The ability to work independently.
- Strong communications skills.
- Demonstrable knowledge of current trends and best practice in the field of creative engagement with public library or museum collections and their users.
- You share our Values of Sustainability, Equity, Creativity, Collaboration & Generosity.



# Why undertake a fellowship here

We strive to integrate **equality, diversity, and inclusion** consistently and naturally into all our activities.

We are proud to be an **open, tolerant, and diverse** organisation. We want to do more to welcome a broader audience and develop a more diverse workforce.

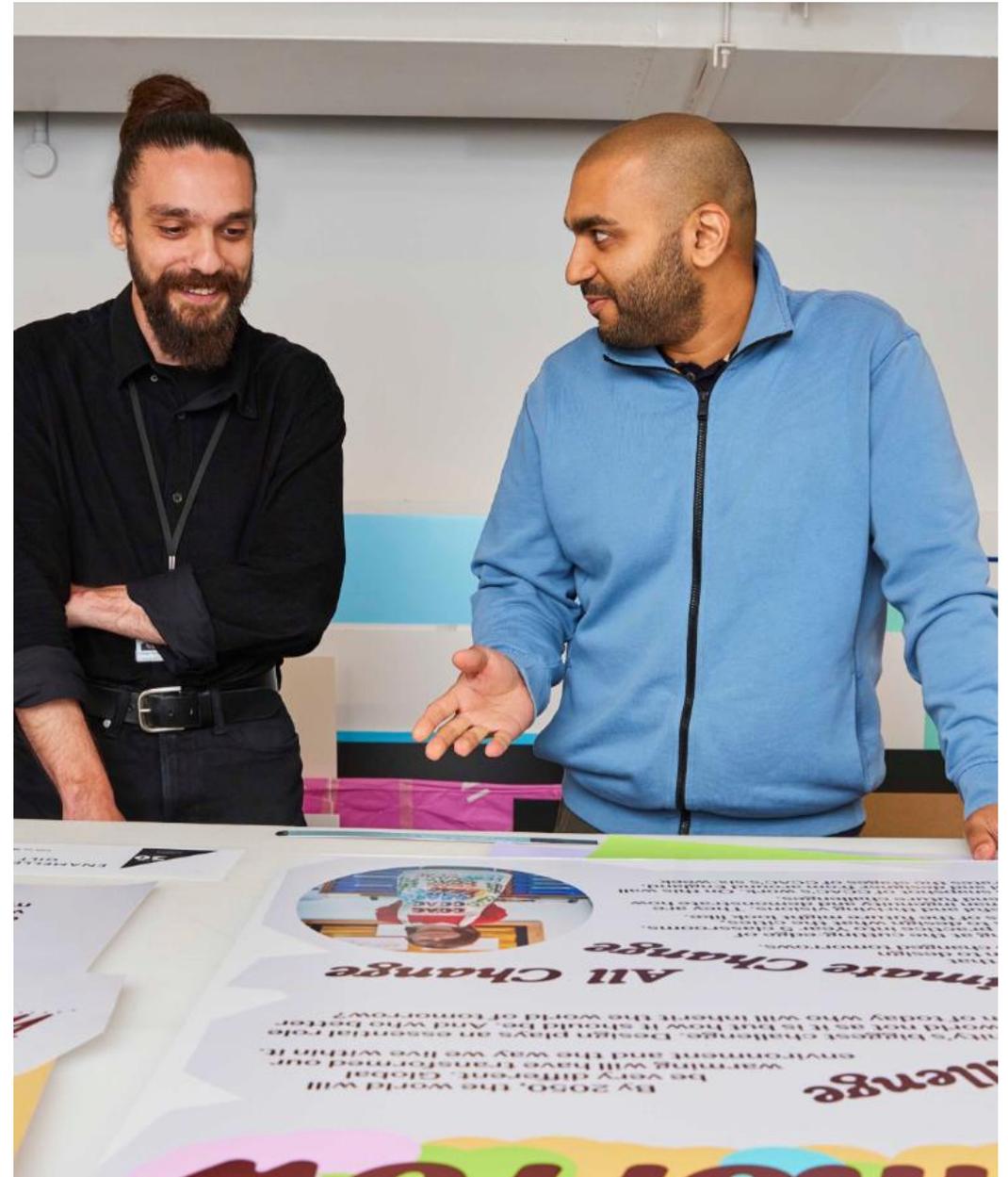
The V&A values are **Equity, Sustainability, Generosity, Collaboration and Creativity.**

## **Disability Confident**

We are committed to guaranteeing an interview for applicants who declare they have a disability and meet the minimum criteria for the role.



- A fellowship stipend of £14,000 and a production/public engagement budget of up to £5,000 (for details please see next page).
- Direct involvement in the culture of the V&A throughout your Fellowship.
- Formal affiliation with the V&A Research Institute, NAL and Archives as part of the Museum's Collections Division.
- Appropriate introductions to V&A colleagues and access to relevant learning and curatorial expertise.
- Support from VARI's Research Projects Officer.
- A desk in the V&A Research Institute and access to a personal computer, including V&A Intranet login and email address.
- A temporary V&A Museum Security pass for the duration of the Fellowship, subject to Security clearance.



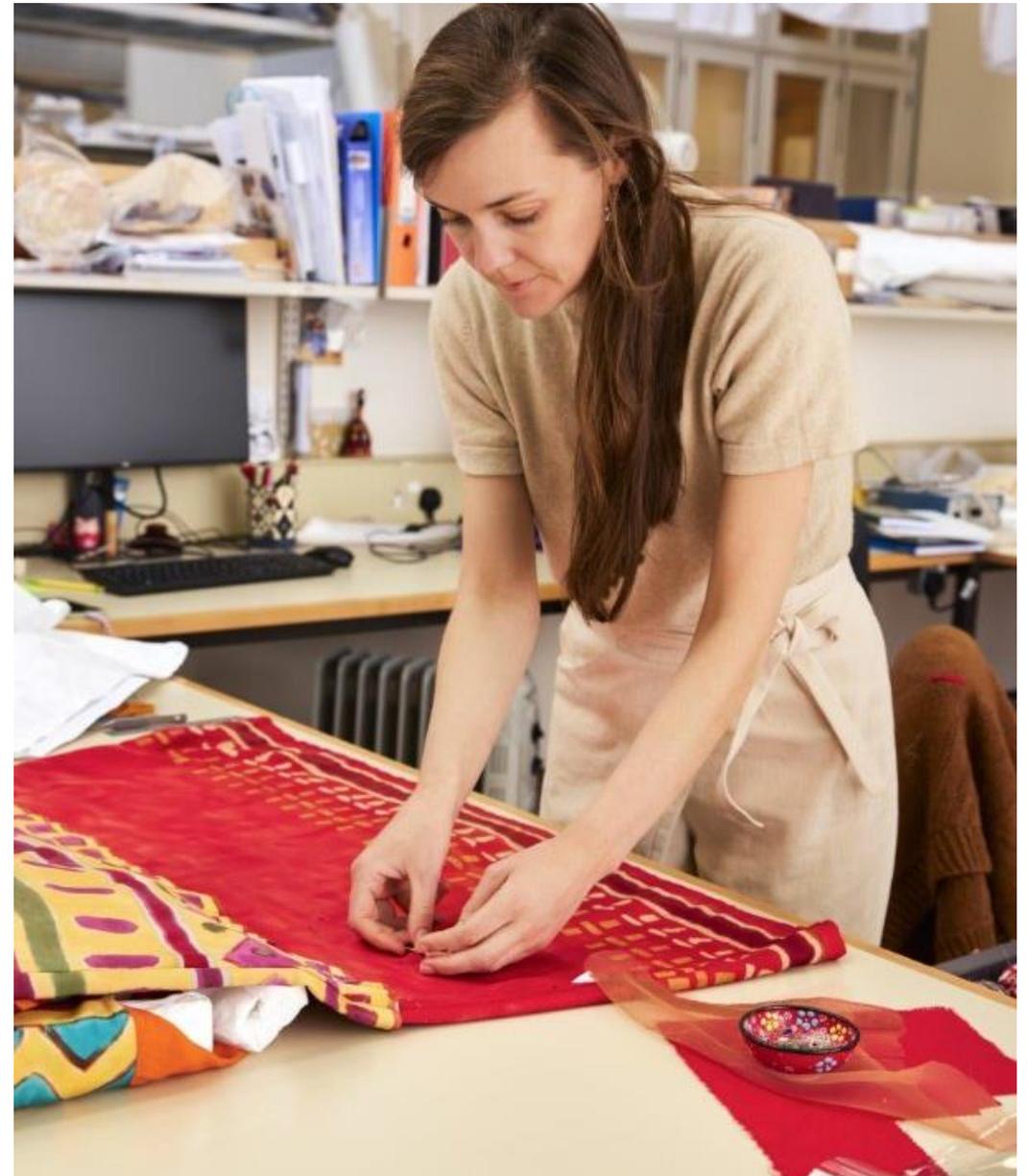
## YOUR FELLOWSHIP BUDGET

The VARI Creative Fellowship stipend is £14,000, supported through a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The stipend will need to cover your living costs as well as subsistence and travel costs to and from your normal working location and the V&A. **Please note that we can offer a desk but no studio space.**

The Fellowship grant funding is disbursed in two equal instalments: the first instalment will be paid on signature of your agreement at the start of your fellowship; the second instalment will be paid on delivery of your fellowship's final outputs, so planning for good personal cash flow is essential.

Additionally, you will have up to £5,000 available for public engagement activities and/or production (including materials for displays).



# What next

**Apply here**

[Vacancies at the V&A](#)

**Application Deadline**

Monday 16 June 2025

We are a Disability Confident Employer offering guaranteed interviews to those who declare their disability and meet the job criteria under the Disability Confident Scheme.

**Interview day**

Tuesday 1 July 2025

**Potential Start Date**

15 September 2025

**Any Questions?**

Contact our Recruitment team at [careers@vam.ac.uk](mailto:careers@vam.ac.uk)



Thank you

Together we make it V&A

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