

V&A acquires its first Eve Arnold Photograph

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The V&A has acquired an important Eve Arnold print which has become the first work by the late photographer to enter its collection. *A Meeting of the Brides of Christ on their wedding day to their Lord at the nunnery in Godalming, Surrey* (1965) presents a rare aspect of the celebrated photographer's work, in that it is neither a portrait of a celebrity nor a straightforward documentary or photojournalist image.

The print was bequeathed to the V&A by Robin Warwick Gibson OBE through the Art Fund. Gibson, who was the National Portrait Gallery's director from 1994 to 2001, cultivated close personal relationships with both contemporary artists and the descendents of historical artists, with whom he collaborated on exhibitions. He put together many memorable shows, including an exhibition of Eve Arnold's photographs in 1991, after which he acquired this gelatin silver print, signed by Arnold and annotated on the reverse with a personal message.

A Meeting of the Brides of Christ shows a group of novice nuns before their wedding ceremony to become Brides of Christ, calmly conversing despite the significance of the life in which they are about to embark. Their sheer, delicate wedding dresses catch the soft light emanating from a nearby cloister window and the image provides a glimpse into an otherwise private world, capturing a sense of quiet anticipation. Arnold was known for her skilful way of putting her sitters at ease, such that an intimacy or vulnerability was often revealed, as seen in this work.

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A said: *"This photograph is a splendid example of the work of Eve Arnold, one of the finest photojournalists of our time. We are thrilled to receive this print for the V&A's national collection of the art of photography."*

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said: *"Among Robin Gibson's many achievements at the National Portrait Gallery was the establishment of its department of photography, a medium to which he maintained a profound commitment throughout his life. It's therefore*

entirely fitting that his bequest, administered through the Art Fund, includes such an important contribution to the V&A's collection – its first Eve Arnold image.”

Eve Arnold (1912-2012) studied with Alexei Brodovitch at the New School for Social Research in New York in the late 1940s before becoming involved with Magnum agency in 1951. In 1957 she became the first female North American photographer in the group. She soon moved to the UK where she continued to live until her death in 2012. Best known for her portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Malcolm X and other famous Americans, Arnold had a long and prolific career working in various countries. She documented life abroad, the banality of poverty and the atrocity of war in China, South Africa and many other nations undergoing transition. In addition to producing photographs for a variety of magazines, from *Picture Post* to *Life*, *Esquire* and *Paris-Match*, Arnold also published several books and produced a film, *Women Behind the Veil*, which looked at Arab women in hammams and harems.

The print will form part of a future display in the V&A's Photographs Gallery.

Notes to Editors

About the V&A

The V&A is the world's greatest museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. In 1852 the V&A became the first museum to collect photographs, and in 1977 became the home to the UK's national collection of the art of photography. The new Photographs Gallery chronicles the history of photography from its invention in 1839 up to the 1960s and temporary displays, primarily showcasing contemporary photography, are shown in the V&A's existing photographs gallery. The majority of photographs not on display can be viewed without appointment in the Prints & Drawings Study Room.

www.vam.ac.uk

About the Art Fund

The Art Fund is the national charity which helps museums and galleries to buy, show and share art for the enjoyment of all. Over the past five years, the Art Fund has given £24 million to buy art and supported a range of projects and programmes aimed at helping more people enjoy art. The Art Fund is independently funded and the majority

of its income comes from almost 90,000 supporters who purchase a National Art Pass, costing just £50, which gives free entry to over 200 museums, galleries and historic houses across the country as well as 50% off many major exhibitions.

www.artfund.org

For further PRESS information and images, contact the V&A press office on 020 7942 2502 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

For further PRESS information about the Art Fund, contact Phil Abraham on 020 7225 4819 or email pabraham@artfund.org (not for publication).