
Anthropocene Reading Group

V&A

The V&A Anthropocene Reading Group is a cross-departmental staff discussion forum convened by V&A East, V&A Research Institute (VARI) and the Estate department. The group is dedicated to critical thinking around the Anthropocene – our present age in which human activity has become the dominant force shaping the climate and ecosystems of planet Earth.

They are focused on the importance of bringing together the arts, sciences, social sciences and humanities in this time of climate and biodiversity crisis, exploring how the concepts and theoretical frameworks of the Anthropocene relate to museum practice at the V&A. In 2021 the group are turning their attention to systems change, and engaging with critical and propositional practice that is shifting the landscape of debate and action in response to the realities of the Anthropocene – from economics to fashion, architecture, design and making.

The second session of 2021 explored sustainable fashion, building on the momentum of Fashion Revolution Week 2021 – a forum devoted to social and environmental justice in the fashion sector. Two guest speakers joined the group: Kate Fletcher, Research Professor of Sustainability, Design, Fashion at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, University of the Arts London, design activist and author, and Edwina Ehrman, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at VARI and curator of the V&A exhibition Fashioned from Nature (2018 – 2019). In tune with the reading group's focus on 'rethinking systems', the session explored fashion systems and the values that govern them. Our relationship with nature emerged as an important theme, together with reflections on what our actions and expectations towards the natural world say about us. A thought-provoking session, the discussion explored several concepts and strategies for driving change.

The group considered the range of opportunities for museum research, programming and digital initiatives to progress debates around sustainable fashion, building on the momentum of the V&A's new sustainability strategy and new 'family' of museum sites. Faced with the pressing timescale for achieving net zero targets, the group considered agile, responsive projects as vital – as Edwina put it, the time is now for endeavours 'with urgency, an action, that can draw in voices from around the globe, so we can collaborate and reflect those values we find in Earth Logic'.

More details and insights can be found [here](#) in the full blog post by Zofia Trafas White, Curator V&A East.