

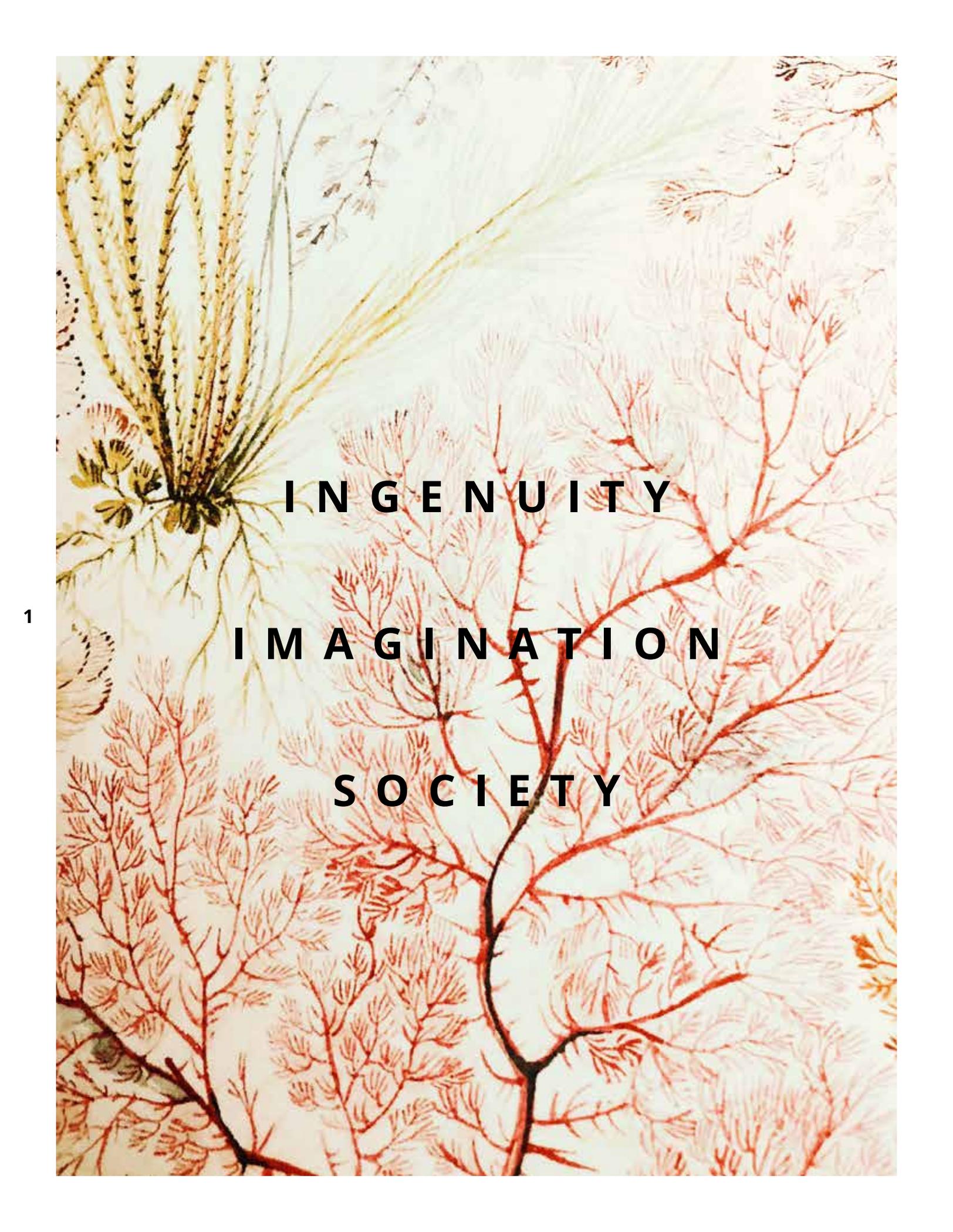


CREATIVE GREEN



CREATIVE PROGRAMMING
& PRACTICE

SHOWCASING CREATIVE GREEN 2018 WINNER
FASHIONED FROM NATURE

A detailed botanical illustration of a plant. The upper left portion features several thick, yellowish-brown stems with small, dark, scale-like structures. These stems branch out into a dense, fan-like structure of fine, yellowish filaments. The lower and right portions of the image are dominated by a complex, branching network of reddish-brown stems, which are densely covered with small, feathery, reddish structures, possibly representing a different part of the plant or a specific growth habit. The background is a light, off-white color.

I N G E N U I T Y

I M A G I N A T I O N

S O C I E T Y

S T R A T E G Y

The V&A and Julie's Bicycle began their partnership over two years ago, developing a Sustainability Strategy and Policy for the museum. The V&A has a commitment to ambitious and inspirational curation and programming, demonstrated in our three core principles of Ingenuity, Imagination and Society. Continuing this important collaboration, the V&A looks to build on the success of the 2018 exhibition *Fashioned from Nature* and the awareness that it created for this important subject.

Fashioned from Nature examined the often uneasy relationship between fashion and the environment, drawing on the past and exploring current innovation in the industry. The exhibition championed innovation, creativity and appreciation for the natural world, and the designers contributing to the rapidly growing sustainable fashion movement.

While exploring environmental themes and narratives through the lens of our collection, the exhibition was a richly imagined response to our role as the extractors and consumers of nature, and how we can become its stewards in the future.

Museums are in a prime position to demonstrate climate leadership through the curation of their exhibitions and creative programming (see [Museums Environmental Framework](#)). *Fashioned from Nature* is the embodiment of the V&A's commitment to sustainability.

Aiming to bridge the past and the future, we look to examine the defining issues of the present through our exhibitions, displays and programming. There is no greater contemporary challenge than that of climate change.

SHOWCASE

CREATIVE PROGRAMMING

Julie's Bicycle and the V&A have prepared a case study of the curation and impact of the exhibition *Fashioned from Nature*, which ran from April 2018 to January 2019.

Our showcase on *Fashioned from Nature* presents an inspiring case to the Creative Green community, profiling creative programming

and best practice. The V&A took an integrated approach to reduce their environmental footprint in presenting their exhibition, which included sustainable procurement of materials, the build and design of display cases, and interstice digital displays to engage audiences with the life cycle of the fashion industry.

3







WRITTEN BY
EDWINA EHRMAN, SENIOR CURATOR

PROCESS

I proposed an exhibition about the relationship between fashion and nature in 2014 but didn't start working on it full time until October 2016 because I was involved with another project. In total, *Fashioned from Nature* and the exhibition book took about 20 months of full time work to develop and deliver. For most of the time I was assisted by a full-time Research Assistant. I also had a very experienced Exhibition Manager, Sophie Parry, who has been integral to the project's success.

In addition, the project benefitted enormously from the support of an advisory group which consisted of staff from the Natural History Museum, Museum of Economic Botany at Kew, Centre for Sustainable Design at London

College of Fashion and Centre for Circular Design at Chelsea College of Art, as well as our sponsor, the European Confederation of Flax and Hemp.

The advisory group, whose members I invited to critique my exhibition idea, met twice, at the concept stage and just before I wrote the design brief. However, I continued to keep in touch with them throughout the exhibition's development. CSF became special advisers, the NHM helped us with loans and recording two videos, we borrowed from Kew and jointly worked together to get one important loan dyed, and CCD developed an exhibit for the 'Future Fabrics' display.



The Most Sustainable Jeans by G-Star RAW. The denim fabric (not the jeans) is the first denim to be cradle-to-cradle certified to the Gold Standard.

A I M S , N A R R A T I V E & C O N T E N T

N A R R A T I V E

Fashioned from Nature explores the complex, uneasy and unequal relationship between fashion and nature. The exhibition title is deliberate: fashion is quite literally ‘fashioned’ or made from materials found in the natural world, from the raw materials used at the first stage of a garment’s lifecycle to the energy required to deliver the clothes we buy to the high street and our homes.

Starting in 1600, the exhibition interweaves two key stories exploring the inspiration of creativity fashion finds in nature’s diversity, colours and textiles, and our human fascination and interaction with the natural world. However, its main focus lies in examining the industry’s increasingly negative impacts on the environment and ecosystems as it grew in scale and complexity. It examines abuses, particularly towards animals, but also draws attention to the people who campaigned to prevent them.

The exhibition creates a solution-focused narrative in order not to preach, but instead raise awareness and encourage debate.

Bringing together past, present and future, the exhibition argues that sustainability should be a core principle of design going forward.

The exhibition asks two questions: How can we design a better, more responsible fashion industry, and what can we learn from the past to improve the future? Its engagement with contemporary issues, support for the design community and creative industries, and its aim to reach out to the widest possible audience accord with the V&A’s strategic plan and its founding ideals. It challenges designers to create clothes that are desirable and responsible, and encourages us all to consider our clothing choices more carefully.

Focussing on the western fashion system, *Fashioned from Nature* uses Britain as a case study of a country with a once thriving textile industry, which is known today for its innovative fashion and design community. In the past, the country exemplified the environmental problems which other countries face today but on a far greater scale. As a historian, I wanted to put today's challenges in context and to use our historical collections to show how we arrived where we are today and to ask if history has any lessons for us.

The exhibition is arranged chronologically. Each section shows key fashions of the period but the narrative and object selection encourage visitors to take a step back and think about the fabric of fashion and the raw materials used to create it. Natural history specimens, taxidermy and raw materials are displayed alongside garments. Maps show the global networks of trade which underpinned the fashion industry from an early period and infographics explain life cycle and process.

Our aim was two-fold: to encourage visitors to think differently about what their own clothes are made from, and perhaps make better fabric choices; and to unite process and practice with aesthetics and performance.





“Uniting process and practice with aesthetics and performance.”





“It is so important and timely that we now
re-conceptualise what it means to wear
and consume, and what is fashionable.”

12

E M M A W A T S O N

C A T A L O G U E F O R E W O R D ,
F A S H I O N E D F R O M N A T U R E

L E F T

Calvin Klein Green Carpet Challenge dress worn by
Emma Watson to the MET Gala 2016, © Matt Baron

Moving forward to the 21st century we switched the emphasis of the narrative, bringing solutions to the fore while continuing to remind visitors of the very real and complex challenge we face. We used Emma Watson's dress by Calvin Klein for Eco-Age, which she wore to the Met Gala in 2016, to highlight this and surrounded the display with living plants, which are thriving in their self-contained ecosystems within terrariums.

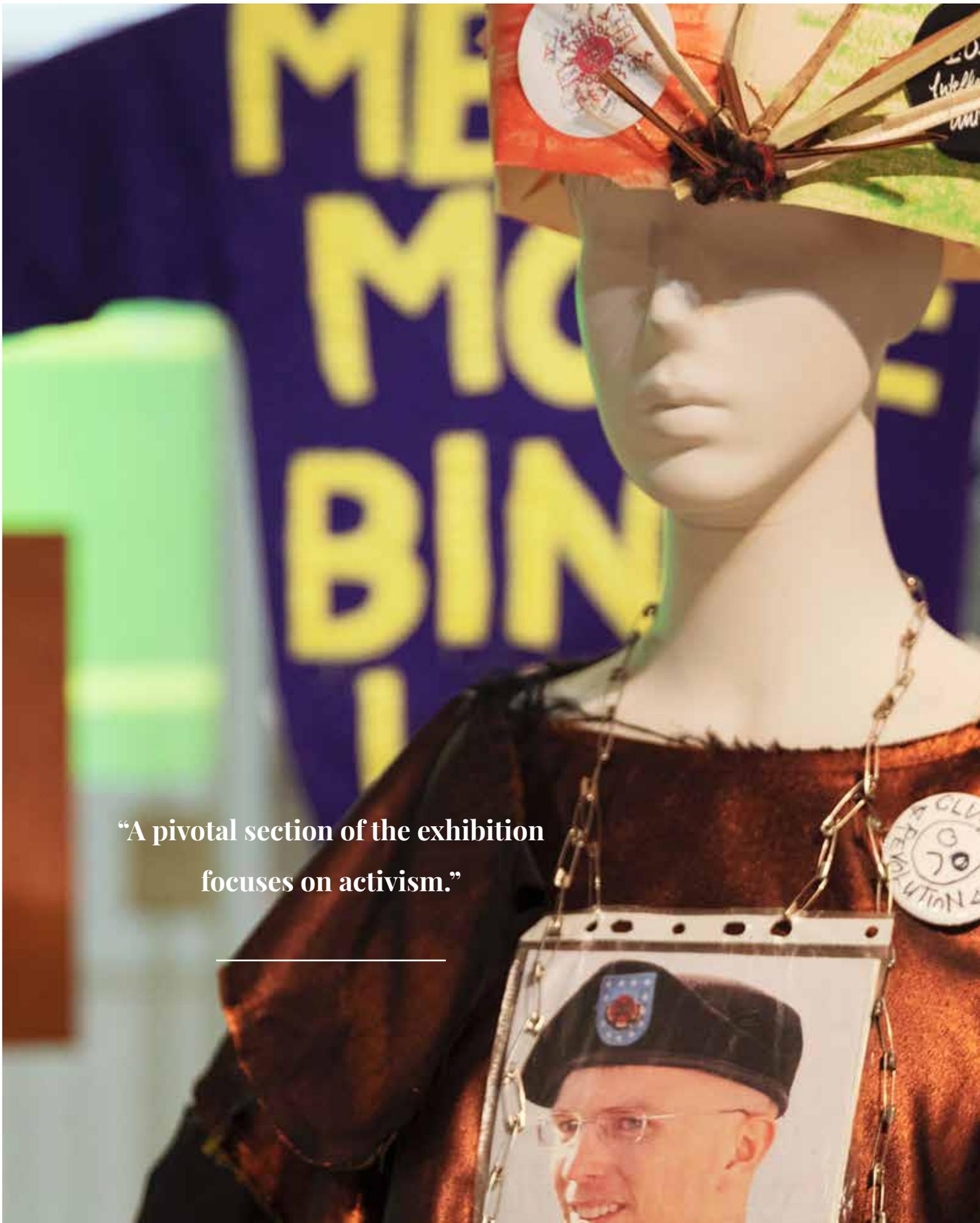
Deciding which companies and designers to include was difficult and we discussed this internally and externally with a network of contacts who work to promote sustainability from within the fashion industry. The outcome of these discussions was the importance of looking at the industry and fashion system holistically and of representing companies and fashion houses that are prepared to make public, transparent commitments to shared targets and who collaborate and invest in research and development which has the potential to benefit the whole industry.

Our selection includes many well-known brands but there are also designers whose names and practices will be unknown to many visitors. Together the garments and accessories offer a range of low and high-tech solutions to the challenge we face.





“A pivotal section of the exhibition
focuses on activism.”





A pivotal section in the exhibition which links the 20th to the 21st century displays focuses on activism. It flags key figures like Katharine Hamnett and Vivienne Westwood and presents campaigns by Fashion Revolution, the Environmental Justice Foundation, Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund. Most of the posters on display were collected by the V&A in the 1980s as part of a drive to collect material that reflected the growing global environmental movement. The V&A started to collect 'eco-friendly' clothing a decade later. The exhibition has given us the opportunity to build on this group of garments and we are extremely grateful to the designers and fashion houses who have donated pieces to the exhibition and the museum's collection.

The exhibition ends by looking to the future. The final four exhibits present prototypes and innovative processes that are either experimental or not yet fully scaled for commercial production. The materials range from the traditional (paper) to fibres and processes created by designing living systems (bio-design) and the speculative, in Diana Scherer's magical dress woven by roots.



D E S I G N & B U I L D

D E S I G N

The exhibition design is both consciously sustainable, using many recycled materials, and rooted in nature. Our in-house team Juri Nishi and Judith Brugger designed the ground floor of the gallery to represent rock and soil, the stairs that link the exhibition's two levels to evoke roots and growth, and the mezzanine, where the focus is on innovation, to suggest verdant growth.

The title board at the exhibition entrance was an important part of the design process. It was developed with set designers Nick Sellek and Caroline Perry. Their concept was inspired by

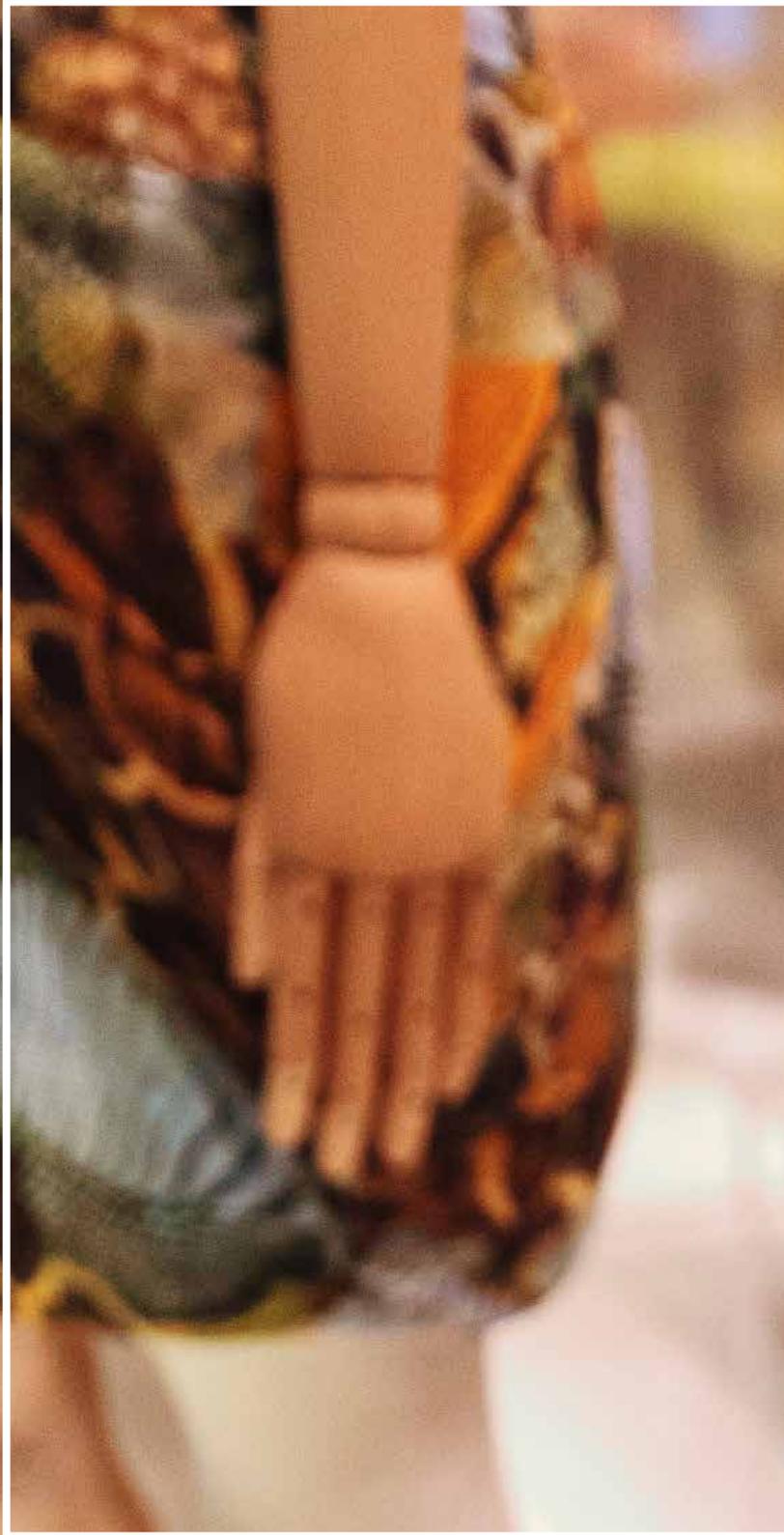
photographs of lichen growing by the Thames estuary and in Eastbourne as well as lichen that Juri found in the inner city.

Lichens are very diverse. They thrive in many different habitats and vary in their colour, form and size. Some, like *rocella tinctoria*, have a direct link with textiles being a much-used source of a purplish dye.

For the materials used in the exhibition build, please see the separate list.

B E L O W

Dress from Alexander McQueen's 2009 show *Plato's Atlantis*, the first of its kind to be live streamed to audiences online. The show alluded to a future confronted by climate change, with rising sea levels, vanishing ice sheets and the need for humanity to evolve in order to survive.





DIGITAL OFFER

The digital offer included pages on the V&A's website with features, videos and images and the **exhibition blog**.

Go to 'Features' for articles; videos featuring the Future Fabric exhibitors, with NHM curators Richard Sabin and Max Barclay, and growing and processing flax in Northern France; a focus piece on the x-rays in the exhibition; teachers' pack and gallery trail.

The Centre for Sustainable Fashion are featuring the 'Fashion Now' and 'Fashion Futures' videos which we commissioned from them for the exhibition on their website.

In addition to this recordings of a number of the speaking events which I undertook outside the museum and several podcasts are available on the web.



PUBLIC PROGRAMME

P R O A C T I V E

Members' events: High profile, income generating, events held in the lecture theatre. These typically take the form of a panel discussion or in conversation. For the launch of FfN Hannah Jones, Nike's Chief Sustainability Officer, was invited to talk with the journalist Marion Hume.

Learning events/schools: The exhibition was used as a resource for school students on the Design Lab Nation programme and formed the focus of the V&A's 2018 Graphic Gathering Challenge. This year our partner is TRAIID and around 300 students attended the briefing day.

Young people: Both July's Create events focussed on fashion. One involved a group of young NEET's. The other was run for the V&A's youth collective, CreateVoice, who took sustainable fashion and the exhibition as their starting point.

Conference: this focused on the future of sustainable fashion and brought together industry experts to explore creative and practical ways to reduce the environmental impact of fashion, from small-scale innovations to new methods being introduced by global brands. Moved to lecture theatre because of demand for tickets (£35).

Artists-in-Residence programme: The exhibition hosted two artists-in residence, Arianna Nicoletti and Bridget Harvey. Artists-in-Residence hold open studios, offer lunchtime talks and contribute to the Learning programme.

R E A C T I V E

External requests for speaking events: These ranged from the talks to panel discussions and interviews – opportunity for expanding networks and possibly future events.





F A S H I O N E D F R O M N A T U R E

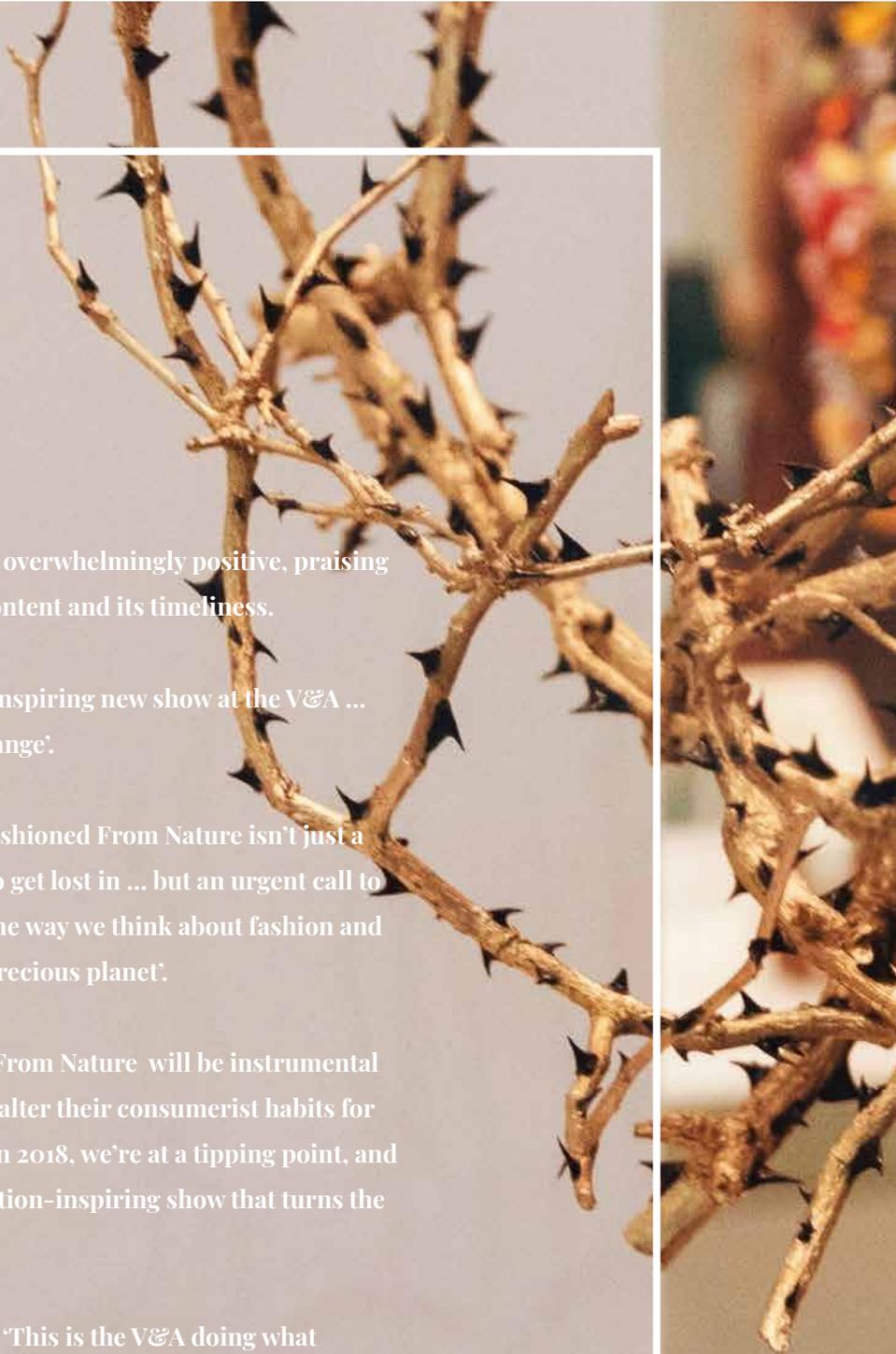
R E F L E C T I O N S

Fashion is an important aspect of the V&A, across our permanent galleries and our temporary exhibitions. *Fashioned from Nature*, however, presented a very different offer than our previous shows. The exhibition didn't focus on a famous name or on a clothing type with a known following such as our Wedding Dresses or Shoes exhibitions.

It represented a bold move by the V&A to host an exhibition that had such a political dimension that it carried an inherent risk that it might not immediately appeal to a broad audience. Fashion exhibitions often attract a

wide audience, however this show broke the mould and how the public would react and engage with the content was difficult to gauge.

Attended by over 175,000 visitors, the exhibition was received extremely well by the Press and the public alike. Observations demonstrated a slightly broader than usual demographic with more men and inter-generational groups attending. Visitors also strongly engaged with the subject matter on social media, posting positive messages and supporting a more sustainable future in fashion.



PRESS

The Press response was overwhelmingly positive, praising the exhibition's aims, content and its timeliness.

Evening Standard. 'An inspiring new show at the V&A ... determined to incite change'.

British Vogue online. 'Fashioned From Nature isn't just a captivating exhibition to get lost in ... but an urgent call to action to us to redress the way we think about fashion and more importantly our precious planet'.

Refinery29. 'Fashioned From Nature will be instrumental in convincing people to alter their consumerist habits for the good of the planet. In 2018, we're at a tipping point, and this might just be the action-inspiring show that turns the tide'.

Time Out. 5 star review. 'This is the V&A doing what the V&A does best: staging world-class exhibitions of immaculately preserved and presented fashion. But this exhibition is about more than looking fabulous. It's about the future of fashion – and the planet.'



The exhibition's aim to provide a forum for conversation and debate has also been realised in its popularity among students and in the blogging community.

27 The exhibition won two awards: Creative Green's Creative Programming award and the Walpole Group's Luxury with a Heart Award. This is awarded to 'the luxury brand, institution or individual that has consistently dedicated themselves to making the world a better place, either through sustainable or environmental initiatives, contribution to special causes, or in using the power of their voice to speak out on behalf of others.'

The awards are a credit to the team who worked so hard to develop the exhibition and will help

to encourage the V&A and other institutions to continue their work embedding sustainability into their practices.

The museum has been taking steps to save energy and reduce its carbon footprint since 2005, the Museums Association 'Museums 2020' initiative. *Fashioned from Nature* and this year's *Food: Bigger than the Plate* exhibition raise much wider issues and have created a fantastic moment for the museum to also introduce a new sustainability programme across the V&A and the Museum of Childhood with the support of Julie's Bicycle. A new sustainability coordinator has also been put into place demonstrating a great statement of intent by the museum.



“A forum to provoke conversations
and provoke a debate.”

The exhibition has also been notably successful in strengthening existing networks and developing others, in government, academia, the fashion industry and among the many charities and NGOs working to reduce the impact of human activity on the planet, amply demonstrating the power of partnerships to explore new avenues for collaboration.

Personally, I am immensely proud that the cross party parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee investigating the sustainability of the fashion industry accepted our invitation to hold an open hearing at the V&A.

The committee chose the lecture theatre for the event which made parliamentary history with the largest audience ever for a committee hearing. It enabled members of the public to observe the parliamentary process in a more accessible location than the Houses of Parliament and gave the members of the

committee a greater insight into the activities of the museum. I gave the MPs a tour of *Fashioned from Nature* before the hearing and some of the questions for the morning's expert witnesses were based on issues raised in the exhibition.

The evidence gathered in the session will help inform recommendations that the Select Committee make to the Government in a major report on sustainable fashion this year.

The event was a valuable advocacy exercise – increasing visibility within parliament and industry networks, helping fulfil the museum's on-going commitment to keep our fashion collections in the spotlight, and aligns with the internal work the V&A is undertaking, following the launch of our sustainability policy earlier this year. We hope to repeat this success with similar events this year.



“The exhibition has also been notably successful in strengthening existing networks and developing others.”

“... An opportunity to think more deeply about how the V&A ... can represent and contribute to debates around sustainability.”

31

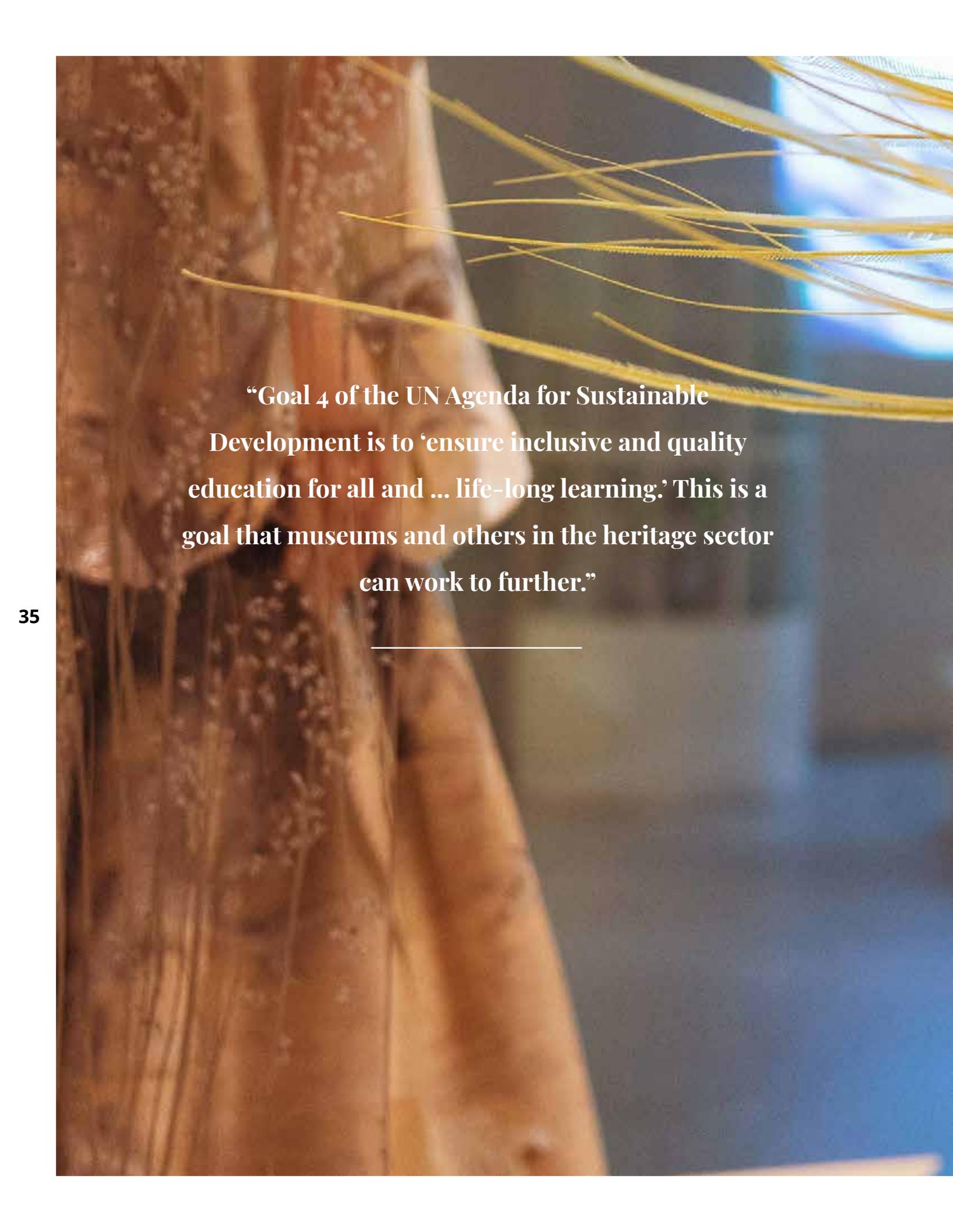


On a higher level *Fashioned from Nature* has given us an opportunity to think more deeply about how the V&A, and museums and cultural organisations world-wide, can represent and contribute to debates around sustainability.

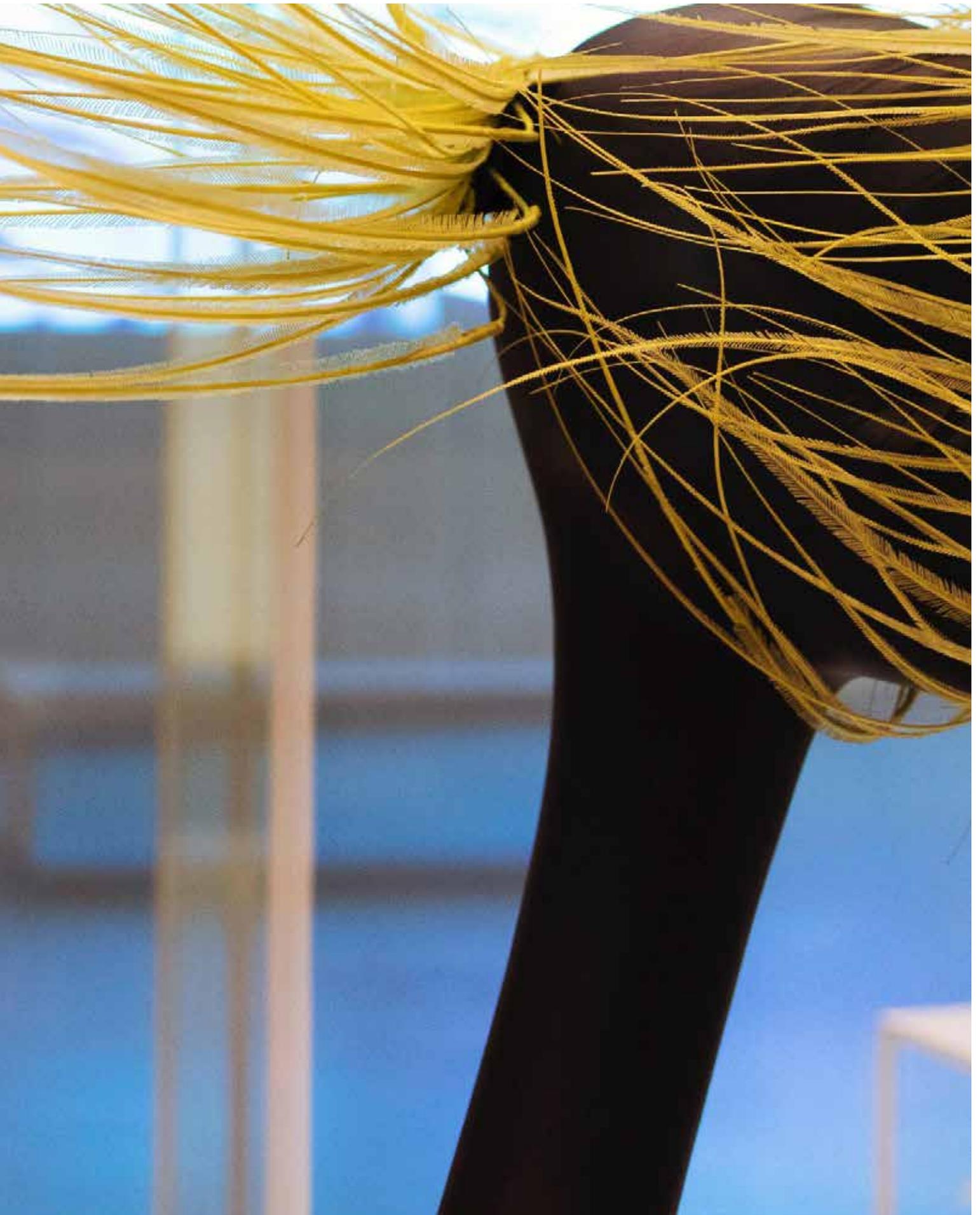
There are more than 55,000 museums in the world. They support life-long, formal and informal learning; they can bring people together, from local communities to industry and academia, and many of their collections and core activities can support focussed explorations of the environmental and social challenges which we urgently need to address.

Indeed, in the case of museums, if we want to remain relevant we must keep our collections up-to-date and engage with the challenges we face today and in the future, and in doing so, perhaps paradoxically, we will give new meaning to our historical collections.

Goal 4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, is to 'ensure inclusive and quality education for all and to promote life-long learning'. This is a goal that museums and others in the heritage sector and their partners can work to further.



“Goal 4 of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development is to ‘ensure inclusive and quality education for all and ... life-long learning.’ This is a goal that museums and others in the heritage sector can work to further.”



ABOUT US

J U L I E ' S B I C Y C L E

Our vision is a creative community powering action on climate and the environment and our purpose is to do everything we can to make that happen.

33 Julie's Bicycle is a charity set up in 2007 to support the creative community across the UK to take action on climate change and the environment. We believe that a thriving arts community will be one with sustainability at its heart. We have supported over 2,000 organisations to reduce their impacts, engage audiences, run sustainable creative programming, develop policy and governance structures, and support artists. Our **Creative Green programme** represents an international community of pioneering cultural organisations driving change.

Our collaborative approach enables creative organisations to build understanding and take action to share and celebrate achievements and extend ambition commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

T O P

V&A 2018 Creative Green Award
for Best Creative Programming

B O T T O M

December 2018, Creative Green workshop
and *Fashioned from Nature* tour



IMAGE: Designed from Nature, courtesy of V&A Museum

WINNER FOR BEST CREATIVE PROGRAMMING

V & A MUSEUM



Julie's Bicycle
WORLDWIDE CREATIVES

ALISON TICKELL
DIRECTOR, JULIE'S BICYCLE
JULY 9, 2018





Julie's Bicycle

SUSTAINING CREATIVITY

JULIESBICYCLE.COM



V&A