V&A and China Merchants Group Announce Pioneering Collaboration to Create the First Major Museum of Design in China

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Today China Merchants Group (CMG) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) signed a collaboration agreement to support CMG's ambitious plan to develop the first major museum of design in China. The signing of the contract took place at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London at a ceremony opened by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and British Prime Minister David Cameron during Premier Li's first visit to the UK since taking office in March last year.

V&A Director, Martin Roth and COO of the V&A, Tim Reeve signed the contract with Mr Sun Chengming, Vice-President of CMG. It is the first collaboration between one of the oldest and most influential companies in China and a public institution in the UK. The new design museum located in Shenzhen aims to promote Chinese design to an international audience, as well as present the best international design in China.

A Memorandum of Understanding between CMG and V&A was signed in Beijing in December 2013 as part of the Prime Minister, David Cameron's visit to China. Of the project he said: 'This pioneering collaboration between the world's leading museum of art and design and China Merchants Group is a fine example of British expertise fostering fruitful bi-lateral partnerships which contribute to the growth of the creative economy. I wish this innovative endeavour to be a resounding success and I applaud the leading role China Merchants Group and the V&A are playing in strengthening China-UK cultural relationships.'

The new museum is planned to open at the end of 2016 in the Shekou district of Shenzhen, the city designated by UNESCO as the city of design and creative industries. The development of the museum is led by China Merchants Property Development Co. Ltd., the real estate flagship of CMG which has commissioned a new museum building, designed by renowned Japanese architecture studio Maki, led by Fumihiko Maki. The V&A will have a dedicated gallery within the Shekou Museum to show curated displays from its collections as well as space to present major V&A exhibitions.

The V&A will play an advisory role in helping the Shekou Museum develop its own collections and provide training for Shekou Museum's senior management team. A senior curator from the V&A will take part in a three-year secondment in Shenzhen to work as Head of the Shekou V&A Partnership in China.

Tim Reeve, V&A's Chief Operating Officer said: “This is an incredibly exciting project for the V&A. It builds on the long history the V&A has of working in and with China to share collections, knowledge and expertise. By working with our trusted partner, China Merchants Group, we are able to engage in a meaningful and financially sustainable way with one of the most dynamic design cities in the world at a time when China is emerging at the forefront of new design ideas and creative thinking".

Mr Sun, Vice-President of China Merchants Group said: "As part of our redevelopment of the Shekou district of Shenzhen we wanted to offer the local residents an internationally important museum that would help promote the development of China's creative industries and further progress design in China. We can think of no better partner to do this with than the V&A, which brings with it a wealth of expertise on the role of a contemporary design museum as well as understanding of Chinese culture through their long-standing connections with China. We think this collaboration will deliver a truly wonderful new museum".

Shenzhen is home to 6,000 design companies employing more than 60,000 people and was awarded the status of UNESCO City of Design in 2008.

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