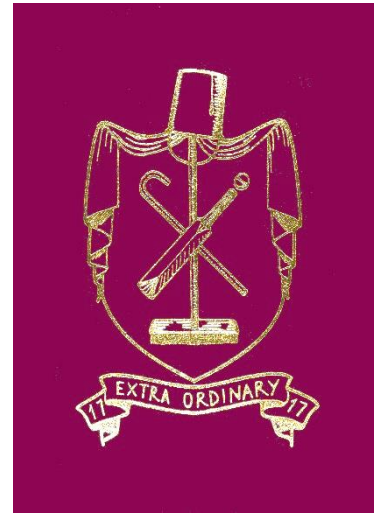


SOMERSET HOUSE PRESS RELEASE



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF EXTRA ORDINARY OBJECTS

5 July - 3 Sept 2017

Terrace Rooms, Somerset House

Free entry

Discover the Extra Ordinary Possibilities of Everyday Objects

This summer, Somerset House's Terrace Rooms will transform into the headquarters of *The Learned Society of Extra Ordinary Objects*, a fictional society inspired by the real history of Somerset House. The Society's recreated 'Club Room' will set the scene for a unique design exhibition centred on imagination, narrative and storytelling. For the exhibit, 30 contemporary designers, artists and makers, have been invited to become the new, 21st century Fellows of the Society and create or contribute objects worthy of the fictitious Society's collection. These new Fellows' designs will present ordinary objects with Extra Ordinary stories, or suggest playful and surprising modifications to familiar objects, reimagining our interaction with everyday items.

Visitors will be encouraged to take a leap of suspended disbelief as they discover the Learned Society's colourful history. The legend goes that the Learned Society first took up residency at Somerset House back in the 18th century, where the Fellows would gather around the Club Room's gin bar, presenting everyday objects or curios to one another and discussing their extraordinary possibilities. This assortment of Extra Ordinary objects was tragically lost when the Society folded, forced to pawn their luxurious furnishings and remarkable collection to settle their debts.

The exhibition takes inspiration from Somerset House's own real-life history. During the 18th and 19th centuries, a number of respected societies, including the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Arts, were residents of Somerset House. Society members would come together in the new 'national building' to discuss advancements and discoveries in their various fields. This exhibition mirrors the same sense of discovery and inquisitiveness. By placing the designers' fantastical objects within the story and setting of a Learned Society, the exhibition brings to life creative design's ability to explore different ways of engaging with commonplace objects.

The collection will be displayed in an immersive recreation of the Learned Society's Club Room. 30 new Fellows including among them British sculptor **Richard Wentworth**; ceramicist, **Richard Slee**; Scottish Indian artist, **Jasleen Kaur**; jewellery-maker **Hans Stofer**; and furniture designer, **Max Frommelt** will honour and celebrate the ethos of past Society members, inviting visitors into the whimsical, peculiar and inventive world of *The Learned Society of Extra Ordinary Objects*. Portraits of new Society Fellows will adorn the walls set amongst the striking and distinctive collection they have contributed.

The Society's gin bar hang-out will be re-opened for visitors to discuss and exchange views on the objects, just as the original Fellows did. Functioning at intervals throughout the exhibition's run and holding special events across the season, the gin bar will be supported by **Sipsmith**, the first London gin distillery to open since 1800s.

This exhibition continues its curators', British furniture designer Carl Clerkin and artist Danny Clarke, examination into the potential of design. Clarke and Clerkin are often involved in design exhibitions and festivals, with their work having been exhibited at Shoreditch Design Triangle and London Design Festival in recent years. The curators' exhibition at Somerset House brings a new, exciting combination

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of these past shows together, looking at design, functionality, everyday objects and storytelling in a unique and engaging way.

Clarke and Clerkin will host two special evening events, on 18 July and 8 August, serving Sipsmith gin and tonic from behind the Society's Famous Gin Bar. New Society Fellows will bring the Learned Society's history to life with performances from **William Warren's** The Prints of Whales band and DJ **Phoebe Morris** who will use ordinary objects in her set, accompanied by mouth-watering culinary offerings from **Jasleen Kaur**. The events will be free but ticketed and places must be booked through the website.

For press enquiries and images, please contact press@somersethouse.org.uk / 020 7845 4624

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Dates: 5 July – 3 Sept 2017

Opening Hours: Saturday – Tuesday: 10:00 – 18:00, Wednesday – Friday: 11:00 – 20:00

Admission: Free.

Address: Somerset House, London, WC2R 1LA

Transport: Temple, Embankment, Charing Cross, Waterloo

Somerset House Facebook: www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse

Somerset House Twitter: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Hashtag: #LearnedSociety

Somerset House public enquiries: 020 7845 4600

About Somerset House

A unique part of the London cultural scene, Somerset House is an historic building where surprising and original work comes to life. From its 18th-century origins, Somerset House has been a centre for debate and discussion – an intellectual powerhouse for the nation. Somerset House is today a key cultural destination in London in which to experience a broad range of artistic activity, engage with artists, designers and makers and be a part of a major creative forum – an environment that is relaxed, welcoming, and inspirational to visit while providing a stimulating workplace for the cultural and creative industries. Since its opening in 2000, Somerset House has built up a distinctive outdoor public programme including Skate, concerts, an open-air film season and a diverse range of temporary exhibitions throughout the site focusing on contemporary culture, with an extensive learning programme attached. In October 2016, Somerset House launched Somerset House Studios, a new experimental workspace connecting artists, makers and thinkers with audiences. The Studios provide a platform for new creative projects and collaboration, promoting work that pushes bold ideas, engages with urgent issues and pioneers new technologies. Somerset House is also one of the biggest community of creative organisations in London including The Courtauld Gallery and Institute of Art, King's College London Cultural Institute and over 100 other creative businesses. It currently attracts approximately 3.4 million visitors every year. www.somersethouse.org.uk

About Sipsmith

Pioneers of the gin renaissance, Sipsmith was London's first copper pot gin distillery for nearly two hundred years, opening its doors in 2009 on a mission to bring back London Dry Gin to the city where it made its name. All Sipsmith gin is made by hand and in small batches according to traditional methods and recipes, driven by the belief that this is the only way to craft spirits of such high quality. Sipsmith is gin made the way it used to be, the way it should be. Sipsmith has been awarded one of the top 5 trending gin brands for the last five years, by the Drinks International World's Best 50 Bars, and Cool Brand accreditation for 2016/17. www.sipsmith.com