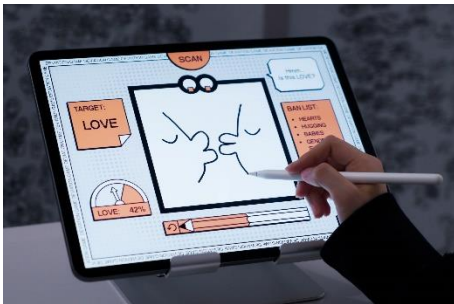




# NOW PLAY THIS

Opening 1 April 2023

PRESS RELEASE



**1 - 9 April 2023 (excluding Monday 3 April)**

**Somerset House New Wing**

**Interactive Exhibition: £9/£6.50 concessions /£25 family ticket (two adults and up to three children)**

**Events: £6 each**

**Festival Pass: £27 (access to all nine days of the exhibition and all events)**

- See and experience cutting edge game design
- Nine days of workshops and live play events
- Talks and panels with artists, researchers, game designers

London's leading festival of experimental games, **Now Play This**, returns to **Somerset House** this April, as part of the city-wide **London Games Festival**, showcasing the very latest in independent and experimental game design from the across the globe.

This year's festival explores one of humanity's most fundamental experiences through the lens of playful art: love. From family, friendship and romance, to self-care, consent and grief, different forms of love will be explored through games, installations, activities and workshops. Inspired by American scholar and activist **bell hooks'** seminal book '**All about Love**', which insists on an ethical definition of love rooted in care and championing of personal growth, *Now Play This* asks how we can treat each other in more loving ways. Taking place over eight days, the festival is slower and longer this year, encouraging gentle moments of contemplation about the many different forms of love that are featured.

Showcasing both a curated selection of works, and submissions from the festival's annual open call, highlights of the festival include an open world documentary where viewers can 'walk' around different family homes and witness everyday moments of love that have been captured through 3D

scanning (**Everyday Vrealities by Timo Wright**); a game played from the perspective of a pet cat, who is tasked with cheering up its owner by lifting their mood through small acts of care (**Point of Mew by Kate Killick and David Rodríguez Madriñán**); a feminist anti-dating simulator interrogating the tactics of so-called pick-up artists (**The Game: The Game by Angela Washko**) and a compliment battle game created out of a collection of 250 unique compliment cards (**Flatter Me by Ami Baio**).

On Sundays, family-friendly sessions will take place based around three cutting edge construction play kits; **Wiggel**, **Criaturas Infinitas** and **Just Add People**. The colourful kits allow players to work together to create temporary structures and sculptures exploring the creative possibilities of collaboration.

At the heart of the festival is the interactive installation **Cushion Commons**, created by artist and professor **Valentina Karga** in collaboration with a group of her students from University of Fine Arts of Hamburg. The installation is made up of handcrafted cushions, created from recycled materials and natural dyes, for festival goers to sit, lounge and play on, as well as providing a calm space for games, workshops and conversations.

This year the festival will extend outdoors with artists **Helen Kwok** and **Chad Toprak** transforming outside spaces of *Somerset House* with their installation **Rainbow Paths**, creating unique play spaces out of colourful branching paths filled with mini-games, hidden objects, and winding routes.

## INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Point of Mew by Kate Killick and David Rodríguez Madriñán:** A first *paw-son* story about a cat cheering up its owner, the game puts the player in the paws of a cat doing their best to help their human get through the day.
- **Everyday Vrealities by Timo Wright:** An 'open world' virtual reality documentary about different kinds of homes, families and lifestyles by walking through homes witnessing everyday moments that have been captured through 3D scanning.
- **Deviation Game by Tomo Kihara and Playfool:** An exploration of how we can keep human-to-human communication alive as technology becomes increasingly present in our lives. The installation requires one player to make a drawing while others try to guess what they are expressing – before an artificial intelligence (AI) system recognizes the drawing faster than the humans and wins the round.
- **Rainbow Paths by Helen Kwok and Chad Toprak:** A multigenerational public art installation made up of colourful branching paths embedded with mini games and instructions, guiding participants to interact with each other and the urban environment in a playful, curious, loving way.
- **The Game: The Game by Angela Washko:** Feminist anti-dating simulator interrogating the tactics of so-called pick-up artists who use flattery, psychological manipulation and coercion when talking to women.
- **Mother, Player by Angela Washko:** Premiering at *Now Play This*, an experimental narrative video game featuring pregnancy and early parenthood stories from artists during the global pandemic.
- **Where Should We Begin by Esther Perel:** Created by renowned psychotherapist and podcast host Perel, visitors can play a deck of cards designed to provide a framework for people to ask and tell intimate questions and stories, strengthening relationships in the process.

- **Flatter Me by Ami Baio:** A card game made up of 250 unique compliment cards with players competing to receive the most compliments. Designed as a game for two players, or to be given away individually as tokens of care and friendship.
- **Cushion Commons by Valentina Karga:** Originally developed for the student forum of Documenta in Kassel, the installation is made up of cushions created out of recycled materials and natural dyes, providing a space for calm in the festival.
- **Family Construction Games (Sunday 2 and 9 April 11am-2pm): Wiggel;** a flexible play system that uses silicone joints to create wiggly and bouncy structures and shapes, created by **Somerset House Makerversity** resident **Britton Kroessler**. **Criaturas Infinitas;** a construction game that invites children and adults to build their own creature, costume or construction out of a system of large and small pieces of soft materials. **Just Add People;** an instant architecture game exploring the discipline of gameful architecture through balls, sticks and cards.
- **The Care Collective (Wednesday 5 April 2pm):** The collective (**Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, Lynne Segal**) host a workshop where participants prototype games inspired by their collaboratively written book **The Care Manifesto** (Verso 2020), exploring their case for 'universal care', which calls for inventive forms of collective care at every scale of life.

## EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

- **End(less) Story by Nina Runa Essendrop:** A participatory performance piece set in an alternate near future where the world has ended and those left must remember and explore the loving experiences of their lives.
- **How I Taught my Mum to Play Elden Ring by Laurence Young:** The artist and his mother Maria Pattinson reflect on how teaching and learning the notoriously difficult game Elden Ring changed their relationship in a live play and talk event. The mother and son share touching insights into the ways that games can bring us together and how the act of forging into unknown territory can be a radical act of love.
- **The Creative Love Show by Alistair Aitcheson:** A specially designed app is used to create live audience participation show. Audience input will be used to construct valentines, write love poems and build the perfect date, before finally casting the audience-created characters to play out interactive first dates.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

Address: Somerset House, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA

Transport: Underground: Temple, Embankment / Rail: Charing Cross, Waterloo, Blackfriars

Website: [www.somersethouse.org.uk](http://www.somersethouse.org.uk)

Somerset House Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse](https://www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse)

Somerset House Twitter: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House TikTok: @SomersetHouse

General Press enquiries contact: [press@somersethouse.org.uk](mailto:press@somersethouse.org.uk)

## About Somerset House

As the home of cultural innovators, Somerset House is a site of origination, with a cultural programme offering alternative perspectives on the biggest issues of our time. We are a place of joy and discovery, where everyone is invited to Step Inside and Think Outside.

From our historic site in the heart of London, we work globally across art, creativity, business, and non-profit, nurturing new talent, methods and technologies. Our resident community of creative enterprises, arts organisations, artists and makers, makes us a centre of ideas, with most of our programme home-grown.

We sit at the meeting point of artistic and social innovation, bringing worlds and minds together to create surprising and often magical results. Our spirit of constant curiosity and counter perspective is integral to our history and key to our future.

<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/>

### **About Now Play This**

Now Play This is a festival of experimental game design running at Somerset House in London each Spring, showcasing interactive and playful work as part of the London Games Festival. With making at the heart of all programming, Now Play This champions innovative game-making in all its forms.

<https://nowplaythis.net/>