

Somerset House at 25

The Home of Cultural Innovators



In 2025, Somerset House celebrates its 25th birthday, marking its extraordinary transformation to one of London's best loved cultural spaces and home to one of the largest creative communities in the UK. To mark this milestone, there will be a special year of artistic innovation featuring genre-defying exhibitions, new commissions and events bringing audiences closer to the range of cross-disciplinary work from Somerset House's unrivalled resident creative community, cementing Somerset House as a leading international arts destination.

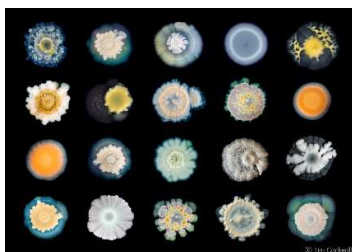
Somerset House has established a reputation for its original approach to key contemporary issues and trends with eclectic and thought-provoking programming that challenges conventions and offers alternative perspectives. 2025 will be emblematic of this approach with highlights including:

- Landmark exhibition *SOIL: The World at Our Feet*, celebrating the wonder of soil and its unbreakable bond to all life on Earth
- Premiere of Somerset House Studios resident Akinola Davies Jr's new film accompanied by live music
- Large-scale courtyard sculpture by Tai Shani, Turner prize winning artist and Somerset House Studios resident
- The first ever exhibition exploring the polymath practice of acclaimed choreographer Sir Wayne McGregor

Jonathan Reekie, Director of Somerset House says: *"We're thrilled to be sharing plans of our birthday year and can't wait to welcome audiences in to celebrate with us. Over 25 years we've reimagined one of London's most inspiring, historic buildings into a new model for the future. Today as the home of cultural innovators, we convene some of the brightest creative minds whose work provokes a sense of discovery and offers creative solutions to some of the biggest issues of our time. This milestone year perfectly encapsulates our purpose, and we invite everyone to step inside and think outside."*

2025 PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Embankment Galleries



SOIL: The World at Our Feet
23 January – 13 April 2025
Tickets on sale in September, £10 - £18.50

Somerset House's milestone year starts with *SOIL: The World at Our Feet*, a major exhibition celebrating the wonder of soil and its unbreakable bond to all life on Earth. The exhibition will reveal soil's incredible powers of life and regeneration, bringing together sensory artworks, new large-scale commissions and rarely seen artefacts to unearth soil's vital role in our planet's future.

Featuring over 50 works in a diverse range of media, including commissions from artists such as Sam Williams, Something & Son, Semantica (Jemma Foster and Camilla French) with Juan Cortés, Marshmallow Laser Feast and Vivien Sansour, this multifaceted exhibition will transport audiences on an uplifting journey across many landscapes, digging beneath the surface. Across three thematic sections - Life Below Ground, Life Above Ground and Hope - the story of SOIL will be one of humanity, providing a record of the transformational marks that geopolitical, economic and social histories leave on the skin

of our planet. Each theme presents a powerful and thought-provoking interpretation, conveying feelings of movement, growth, emergence and life.

Co-curated by The Land Gardeners (Henrietta Courtauld & Bridget Elsworthy), May Rosenthal Sloan, and Claire Catterall, Senior Curator at Somerset House.



WAYNE McGREGOR: INFINITE BODIES

24 October 2025 – 22 February 2026

Tickets on sale in 2025

As the closing exhibition of Somerset House at 25, this major new show will celebrate internationally renowned director and choreographer Sir Wayne McGregor and his trailblazing collaborations that have radically redefined how we think about performance, movement and the body. Audiences will be invited to step inside McGregor's polymath practice, which has led him beyond the stage and into creative collaborations across an array of artistic forms, scientific disciplines, and cutting-edge technologies - all centred around the nature of physical intelligence. This immersive exhibition will bring together McGregor's celebrated choreographic installations and spectacular new commissions that will explore the incredible possibilities and untapped potentials afforded to the body by rapidly evolving technologies.

Curated by Wayne McGregor, Cliff Lauson, and Philippa Dunn.

Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court



Salt Cosmologies

20 February – 27 April 2025

Free

For the annual Spring commission, Somerset House presents a new multi-dimensional project by Hylozoic/Desires, the cross-disciplinary collective of Himali Singh Soin & David Soin Tappeser. Branching out across three diverse spaces – the Courtyard, Terrace Room, and Salt Stair – *Salt Cosmologies* explores the complex weave of histories and myths around Britain's imperial salt monopoly in India.

Outside in the courtyard, the artists present a large-scale installation that maps out the cartographic path of the Inland Customs Line, a monumental 2500 mile-long 'hedge' composed of living vegetation. Established by the British in the 19th century to control the movement and taxation of salt, the artists' interpretation will feature a series of block-printed fabrics, depicting colonial-era botanical drawings with natural dyes from the plants that composed the vegetal barrier.

Continuing into the South Wing of Somerset House, the story of the hedge, the slow violence of colonial extraction, and the mystical forces of salt will be explored through historical images, archival documents and speculative artwork. Spaces along the Salt Stair once administered Britain's salt duty, and this newly refurbished staircase will be made accessible for the first time, allowing the public to revisit the entangled histories of salt in a site-specific setting.

Curated by Cliff Lauson and Kinnari Saraiya. Salt Stair restoration and associated programming supported by a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players.



Somerset House Summer Series with American Express

10 – 20 July 2025

Line-up announcement and tickets on sale in 2025

Somerset House Summer Series with American Express returns in July 2025 with eleven nights of unmissable gigs in the intimate and immersive setting of Somerset House's spectacular courtyard. An iconic London summer experience, the series presents a trailblazing line-up of breakthrough music artists and established acts from across the globe.



New commission from BAFTA-nominated filmmaker and Somerset House Studios resident Akinola Davies Jr

Featuring as part of the Summer Series and in celebration of Somerset House at 25, BAFTA-nominated filmmaker and Somerset House Studios resident Akinola Davies Jr will premiere a new film, featuring a specially-commissioned score performed live. Made with support from BBC Film, it documents the everyday rituals

that underscore rhythms of Black life in the UK, paying tribute to the collective resonances of the Black British communities in abundance.

Akinola Davies' commission and live performance is supported by GRoW @ Annenberg.



The Spell or The Dream by Tai Shani
8 August – 25 September 2025
Free

Premiering in the courtyard of Somerset House in summer 2025, *The Spell or The Dream* is a major new commission from Somerset House Studios resident and Turner Prize winning artist Tai Shani. Drawing on the archetypal fairytale image of a sleeping figure in a glass box, a large-scale sculpture will sit in the centre of the courtyard alongside Somerset House's iconic dancing water fountains. Under a seemingly unbreakable spell, the character – The Dreamer – remains in a suspended state of animation. A continuous radio broadcast will invite a host of guest contributors from around the world, to explore the theme of dreaming of a better future, through discussions, readings and newly commissioned sound works. Devised for a large outdoor space and for online audiences concurrently, this fantastical new work reflects on the urgent

contemporary issues of our time and invites visitors to imagine new and radical ways of being and building together.

Curated by Marie McPartlin and Rahila Haque.

Terrace Rooms



Virtual Beauty
23 July – 21 September 2025
Pay What You Can

Arriving at Somerset House this summer, *Virtual Beauty* explores the impact of digital technologies on the traditional concept of beauty, inviting visitors to examine their relationship with identity in the post-internet era. The proliferation of social media filters, avatars, artificial intelligence and digital self-curation has radically changed the boundaries of identity, race, gender and sexuality. This thought-provoking show will feature the work of numerous international artists working across sculpture, photography, installation and video, interrogating the influence of digitalisation on physical bodies and questioning who defines beauty today.

The exhibition, a project initiated by HEK (House of Electronic Arts, Basel), is co-curated by Bunny Kinney, Gonzalo Herrero Delicado, Mathilde Friis and Claire Catterall, Senior Curator at Somerset House.



Jennie Baptiste
October 2025 – January 2026
Pay What You Can

Somerset House celebrates the visionary work of Jennie Baptiste, renowned British photographer known for her portraits capturing the essence of youth culture, music, fashion, and urban life of the Black British diaspora in the 1990s and beyond. Her work is deeply inspired by her love for music and platforms people from the ragga and hip-hop scenes, reflecting the vibrant era of 90s pop culture. Bringing together a curated selection of Baptiste's most iconic images, the exhibition will offer an intimate glimpse into the worlds

she has documented through her lens. It will be the first solo survey of Jennie Baptiste's work, featuring rare and celebrated works alongside exploratory pieces and unseen work from Baptiste's personal archive.

Curated by Kinnari Saraiya.

OTHER EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS AND INSTALLATIONS



Lancaster Place Commission
Lancaster Place, New Wing
From April 2025, Free

Researched and developed in residence at Somerset House Studios for Somerset House at 25, a new artwork for the Lancaster Place entrance of Somerset House by artists Lydia Ourahmane and Sophia Al Maria will continue the artists' joint exploration of the idea of the 'right to remain'. Considering the building's transition from a former location of government administration and taxation to an internationally acclaimed arts destination, the site-specific piece will interrogate the historic, physical and fictional cycles of power, debt and ownership, asking who has the right to occupy, and under what terms & conditions.

Curated by Marie McPartlin and Marina Doritis.



Now Play This
April 2025
New Wing, Tickets on sale in 2025

Now Play This, the UK's leading experimental games festival, returns to Somerset House this spring to celebrate **Folk Games**. This year's edition focuses on games with traditional roots and learning about other cultures, celebrating diversity and bridging worlds through play. The popular festival offers engaging interaction for all ages to enjoy, fusing art and games to showcase the very latest in independent and innovative game design from around the world.

Now Play This is supported by the London Games Festival and Arts Council England.



London Design Biennale
5 – 29 June 2025
Site-wide, Tickets on sale in 2025

London Design Biennale features world-leading design innovation and creativity from countries and institutions around the world. The theme of the 2025 edition, *Surface Reflections*, will explore how our ideas are fuelled by both our internal experiences and external influences. Dr. Samuel Ross MBE - founder of A-COLD-WALL* and SR_A SR_A, and the Black British Artists Grants Programme - has been appointed Artistic Director for *London Design Biennale 2025*. As well as inviting industry-leading figures from across the world to collaborate for the Biennale, Ross will debut a series of large-scale sculptural works in the courtyard at Somerset House – his first major UK installation. The acclaimed international exhibition will showcase spectacular installations across Somerset House alongside talks, screenings, workshops and a lively events programme for all.



Upgrade Yourself Festival
June 2025 and November 2025
New Wing, Free

Upgrade Yourself, Somerset House's free programme dedicated to supporting aspiring young creatives make meaningful connections with like-minded individuals and network with industry professionals, will return in 2025, with a series of interactive takeovers and workshops throughout the year. A highlight will be *Upgrade Yourself Festival*, taking place twice in 2025. The free weekend festival will feature guest speakers, workshops and bespoke mentoring sessions, empowering 18-30 year olds to access the creative industries.



AGM
October 2025
Somerset House Studios, Tickets on sale in 2025

Somerset House Studios celebrates its exceptional resident artist community with its annual *AGM*, an unmissable late-night party taking over the pioneering experimental workspace of Somerset House Studios. This year's edition of *AGM* will takeover the whole of the New Wing building, and feature captivating live performances and collaborative art installations.

Curated by Somerset House Studios.



Skate at Somerset House
12 November 2025 – 11 January 2026
Edmond J. Safra Court, special events announcement and tickets on sale in 2025

A beloved staple of London's winter season, Somerset House's spectacular courtyard will be transformed into an iconic festive destination once again in November 2025, welcoming visitors for an unparalleled skating experience, delectable and decadent warming winter treats, contemporary music and unique gift shopping, all in the heart of the capital.



Channel
Somerset House's online curated space for art, ideas and the artistic process
channel.somerset-house.org.uk

Powered by Somerset House Studios, Channel draws on Somerset House's unique community to drive a distinctive and evolving programme of new commissions, original films, talks, podcasts and curated content. The first commission of 2025 will be *Sidse/ Meineche Hansen: Grumpy*, premiering from January, a new digital artwork delving into the relationship between automation and arousal, desire and denial.

Curated by Marie McPartlin and Eleanor Ritter-Scott.

SOMERSET HOUSE'S TOURING CULTURAL PROGRAMME



A Riot In Three Acts by Imran Perretta
Touring nationally from 1 February 2025

A Riot In Three Acts is a large-scale installation using the tropes and techniques of cinema, in the form of an expansive film set and cinematic score, to consider riots and civil uprisings that have occurred in response to systemic injustice experienced by marginalised communities. Evolving from the artists' experience as a young person during the UK riots in 2011, the work explores the narratives of our urban spaces, and the social inequality and racial violence that shape them. Following its presentation at

Somerset House this autumn, the exhibition tours.

A Riot in Three Acts (2024) is commissioned by and developed in residence at Somerset House Studios. The score, *A Requiem for the Dispossessed (2024)*, is co-commissioned by Somerset House Studios and the Manchester Camerata, by arrangement with NEWFORM MUSIC. Supported by d&b audiotechnik's Soundscape.



CUTE
5 July – 23 November 2025
Kunsthal Rotterdam, The Netherlands

One of Somerset House’s most successful and celebrated exhibitions, *CUTE* explores the irresistible force of cuteness in contemporary culture. Originally conceived by Somerset House and presented in the Embankment Galleries in January 2024, the exhibition now embarks on an international tour, opening at the Kunsthal Rotterdam in July 2025. Bringing together contemporary artworks, including new artist commissions, and cultural phenomena such as music, fashion, toys, video games and social media, the exhibition unravels cuteness’ emotive charge, revealing its extraordinary and complex power and potential.

The exhibition is initiated by Somerset House, London, and organised in close collaboration with Kunsthal Rotterdam. Exhibition curated by Claire Catterall at Somerset House, London and Charlotte Martens at Kunsthal Rotterdam.

PARTNER PROJECTS



Collect, the leading international fair for contemporary craft and design
28 February - 2 March 2025 (previews 26-27 February)
Somerset House site-wide, Tickets on sale in 2025

Having honed its distinctive edge over 20 years, *Collect* celebrates the very best collectable contemporary craft and design from around the world. *Collect* fills Somerset House, bringing together 40 international galleries representing over 400 exceptional contemporary craft artists, allowing collectors to buy with confidence. Exhibitors at *Collect* are approved by an external Advisory Panel and over 80% of the work has been made in the past five years, with many newly commissioned

pieces created especially for the fair.



London Original Print Fair
20 – 23 March 2025
Somerset House site-wide, Tickets on sale in 2025

London Original Print Fair (LOPF) returns for its landmark 40th edition. Established in 1985, LOPF is the UK capital’s longest-running art fair and one of the world’s oldest specialist print fairs. This special anniversary edition celebrates four decades of dedication to the art of printmaking, bringing together over forty leading international dealers, publishers, and studios. Visitors can look forward to an inspiring programme of curated exhibitions, exclusive launches, engaging talks, and live printmaking demonstrations. The fair offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore and collect original prints, spanning from timeless old masters to contemporary icons, and showcasing the latest works by a new generation of artist-printmakers. Discover six centuries of art history with iconic pieces by renowned artists such as Rembrandt, Dürer, Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Hockney, Freud, Emin, Riley, Rego, and many more.



Sony World Photography Awards 2025 Exhibition
17 April – 5 May 2025
East and West Wing Galleries, Tickets on sale in 2025

The acclaimed Sony World Photography Awards exhibition returns to Somerset House in April 2025, celebrating the photography shaping our visual language. Now in its 18th edition, this major exhibition spotlights photography today in all its diversity, bringing together artists working across the medium from around the world. Spanning the East and West Wing Galleries, the works on view are selected from the winning and shortlisted entries to the Sony World Photography Awards 2025. Also on display is a special showcase by Juliette Pavy, winner of the *Photographer of the Year 2024*, and a solo presentation from the *Outstanding Contribution to Photography* recipient, an award which each year celebrates the career and legacy of an artist who has made a significant impact upon the medium. Curated by Monica Allende, the Chair of the Sony World Photography Awards Professional jury, the exhibition and Awards are partnered with Sony and are organised by Creo under its photography strand: the World Photography Organisation.



Photo London
15 – 18 May 2025 (Preview Wednesday 14 May 2025)
Somerset House site-wide, Tickets on sale in 2025

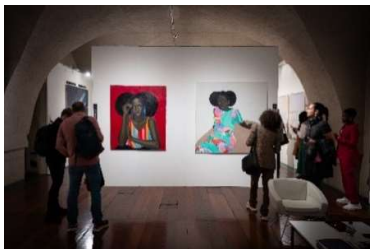
Photo London is delighted to return to Somerset House for its 10th anniversary edition. The leading photography fair will once again feature exhibitors from all across the world showing the very best of the past, present and future of the medium, alongside a Public Programme of Exhibitions, Talks, Awards and Book signings.

The tenth edition will feature artists working at the forefront of photographic innovation whilst also celebrating the legacy of Photo London, making it a must-see cultural event.



National Saturday Club Summer Show
12 – 15 July 2025
Embankment Galleries, Free

The National Saturday Club's annual Summer Show returns to Somerset House in July. The exhibition presents the work of more than 2,500 13–16-year-olds who have been attending free, weekly Saturday Clubs at universities, colleges and museums across the country. It promises to be an inspirational showcase of the creativity and innovation of the UK's next generation.



1-54
October 2025
Somerset House site-wide, Tickets on sale in 2025

The leading international art fair dedicated to contemporary art from Africa and the African diaspora, 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, will return to Somerset House for the 13th consecutive year over four days in October.

Further information on Somerset House at 25 Programme will be announced in January.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Press enquiries: press@somerset-house.org.uk

Press images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/khv221u0h9j4yhaqwfg4i/AMnwQ2KjkiBsJqoAVLm7NM?rlkey=ss9qmqz9yi1807vwuv4uh7wl4x&st=lef8rlm8&dl=0>

Website: www.somerset-house.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook: www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse

Somerset House Twitter & Instagram: @SomersetHouse

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.somerset-house.org.uk/>

IMAGE CREDITS

SOIL: THE WORLD AT OUR FEET - Unearthed - Mycelium by Jo Pearl, 2023 © Elsa Pearl // A Diversity of Forms Image created by Dr Tim Cockerill, bacterial colonies isolated and cultured by Dr Elze Hesse

WAYNE MCGREGOR: INFINITE BODIES - Wayne McGregor's FAR, Company Wayne McGregor (Catarina Carvalho), 2010, Photo Ravi Deepres

SALT COSMOLOGIES- HylozoicDesires, Soap of the sages, sun of the sea , 2024

SOMERSET HOUSE SUMMER SERIES - Somerset House Summer Series 2024. Photo by Sophie Harbinson // Akinola Davies Jr. Courtesy of the artist

THE SPELL OR THE DREAM BY TAI SHANI - Tai Shani Portrait, 2023. Courtesy of the artist

VIRTUAL BEAUTY - Angelfire Xena, 2021. Digital sculpture. Courtesy of Angelfire.

JENNIE BAPTISTE - Jennie Baptiste, 1995. Photo taken from a series for fashion designer Wale Adeyemi. Courtesy of Jennie Baptiste

LANCASTER PLACE COMMISSION - Lydia Ourahmane. Courtesy of the artist

LANCASTER PLACE COMMISSION - Sophia Al Maria. Courtesy of the artist

NOW PLAY THIS - Now Play This 2024 at Somerset House. Image by Ben Peter Catchpole

LONDON DESIGN BIENALE- London Design Biennale, 2023. Photo by Iona Wolff

UPGRADE YOURSELF FESTIVAL - Upgrade Yourself Festival, June 2024. Photo by Lucian M. Koncz

AGM - Somerset House Studios, AGM 2023 © Anne Tetzlaff

SKATE AT SOMERSET HOUSE - Skate at Somerset House. Photo by Owen Harvey

CHANNEL- Story Cycle, Sin Wai Kin 2022. Commissioned by Somerset House for Channel, with support from UK Government's Culture Recovery Fund through Arts Council England. Photo credit Anne Tetzlaff

A RIOT IN THREE ACTS - Imran Perretta_ Photo credit © Anne Tetzlaff

CUTE - Graphic Thought Facility (1990, UK). Playing dress-up with AI, 2023

COLLECT FAIR - Collect 2024 [Vessel Gallery]. Photo by Iona Wolff

LONDON ORIGINAL PRINT FAIR - London Original Print Fair Installation View, 2024. Photo by Ben Fisher. Courtesy of LOPF

PHOTO LONDON - Photo London 2024 © Graham Finn Carlow Courtesy of Photo London

NATIONAL SATURDAY CLUB - National Saturday Club Summer Show. Courtesy of the National Saturday Club

1-54 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART FAIR - 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair 2023. Courtesy of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair