

MUSHROOMS: THE ART, DESIGN AND FUTURE OF FUNGI

PRESS RELEASE

Friday 31 January – Sunday 26 April 2020



**PART OF THE CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS TERRACE ROOMS SERIES
TERRACE ROOMS, SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON
ENTRY IS FREE**

Launching its 2020 season, Somerset House invites visitors to explore the fascinating world of mushrooms in a new exhibition from curator and writer, Francesca Gavin. Through the work of 35 artists, designers and musicians, **Mushrooms: The Art, Design and Future of Fungi** celebrates the rich legacy and incredible potential of the remarkable organism, the ideas it inspires in the poetic, spiritual and psychedelic, and the powerful promise it offers to reimagine society's relationship with the planet, inspiring new thinking around design and architecture. An extensive events programme from leading artists and experts accompanies the exhibition, spanning design, sustainability, health and beauty.

New works announced:

- **Specially commissioned mycelium-based chair** from one of Britain's leading designers, **Tom Dixon**
- **Solar-powered *Mushroom Suitcase*** from acclaimed conceptual artist, **Carsten Höller**
- **Decomposable mushroom burial suit by Jae Rhim Lee** designed to reduce the damaging environmental impact of the funeral industry
- **Large-scale mushroom-based floral installation** from the **London Flower School** featuring mushrooms grown at Somerset House
- **New generative tool and custom typeface commission** inspired by fungi created by designers **Pentagram** in collaboration with **3D artist Rosie Emery** and creative studio **Counterpoint**

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Events highlights include:

- **TABLE, a mushroom-inspired pop-up dining experience** at Somerset House from acclaimed chef and Spring restaurant founder **Skye Gyngell** with **specially curated, biodynamic 3-course meals**
- **Exclusive seminar** from integrative medicine pioneer **Dr Andrew Weil** on the **medicinal and health benefits of mushrooms**, presented by Beauty and Wellness Partner, **Origins**
- **Mushrooms Gallery Late** featuring mushroom workshops, short films, and a special performance inspired by the stinkhorn mushroom from artist **Siôn Parkinson** with **Sam Annand**, featuring a spectacular ‘mushroom dress’ created by designer **Matty Bovan**
- Screening of critically acclaimed documentary ***Magic Medicine*** exploring how magic mushrooms may provide a solution in **treating depression**

Mushrooms brings together work from leading international artists and designers, renowned for their use of the mushroom motif, to explore three themes: **Mycophilia; Magic Mushrooms;** and **Fungi Futures**. Across three rooms, transformed by award-winning designers **Pentagram**, visitors encounter a spectacular range of interdisciplinary works, spanning sculpture, hand-cut collage, painting, drawing, photography and film, all featuring the magnificent fungi. The incredible versatility of mushrooms is further celebrated in new, conceptual pieces from designers working across architecture, furniture and fashion, all pushing the boundaries of design through the use of mycelium and bio-based materials in their work.

Immersing visitors in the incredible kingdom of fungi, the exhibition opens with a celebration of mushrooms exploring the theme of **Mycophilia**, with mushroom-inspired works that both inform current scientific understanding of the organism and capture artistic responses to it. Highlights include selected watercolours from the renowned author **Beatrix Potter**, whose collection of over 300 scientific illustrations of mushrooms and fungi, lesser known by her readers, form a significant contribution to the study of natural history and is still used by mycologists today. Acclaimed artist **Carsten Höller** presents a striking example of his use of the mushroom motif in *Pilzkoffer (Mushroom Suitcase) 2008* which sees small casts of the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom revolving on mechanical stands, powered by a hanging lightbulb above. The seminal American artist **Cy Twombly** explores the relation between the natural world and human history in his quasi-scientific portfolio *Natural History Part I, Mushrooms (1974)*. Formed of lithographic prints with collaged sheets of paper and photographs, the series captures Twombly’s characteristic expressive, graphic style, uniting logic and chaos in the human quest for knowledge.

Alex Morrison’s colourful oil painting on canvas *Mushroom Motif* pays homage to William Morris’ approach to textile and graphics, whilst **Graham Little**’s *Untitled (Wood) 2019* transports audiences to a quiet autumnal woodland. Antique copies of ***Alice in Wonderland*** display various interpretations of the notorious caterpillar seated atop a mushroom from illustrators such as **Arthur Rackham** and **John Tenniel**, in a scene now widely recognised as a key depiction of the mushroom as a door to another world.

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This mysticism that surrounds the mushroom is further explored in **Magic Mushrooms** as artists delve into the themes of psychedelia, poetry and spirituality. Hailed as one of the great music pioneers of the 20th century, **John Cage** was also fascinated with fungi, co-founding the New York Mycological Society. Cage's long-term interest in the subject resulted in *Mushroom Book*, a limited-edition publication which offers deep insight into his passion for mushrooms, published in collaboration with mycologist **Alexander H Smith** and artist **Lois Long**. Visitors can delve into the book's framed pages, featuring Cage's poetry and handwritten notes alongside Long's beautiful mushroom illustrations.

Fellow mushroom devotees include **Amanda Cobbett**, who following the launch of her latest collection at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2019, captures the mesmerising beauty of the mushroom in her three-dimensional, papier-mâché and machine-embroidered sculptures, each one completely unique. **Adham Faramawy's** experimental piece *My fingers distended as honey dripped from your lips and we danced in a circular motion* is similarly hypnotic as it captures dancers in 360° video, whilst animations of a fungus emerge and ultimately metabolise the work. Further highlights include RA graduate **Hamish Pearch's** realistic sculptures of sprouting fungi reflecting on the continuous lifecycle of decay and re-invention, hand-cut collage from **Seana Gavin**, whose imaginative anthropomorphic mushroom characters and architectural structures transport visitors to a fungi-filled world, whilst cult Australian art and fashion label **Perks & Mini** similarly bring a feeling of playfulness in an irreverent, graphic handmade hanging textile.

Designers working across architecture, furniture and fashion explore the powerful potential of the mushroom in the final theme, **Fungi Futures**, pushing the boundaries of design in their use of bio-based materials to create pioneering processes and products. This is demonstrated by one of Britain's leading designers, **Tom Dixon**, who invites people to experience the strength of mushrooms with his **specially commissioned chair formed of mycelium**, the mass of fine branching tubes (called hyphae) that form the main structure of a fungus. Belgian shoe designer **Kristel Peters** explores possibilities for the development of sustainable shoe design using mycelium, whilst **Aniela Hoitink** offers unique insight into her practice of developing sustainable materials, displaying her experimental textiles and alternative clothing prototypes. **Jae Rhim Lee** similarly challenges the ecological impact of human consumption in her reimagining of the funeral industry. Presenting an example of her **decomposable mushroom burial suit**, Lee combines art, design and fashion to reflect on the human relationship with the world and invites visitors to consider their impact on the environment after death.

Architectural historian and building-material technologist, **Mae-ling Lokko**, demonstrates the incredible versatility of mushrooms in her ground-breaking project which upcycles agro-waste into new building-materials. The potential of mushroom-based materials is also evident in the use of mycelium, which is moulded into furniture pieces including ceiling pendant lights

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from **Sebastian Cox and Ninela Ivanova**. Formed of mycelium and green wood waste harvested from their woodland in Kent, each light shade is grown in the Sebastian Cox Studio's laboratory in south east London, to create beautiful and environmentally friendly pieces for the home.

As part of Pentagram's exhibition design, the consultancy has collaborated with 3D artist **Rosie Emery** and creative studio **Counterpoint** to develop a **web tool** which creates is used to output **digitally 'grown' text** and small **3D-printed sculptures**. Inspired by mycelium growth and the natural dispersal of mushroom spores in the fungi life cycle, the project combines Emery's understanding of growth algorithms with Counterpoint's expertise in generative systems (systems such as computer programmes or algorithms that semi-autonomously create complex visualisations) and Pentagram's art direction. Visitors can discover the resulting fungal-inspired typeface and sculptures throughout the exhibition.

Outside of the exhibition entrance, visitors can experience the beauty of fungi as they step into Somerset House's Seamen's Hall. Here, the **London Flower School** launches the exhibition's opening week with a **spectacular floral display, featuring mushrooms grown in Somerset House's former coalholes**.

Visitors to the exhibition shop will find **a bespoke collection of products inspired by the world of mushrooms** available for purchase, including a **Limited Edition Dr. Andrew Weil for Origins Mega-Mushroom Treatment Lotion** presented in a beautiful bottle and box designed by exhibiting artist **Alex Morrison**. The soothing lotion will be **exclusively available from Somerset House** for the duration of the exhibition. Further highlights include an accompanying ***Mushrooms* publication** featuring a new essay from curator, Francesca Gavin.

As part of the ongoing **Edible Utopia** educational food-growing project, which looks at growing food in the underused and hidden parts of Somerset House, the site's historic coalholes have been transformed into fungi chambers, where mushrooms are grown using waste coffee grounds collected from on-site restaurants, creating a closed-loop ecosystem. To mark the opening of the *Mushrooms* exhibition, the **homegrown produce will be showcased in new special dishes** from Somerset House's **Bryn Williams restaurant** and **Hej café**, for diners to savour throughout the season.

Mushrooms will be the next exhibition in the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series, an ongoing partnership with the leading law firm to present a wide range of free exhibitions reflecting the broad interests of both organisations. *Mushrooms* is also supported by Origins as Beauty and Wellness Partner. The *Mushrooms* public programme is kindly supported by the Gaia Art Foundation. With thanks to the Adonyeva Foundation for their support of Jae Rhim Lee's mushroom burial suit.

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EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Tickets available from somersethouse.org.uk/mushrooms

Skye Gyngell's Mushroom TABLE

Thursday 27 & Friday 28 February 2020

18.00: Guided tour of the Mushrooms exhibition

19.00: Welcome drink followed by dinner

£40 (includes 3-course meal with wine and welcome drink)

Lancaster Room, Somerset House

Hosted by **one of Britain's most acclaimed chefs, Skye Gyngell**, and the team from her renowned **Spring restaurant** at Somerset House, **TABLE, a special mushroom-inspired pop-up**, invites visitors to experience a new communal dining feast. Following the success of the first TABLE pop-up during Photo London, the pioneering restaurateur returns to Somerset House's Lancaster Room with a fungi-filled spread, curated especially for the *Mushrooms* exhibition. Each evening, Gyngell will create a **biodynamic three-course meal**, with the magnificent mushroom at its heart.

Dr. Andrew Weil Seminar with beauty brand Origins

Thursday 6 February 2020

18.00: Guided tour of the Mushrooms exhibition

19.00 – 21.00: Seminar

£12 Portico Rooms, Somerset House

Dr Andrew Weil joins Somerset House and beauty brand, **Origins**, for a **special seminar** exploring the power of mushrooms in the field of integrative medicine, a healing-oriented approach to health care which encompasses body, mind, and spirit. The exclusive event features insights from Dr Weil on the **medicinal and health benefits of mushrooms**. It was under Dr Weil's tutelage that Origins became one of the first brands to recognise the highly functional value of integrating mushrooms into skincare. Guests can also experience the superfood-infused Mega-Mushroom range first-hand with **complimentary Feel Good Facials** while receiving **personalised skincare advice** from Origins experts. *Kindly supported by Origins.*

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Mushrooms Gallery Late

Thursday 19 March

18.30-21.00

Free; some events ticketed [prices vary]

Somerset House

Keeping its doors open for the ultimate fungi-filled evening, Somerset House presents an **exclusive Gallery Late** to celebrate the magnificent world of mushrooms. Visitors can enjoy late-night access to the free *Mushrooms* exhibition alongside a series of performances and workshops all inspired by the remarkable organism, alongside **a special short-film programme** curated by Francesca Gavin.

Highlights include ***STINKHORN: A musical cycle of a foul-smelling mushroom*** (£10/£8 concessions) from artist and singer **Siôn Parkinson** and musician **Sam Annand**. Inspired by the fetid-smelling stinkhorn mushroom, Parkinson and Annand combine vocals and modular synth with the eerie sounds of a theremin (an electronic musical instrument played by moving your hands through the antennas' invisible electromagnetic fields) to create a musical experience that moves between sound and smell, fertility and decay. For this special performance in Somerset House's Deadhouse, Parkinson wears a specially commissioned 'mushroom dress' by renowned designer **Matty Bovan**, formed of bulbous shapes and a mix of wool, felt, leather and discoloured foam.

Further highlights from the Mushrooms events programme

Supported by the Gaia Art Foundation

An extensive *Mushrooms* public programme, kindly supported by the Gaia Art Foundation, features an insightful series of talks and events exploring the impact of pioneering mycological research and experimentation on health, design and sustainability. Events include:

Mushrooms: The Art, Design & Future of Fungi: Curators Talk

Friday 31 January

19.00 – 20.30

£10/£8 concessions

Screening Room, South Wing, Somerset House

Mushrooms curator **Francesca Gavin** and key contributor **Jae Rhim Lee** delve into the fungi kingdom, interrogating the themes of the exhibition, and offer their unique insight into artistic responses to the powerful organism.

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The Magic of Mushrooms: Psilocybin and Altered States

Thursday 5 March

19.00 – 20.30

£10/£8 concessions

Screening Room, South Wing, Somerset House

Robin Carhart-Harris, Head of the Imperial College Centre for Psychedelic Research joins **Darren Springer**, Edible Utopia Mycologist, Researcher and Educator, and Cultural Historian **Mike Jay** for an evening exploring the mind-altering properties of mushrooms. From Carhart-Harris' ground-breaking studies on **the use of mushrooms to treat depression**, to Springer's extensive research on the indigenous use of psychedelic plants in Africa, and Jay's knowledge of **psilocybin use in Britain** from earliest recorded usage through to today, the event celebrates the magic of fungi from a scientific, historic and cultural perspective.

***Magic Medicine* Screening**

Wednesday 25 March

19.00 – 20.45

£10/£8 concessions

Screening Room, South Wing, Somerset House

A special screening of the critically acclaimed documentary ***Magic Medicine*** exploring how mushrooms may provide a solution in treating depression. Over four years, filmmaker Monty Waters was given exclusive access to **The Centre for Psychedelic Research at Imperial College London** to capture **the first ever medical trial to offer psilocybin** (the psychoactive ingredient in magic mushrooms) to a group of volunteers suffering from clinical depression. The remarkable film follows three of the volunteers and their families, and the staff running the trial, who hope the controversial treatment has the power to transform millions of lives.

Produced by **Somerset House Residents Dartmouth Films**, the screening will be followed by a Q&A.

Fungus Futures: Movements in Mycelium

Thursday 16 April

19.00 – 20.30

£10/ £8 concessions

Screening Room, South Wing, Somerset House

A fascinating panel exploring how mycelium may provide solutions to combat the world's environmental crises. **Merlin Sheldrake**, Fungal Biologist and author of the highly anticipated new book *Entangled Life* speaks on his research into mycelium, fungal networks with **Ehab Syed**, Founder and Director of Innovation at Biohm, a company using mycelium in industrial and domestic projects to create truly sustainable materials and buildings.

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Mushrooms Earth Day 25 April

Edible Utopia Mushroom Spawn Workshops:

10.00 – 11.30 (Family session) & 12.00 – 13.00 £5

More announcements to follow in 2020

Edible Utopia's Mycologist in Residence **Darren Springer** leads special workshops to equip participants with the tools and skills needed **to start their own mini mushroom farm**.

The hands-on, family-friendly sessions celebrate the power of mushrooms, the integral role they play in the world's eco-system and give attendees the chance to take away their own fledgling fungi to nurture at home. Visitors will also learn more about the mushroom kingdom and tour the mushroom growing chambers in Somerset House's historic coalholes. *Edible Utopia is kindly supported by City Bridge Trust, with initial support from Systemiq.*

Artist List:

Adham Faramawy, Alex Morrison, Amanda Cobbett, Andrea Zucchini, Aniela Hoitink, Annie Ratti, Beatrix Potter, Carsten Höller, Cody Hudson, Cy Twombly, Daniel David Freeman, David Fenster, Donlon Books, Graham Little, Hamish Pearch, Hannah Collins, Haroon Mirza, Jae Rhim Lee, Jason Evans, Jeremy Shaw, John Cage, Kristel Peters, Lara Ögel, Laurence Owen, Lois Long, Mae-ling Lokko, Perks and Mini, Salvatore Arancio, Seana Gavin, Sebastian Cox and Ninela Ivanova, Simon Popper, Stephan Doitschinoff, The Mycological Twist, Tom Dixon.

FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

press@somersethouse.org.uk/0207 845 4624

NOTES TO EDITORS

Dates: 31 January – 26 April 2020

Opening Hours: Sat – Tues, 10.00 – 18.00. Wed – Fri, 11.00 – 20.00

Tickets: Free

ADDITIONAL LISTINGS INFORMATION

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

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

Website: www.somersethouse.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse

Somerset House Twitter: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Hashtag: #theartofmushrooms

SUSTAINABILITY AT SOMERSET HOUSE

Somerset House is actively responding to environmental issues both through the practical management of the Grade I listed historical site and thematically as part of our year-round cultural programme. By working together with visitors and the 2500+ resident creative community, we are committed to collectively reducing our impact on the planet. Somerset House has been awarded a 4-star rating in recognition for its environmental commitment, understanding and improvement in the Julie's Bicycle Creative Green Awards. For more information visit somersethouse.org.uk/sustainability

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ABOUT SOMERSET HOUSE

London's working arts centre

Somerset House is London's working arts centre and home to the UK's largest creative community. Built on historic foundations, we are situated in the very heart of the capital.

Dedicated to backing progress, championing openness, nurturing creativity and empowering ideas, our cultural programme is ambitious in scope. We insist on relevance, but aren't afraid of irreverence, and are as keen on entertainment as enrichment. We embrace the biggest issues of our times and are committed to oxygenating new work by emerging artists. Where else can you spend an hour ice-skating while listening to a specially commissioned sound piece by a cutting edge artist?

It is this creative tension – the way we harness our heritage, put the too-often overlooked on our central stage and use our neo-classical backdrop to showcase ground-breaking contemporary culture – that inspires our programme. Old and new, history and disruption, art and entertainment, high-tech and homemade, combined with the fact that we are home to a constantly shape-shifting working creative community: this is our point of difference. It is what we are proud of. And it is what makes the experience of visiting or working in Somerset House inspiring and energizing, urgent and exciting.

somersethouse.org.uk

ABOUT FRANCESCA GAVIN

Francesca Gavin is a curator and writer based in London. She is an editor-at-large at *Kaleidoscope*, Art Editor of *Twin* and contributing editor at *Good Trouble*, *Beauty Papers* and *Semaine.com*. She was the co-curator of the Historical Exhibition of Manifesta11 and has curated exhibitions internationally including at the Palais de Tokyo, Site Sheffield and Mu. Gavin has written six books including *Watch This Space*, *The Book of Hearts*, *100 New Artists* and *Hell Bound: New Gothic Art*, and contributes to numerous publications including *The Financial Times*, *Dazed*, *wallpaper**, *Mousse*, *AnOther* and *Newsweek*. She has a monthly radio show *Rough Version* on NTS Radio on art and music. francescagavin.com
@roughversion

ABOUT THE CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS TERRACE ROOM SERIES

The Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series of free exhibitions profiles the work of living artists in one of the most accessible spaces at Somerset House, bringing the public into contact with a diverse and engaging range of creative thinkers. The series provides a platform for artists to develop and amplify the messages within their practice and engage openly with Somerset House's visitors. Every exhibition in the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room series is free and contributes to our on-going commitment to public access and engagement with arts and culture.

ABOUT CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

Charles Russell Speechlys works with clients in the UK and throughout the world. Our lawyers are based in 11 locations across the UK, Europe, Asia and the Middle East and through each of these locations clients are able to access the full range of the firm's skills and expertise.

We have a broad range of skills and experience across the full spectrum of business and personal needs. This gives us a wider perspective, clear insight and a strongly commercial long-term view.

It has made us a leader in the world of dynamic growth and family businesses, and among the world's leading creators and owners of private wealth and their families. Major corporates and institutions find our more considered and personal approach a refreshing alternative to conventional business law firms. www.charlesrussellspeechlys.com

ABOUT ORIGINS

Powered by nature and proven by science – Origins combines the highest-quality plant, earth and sea-based ingredients with non-toxic-to-skin alternatives and advanced science to create safe, high-performance skincare, bath & body and makeup products that deliver visible results. Since its inception in 1990, Origins has travelled the world to discover nature's most potent ingredients and unleashed their unique powers to deliver transformative products and experiences for the consumer. Origins believes it's the brand's responsibility to give back to nature and strives to make choices that help reduce our overall impact on the planet. Learn more at origins.co.uk and join the conversation @OriginsUK

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ABOUT DR ANDREW WEIL

Andrew Weil, M.D., is a world-renowned leader and pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, a healing-oriented approach to health care which encompasses body, mind, and spirit. Combining a Harvard education and a lifetime of practicing natural and preventive medicine, Dr Weil is the founder and director of the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, where he also holds the Lovell-Jones Professor of Integrative Medicine. The Center is the leading effort in the world to develop a comprehensive curriculum in integrative medicine.

Dr Weil is a *New York Times* bestselling author, editorial director of DrWeil.com and an internationally recognized expert for his views on leading a healthy lifestyle, his philosophy of healthy aging, and more. Dr Weil partnered on the Dr Andrew Weil for Origins™ Mega-Mushroom Relief & Resilience franchise—a skincare line infused with skin soothing medicinal mushrooms—with beauty brand, Origins.

ABOUT THE GAIA ART FOUNDATION

Gaia Art Foundation is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to support and nurture diverse cultural initiatives and to build a platform to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue through visionary artistic practices and partnerships.

ABOUT SPRING

In October 2014, Skye Gyngell opened her much-anticipated London restaurant Spring, which brings warmth and elegance within a beautiful dining space set in the New Wing of the iconic Somerset House, in the arts and cultural heart of London. At Spring food is celebrated for its conviviality and the joyfulness of sharing seasonal produce. Skye's menu is heartfelt, wholesome, produce driven and cooked by a team of people who are passionate about what they do and who feel truly privileged to work with beautiful ingredients. springrestaurant.co.uk