

# ARRIVALS + DEPARTURES

An interactive installation by YARA + DAVINA  
in Somerset House's courtyard

10 September – 5 November 2020

*Supported by Without Walls and co-commissioned by Artsadmin,  
Norfolk & Norwich Festival and Freedom Festival Arts Trust (Hull).*



**Arrivals + Departures** is an interactive installation exploring birth, death and the journey in between by artist duo **YARA + DAVINA**. Taking the recognisable form of a station or airport arrivals and departures board, the artwork invites visitors to share the names of people who have arrived and departed as a way to celebrate a birth or commemorate a death. As the effects of Covid-19, racial injustice and the environmental crisis continue to disrupt communities across the world, **this artwork offers a timely platform to engage with birth, life, death, loss and collective grief, through the act of naming.**

Capturing the joy and sadness of any arrival or departure lounge, these **nostalgic analogue display boards reflect the magnitude of sharing a name**. By recording birth and death, the work marks the ebb and flow of life offering moments to welcome new life, honour the living and bring attention to death, acknowledging grief and loss.

For 134 years, Somerset House was home to the General Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, holding the first comprehensive record of life events for the whole of the population. **Located in the central courtyard, surrounded by the buildings that once housed 8.5 miles of records**, the large display boards of *Arrivals + Departures* will be accessible to passers-by as well as regular visitors. The public will be invited to submit names to the boards online at [www.arrivalsanddepartures.net](http://www.arrivalsanddepartures.net) - either from their phone or with assistance from a steward live on site or from home anywhere in the world. Each name is given a presence as it appears on the mechanical flip dot screens - a stark contrast to the fleeting nature of digital LED signs and the instant nature of social media.

Responsive to all Covid-19 restrictions, **a public programme features both live (open air) and online activity** including **Birth and Death Cafés** and **live drawing sessions** by a professional artist who will create portraits of people whose names have been submitted to the boards (full programme details below). In a series of **weekly board take-overs**, a special guest will be invited to submit names in response to specific themes or causes - ranging from Women & Feminism to Environmental and Social Justice. In these instances, the act of including diverse names that may often be excluded can be a radical act in and of itself, openly encouraging participants to respond to the boards in expansive ways.

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YARA + DAVINA are artists whose playful and profound work uses accessible formats to engage the public with a broad spectrum of issues. Their powerful artworks are rooted within the everyday, subverting popular culture to explore issues that touch on the human condition.

The artists said: "We are creating space for naming someone as an acknowledgement, a public moment of reflection, marking people in your life. When we asked our friends and family to start submitting names, we found the simple act of asking them to submit invited them to think about the now, who guides and shapes us? Who has profound effects on us and our own lives? Interestingly these ranged from people naming their children, to old teachers, dead socialists, environmental activists, grannies and people who have died through acts of social injustice. Who knows what the public will submit?"

## EVENTS PROGRAMME

On-site events will take place in the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court

### Drawings of Arrivals + Departures

Sunday 13 September, 12.00 – 18.00

Artist and poet **Sophie Herxheimer** joins Somerset House for a special event to mark the opening weekend of *Arrivals + Departures*. Visitors are invited to bring a story of a loved one or of an inspirational figure in their life, and have a **live drawing** of them created by Herxheimer. Each interaction takes 10-15 minutes and once dry, copies are **available to take home**.

### Death Café

Sunday 13 September, 12.00 – 14.00

Led by **Emma Curtis** and **Ash Hayhurst**, the open-air Death Café forms a **safe space** for visitors to discuss death and dying, to share understandings, ideas and experiences, and to increase awareness of death to help people make the most of their finite lives.

### Birth Café

Sunday 20 September, 14.00 – 16.00

Led by birth activist, midwife and artist **Laura Godfrey-Isaacs**, the Birth Café welcomes guests to talk about their relationship to, and concept of birth. In response to the increasing number of popular TV programmes, celebrities sharing their pregnancy journeys, and NHS maternity scandals, the Birth Café seeks to build understanding and respect for the psychosocial, cultural and bodily significance birth has for everyone.

### YARA + DAVINA in conversation with Jonathan Reekie

Tuesday 22 September, 18.00 – 19.00

Online event: [somersethouse.org.uk](https://somersethouse.org.uk)

Artist duo **YARA + DAVINA** join Somerset House Director **Jonathan Reekie** for a special live online event. Exploring their artistic and social practice, the pair will give **behind the scenes insight** into the development of their interactive installation, and will explore how the current climate has added another dimension to it.

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### FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

[press@somersetshouse.org.uk](mailto:press@somersetshouse.org.uk)/0207 845 4624

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

**Dates:** 10 September – 5 November 2020

**Entry:** Free

**Opening hours:** Please check website for latest opening hours [www.somersetshouse.org.uk](http://www.somersetshouse.org.uk)

#### FUNDING

Supported by Without Walls.

Co-commissioned by Freedom Festival Arts Trust (Hull) and Norfolk & Norwich Festival and Artsadmin with support from Create To Connect > Create to Impact through the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

Publicly funded through Arts Council England.

Development phase of Arrivals + Departure (2018) was supported by In Situ Network through the Creative Europe programme of European Union.

#### ABOUT YARA + DAVINA

Yara El-Sherbini and Davina Drummond create art with a focus on engagement and participation. Using familiar formats such as jokes, mini golf, choirs and tattoo parlours, they root their works in the everyday. Their work has been shown at Tate, Venice Biennale, Manchester Art Gallery, Baltic, IKON, National Portrait Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Modern Art Oxford, The RCA, Arnolfini, National Maritime Museum, and the ICA. They are currently working on Kick Off a project with the National Trust that explores women's football.

#### ABOUT ARTSADMIN

Artsadmin is a producing organisation, which enables artists to create without boundaries, connecting bold interdisciplinary work with local, national and international audiences. The advisory service supports artists at every stage of their development with free advice and opportunities. In London's East End, Artsadmin has established Toynbee Studios, a centre for the creation, development and presentation of new work, where new talent is constantly nurtured in the rehearsal, performance and meeting spaces. For more information visit [artsadmin.co.uk](http://artsadmin.co.uk)

#### 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. [somersetshouse.org.uk](http://somersetshouse.org.uk)

#### ABOUT WITHOUT WALLS

Without Walls is a network of festivals that works with artists to bring fantastic outdoor work to people in towns and cities across the UK. For more information on the work of Without Walls, please visit [www.withoutwalls.uk](http://www.withoutwalls.uk)

#### CREATE TO CONNECT > CREATE TO IMPACT

Create to Connect-> Create to Impact (CtC-> CtI) is a joint effort of sixteen European cultural and research organizations to create impact in the society in terms of change, innovation, empowerment and emancipation through building powerful and long-lasting connections of artists, cultural operators, researchers and audience. [ctc-cti.eu](http://ctc-cti.eu)

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



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