

SOMERSET HOUSE ANNOUNCES UPGRADE YOURSELF – ITS RELAUNCHED INNOVATIVE CREATIVE CAREERS PROGRAMME FOR 18-25s – AND RELEASES INDUSTRY RESOURCE GUIDE AND PODCAST, FOLLOWING EVALUATION OF ORIGINAL PROGRAMME



Somerset House has relaunched its innovative creative careers programme under the new umbrella of *Upgrade Yourself* – a name conceived by programme alumnus Hodan Ibrahim to reflect the collaborative process and part of both members and mentors in the transformational initiative. This new revised programme has multiple strands – all now under the banner of *Upgrade Yourself* – to support both young talent aged 18-25, who are looking for access routes into the cultural sector, and Somerset House’s resident arts and creative enterprises in finding fresh perspectives to contribute to their output.

In conjunction with *Upgrade Yourself*’s launch, **Somerset House has released a resource guide for colleagues in the cultural sector**, entitled *Upgrade Yourself: Playbook*. The *Playbook* reveals the findings of an **independent evaluation**, led by arts education researcher Dr Nicola Sim in collaboration with Somerset House’s Engagement & Skills team and previous programme members and mentors, commissioned by Somerset House after two years of learnings from its initial creative careers programme.

The new *Upgrade Yourself* programme has primarily been borne out of this research, but also out of Somerset House’s ongoing anti-racism work, which takes positive action to address representation. The journey to follow up on the evaluation’s recommendations and enact these vital changes – especially in areas such as language and capacity - is charted by Somerset House’s Engagement & Skills team in a **new one-off podcast** *Upgrade Yourself: Audio*.

It is hoped that **both resources can be used as a reference for industry peers also offering programmes supporting young people**, through the voices of the young people themselves and those that delivered and supported the programme from Somerset House’s resident community - home to over 400 businesses from small start-ups to artist studios and world-leading cultural organisations.

Upgrade Yourself: Playbook and *Upgrade Yourself: Audio* can be accessed via <https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/engagement-and-skills/upgrade-yourself>

An overview of the new *Upgrade Yourself* programme is detailed below:

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UPGRADE YOURSELF: ONLINE



Open to all and developed during lockdown to respond to current challenges, *Upgrade Yourself: Online* is a series of **fortnightly live-streamed talks and workshops delivered by seasoned creative professionals**. Each month is centred on a different corner of the creative industries and features one ‘Inspiration’ talk and one ‘Process’ workshop on the chosen monthly theme. ‘Inspiration’ talks see high-profile industry voices share their career journey and insights, offering practical tips to viewers. ‘Process’ workshops bring smaller groups of participants together, allowing for deeper engagement, discussion, bitesize prototyping and creative play. Upcoming ‘Inspiration’ speakers include fashion designer **Henry Holland** and former RuPaul’s

Drag Race UK drag artist **Crystal**, whilst ‘Process’ workshops cover visual communication in fashion with stylist and creative director **Jeanie Annan-Lewin**. All live events will be archived to access at a later date; this archive already includes a talk from KISS FM presenter **Swarzy Macaly** and workshop from content producer **Moed Majeed**, both on the theme of broadcasting and presenting. Full listings can be found in the Notes to Editors section.

UPGRADE YOURSELF: IRL



Once government guidance permits, Somerset House hopes to roll out *Upgrade Yourself: IRL*, offering **networking and mentoring opportunities alongside Somerset House’s pioneering London Living Wage work placements**. A variety of positions, spanning a spectrum of possible career paths in the sector, will be available inside Somerset House Trust itself and across Somerset House’s resident community, **one of the largest communities of arts and creative enterprises in the UK from which to learn and connect on-the-job, and equally discover new talent**, accessible through collective funding and recruitment support.

Since October 2020, Somerset House has been working specifically with a **collective of six Young Producers** on an inaugural co-production project, the details of which are also released today. In collaboration with Somerset House, innovative design studio and Somerset House Studios resident COMUZI, and Pinterest, ***Decentralise* explores the re-interpretation of Black history, heritage and culture at Somerset House**. The new innovative archive will allow users to engage virtually with key objects from, and inspired by, Somerset House’s exhibition past - the themes of which span Afro-Nowism, Afrofuturism, Political and Disobedient art - through design, interaction and play. ***Decentralise* will launch digitally on 16 March**, with future projects from the Young Producers collective in the pipeline.

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Upgrade Yourself: Online is supported by the Maria Bjornson Memorial Fund

Upgrade Yourself: IRL is supported by the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Freelands Foundation and John Lyon's Charity

Decentralise in collaboration with Pinterest is supported by Art Fund

NOTES TO EDITORS

Upcoming Upgrade Yourself: Online events

Upgrade Yourself: Inspiration | Creative Vision & Collaboration with Henry Holland Thurs 18 Feb | 13.00 - 14.00

Join creative director and design consultant Henry Holland as he walks through some of his career highlights and insights to date. Hosted by Cherece Lucina from the Young Producers at Somerset House programme.

Upgrade Yourself: Process | Approaching Fashion Research and Styling with Jeanie Annan-Lewin Thurs 25 Feb | 13.00 - 14.00

Join fashion director and stylist Jeanie Annan-Lewin in this fashion forward process-led workshop.

Upgrade Yourself: Inspiration | Developing concepts and performances with drag artist Crystal Thurs 11 Mar | 13.00 - 14.00

Join all-round entertainer and drag artist Crystal in this performance and conceptually inspired Upgrade Yourself.

All *Upgrade Yourself: Online* events are free and can be accessed here:

<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/whats-on/upgrade-yourself-online>

Films showcasing the initial creative careers programme run by Somerset House (on which *Upgrade Yourself: Playbook* is based) can be viewed here:

2019 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwKlyP4AQal>

2018 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VamH6lby5OQ>

FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:
press@somersethouse.org.uk/0207 845 4624

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](https://www.somersethouse.org.uk)