

NO COMPLY: SKATE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY PRESS RELEASE

Monday 19 July – Sunday 19 September 2021*



Terrace Rooms, South Wing, Free

This summer, Somerset House presents **No Comply**, a free exhibition exploring the phenomena of skateboarding and the impact of its culture and communities on the UK over the past 45 years. Through the work of leading photographers, designers and filmmakers, *No Comply* celebrates the country's vibrant and diverse skateboarding scene, documenting the transformative influence the subculture has played in shaping people, cities and culture in the UK, and beyond.

No Comply is curated by **Tory Turk**, from an original idea by Frankie Shea, with expert insight from acclaimed British skateboarder and Somerset House Visitor Experience Manager **Helena Long**. Contributors include **Brixton's Baddest, Henry Kingsford, Iain Borden, Jenna Selby, Leo Sharp, Long Live Southbank, Louis Vuitton, Lovenskate, Lucy Adams, R.A.D Archive, Reece Leung, Richard Gilligan, Sam Ashley, Science versus Life, Skate Nottingham, SkatePal, Palomino, Wig Worland** and **Winstan Whitter**.

Highlights include:

- Striking imagery from the community's foremost photographers including **Wig Worland, Sam Ashley, Henry Kingsford, Jenna Selby** and **Norma Ibarra** spanning across three decades
- **New original film commissions** exploring the freedom of skateboarding and its community spirit from London-based director **Dan Emmerson**, filmmakers **Dan Magee** and **Sirus f Gahan** with Helena Long, and **Somerset House's Creators-in-Residence** in collaboration with **Google Arts & Culture**
- Archive objects and photography exploring **the influence of skatewear on skateboarding's collective identity as well as mainstream fashion trends**, featuring brands including **Palace Skateboards** and **Louis Vuitton**

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- Inspiring case studies from the UK and beyond of **grassroots campaigns and non-profit initiatives** helping to promote positive change through skateboarding, including **SkatePal** and **Free Movement Skateboarding**
- Urban spaces design studio **Betongpark re-imagine Somerset House as a skateable site**, with a specially commissioned mixed media render of the space

"Finally, an exhibition that celebrates the beautiful, multifaceted and diverse community that is skateboarding today" - **Helena Long**, British skateboarder and Consultant Curator

Up and down the country, skateboarding is thriving. Throughout the Covid-19 lockdown, skateboarding has experienced the biggest increase in uptake since 2000, with over 750,000 skateboarders and 1,500 active skateparks currently across the UK. For the first time in history, skateboarding will also make its debut at the Olympics Games in Tokyo, providing skaters from across the UK the chance of competing for the very first time. Yet despite its prevalence, the story of skateboarding's longstanding influence has remained under the radar. Bringing together film, sound, art, fashion, design, photography and archive material, *No Comply* seeks to unpack the dynamic story of skateboarding in the UK, through three enduring themes that define the subculture's ethos: **the city as playground**, **skateboarding communities** and **D.I.Y. culture**.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

The exhibition is arranged across three rooms, specially developed by creative practice **Studio LP** and design studio **Interesting Projects**.

The City as Playground

No Comply invites visitors to reimagine the urban landscape which surrounds them, with works exploring and documenting the ways in which skateboarders occupy, reclaim and repurpose regimented urban spaces into sites of creativity and play. Featuring works spanning from the 1970s to the present day, *No Comply* showcases images from some of the community's foremost photographers, including **Wig Worland, Sam Ashley, Henry Kingsford, Richard West, Reece Leung, Norma Ibarra, Jenna Selby, Tim Lighton-Boyce, Leo Sharp, Rafal Wojnowski** and **Rich Gilligan**, whose works capture skateboarding scenes across the UK, from Nottingham, Somerset, Woking, Manchester, Leeds, Bristol and Oxford to the UK's most established skate parks such as **ROM, 'The Hollywood Bowl' (Swansea), Southsea, Knebworth, Livingston, Portland** and **Raemers Park (Victoria Park)**.

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D.I.Y. Culture

Drawing upon skateboarding's D.I.Y. ethos of interdependence, creativity and resourcefulness, which has always been at the heart of skateboard culture, *No Comply* examines the significance of print culture in shaping the face of the UK skate scene. Visitors are invited to explore early editions of titles such as **Alpine Sports, Read and Destroy (R.A.D)** and **Skateboard!** whose mapping of skatespots provided an invaluable resource in connecting skaters from across the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. Recent publications embody the creative and rebellious spirit of skateboarding, with titles including **Confusion Magazine, Over Ply Wood, Dogpiss, Blood Fever** and **Do I Look Like I Care** available to view.

No Comply also explores how skateboarding continues to influence mainstream culture, from fashion brands to video games. Visitors will discover the ways in which design defines the subculture's collective identity, as well as trends both on the runway and in streetstyle, from the origins of brands created by skaters for skaters, including the influential **Palace Skateboards**, whose laidback yet playful style has attracted a global following, as well as collaborations with the world of high fashion, from **Lucien Clarke, Virgil Abloh** and **Louis Vuitton**.

Audiences will have the chance to see in action the first video game created which gives players the chance to experience street skateboarding in a UK location: **Thrasher Presents Skate and Destroy** for Sony PlayStation, from **Rockstar Games** (1999), with a specially created display of playthrough footage, complete with an original monitor and console.

Skateboarding Communities

Throughout the exhibition, *No Comply* spotlights stories from skate communities in the UK and beyond, from inspiring initiatives promoting positive change through skateboarding, to the preservation of sites in which the communities are formed and maintained. Featuring archival objects, photographs and personal anecdotes, the exhibition tells stories of the UK's most successful grassroots campaigns for creative space, including **Long Live Southbank**, which saw the skate community, artists and the general public come together to protect the Undercroft at the Southbank Centre from closure, as well as the ongoing campaign to transform and refurbish East London's 1980's skatepark, **The Hackney Bumps**.

No Comply will also shine a light on stories of non-profit initiatives beyond the UK, such as **Free Movement Skateboarding** and **SkatePal**, working to incite positive

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change, providing skating supplies and lessons for everyone to enjoy, no matter their age, gender or background, as told through personal objects of skateboarders travelling abroad to share their passion. The exhibition also looks at progression within the subculture, with members working to increase awareness around gender notions within the community, from genderqueer skate zine XEM Skaters, whose materials provide visibility for non-binary, queer and trans-skaters, to skateboarding magazine Skateism, which helps to provide a platform for LGBTQ+, female, and non-western skaters.

New commissions

With film and video playing a key role in enabling skaters to document their local scenes, the exhibition will feature **four new film commissions** documenting the community, its spirit, and the spaces which skaters occupy.

Visitors are invited to embrace the freedoms and joys of riding a skateboard with a new short film from London-based director **Dan Emmerson**, explore diverse skate communities in a new short by skate videographer **Sirus f Gahan** and **Helena Long**, as well as experience the friendships and bonds the activity brings with filmmaker **Dan Magee**.

The final film of the exhibition will see **Somerset House's Creators-in-Residence** join **Google Arts & Culture** in documenting different communities of skaters within the UK, showcasing their sense of community and how they respond to the cities around them.

To coincide with the exhibition's opening, Somerset House's **Future Producers** collective (formerly Young Producers collective) and Somerset House Studios residents **OOMK** and **Seth Pimlott** will work together to co-produce a new flag to fly above Somerset House's courtyard and a new short film piece, both of which will explore the idea of manifestos, celebrating the changing shape of our communities, ideas of self-expression and freedom.

No Comply will be accompanied by a further programme of talks, events and digital content delving deeper into the themes explored within the exhibition.

CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:

Aidan Frere-Smith, Alex Etchells, Alex Ramsell, Alex Turnball, Bedir Bekar, Ben Raemers Foundation, Betongpark, Brixton's Baddest, City Mill Skate, Copson Street, Dan Adams, Dan Buck Joyce, Dan Emmerson, Daryl Mersom, Dan Magee, David 'Dog' Vivaldini, Esther Sayers, Far Skate, Flow Associates, Free Movement Skateboarding, 'French', George Booth-Cole, Henry Kingsford, Iain Borden, Jackson Davis, James Grayley,

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Jenna Selby, Joe Walchester, Katie Edwards, Kelli Watson, Kevin Parrott, Kirsty Smith, Leo Sharp, Lizzie Heath, Long Live Southbank, Loutre, Lovenskate, Lucy Adams, Marc Vallée, Matt Lloyd, Norma Ibarra, Palomino, Pollyanna Ruiz (Sussex University), RaD Archive, Rafal Wojnowski, Reece Leung, Rich Gilligan, Richard West, Rob Gifford, Rob Mathieson, Sam Ashley, Sara Prinsloo, Science versus Life, Shuvit Cancer, Sirius f Gahan, Skate Nottingham, SkatePal, Stuart Maclure, Tim Leighton-Boyce, Wig Worland and Winstan Whitter

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Dates: Monday 19 July – Sunday 19 September 2021*

Tickets:

- Entrance to the exhibition will be ticketed, visitors must pre-book their timed ticket slot online (with suggested donation) at somersethouse.org.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 energising, urgent and exciting.

** Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, exhibition dates may be subject to change. Please always check with the Press Office prior to publication.*