

SOMERSET HOUSE PRESS RELEASE



Now Play This **6 – 8 April 2018** **New Wing** **£8/£6.50 Concession**

The three-day games festival *Now Play This* returns to Somerset House for its fifth edition this April, as part of the city-wide London Games Festival, supported by Games London, with a host of hands-on gameplay for all ages.

The popular weekender brings the best of experimental game design from around the globe, from the 1990s to the present day. From screens to tabletops, solo to multiplayer, simple to complex, players can experience dozens of diverse games – many of which premiere at *Now Play This* – across multiple dedicated spaces. This year's focus is on the idea of place, demonstrating how games and play help us understand the world around us in new and creative ways. Through varied, purposeful play, festival goers can explore different countries and cultures, and critical issues specific to these places ranging from international borders to identity.

Opportunities for players to create their own games and contribute towards the making of others will be plentiful, with interactive, participatory installations, and even the communal creation of a 'flatgame' all about *Now Play This*.

As well as hands-on opportunities to play and take part in drop-in workshops throughout the festival, specific games give direct insight into the patterns, processes and particularities of game making. Additionally, visitors with a Weekend Pass receive special access to The Makers' Corner. This space gives access to extra games and delves even deeper into the process of making games through a series of workshops, archive interview footage, and activities such as building custom controllers, trying out prototype board games, and even designing an escape room. The space allows for game industry networking, access to a library of 'zines' and books, and opportunities to have in-depth discussion with many of the designers and makers taking part in the festival.

Also at Somerset House:

Workflow: Sovereign coincides with *Now Play This* and continues throughout April. Somerset House Studios residents Workflow will exhibit a free playable demo of new video game *Sovereign* in the New Wing. Players inhabit the body of a boy in his mid-teens, living between two worlds - a wartorn 'game world' and a real-life suburban landscape linked to his inner imagination. Created in collaboration with young people at Somerset House, *Sovereign* explores the power dynamics

of British culture, as teenagers attempt to navigate questions about their position of assumed sovereignty and state of mind.

GAMES HIGHLIGHTS:

- **The Loss Levels**, by BAFTA-winning artist and creative technologist Dan Hett, premieres at *Now Play This*. The game draws on Hett's experiences after his brother Martyn was killed in the Manchester Arena bombing last May. Players must complete a series of short tasks with a controller, which relate to the situations that arose in the aftermath.
- **Roadmap to Peace** by Yara El-Sherbini (whose game Operation Brexit at last year's *Now Play This* was the most shared on social media across 2017's London Games Festival) can be played for the first time at *Now Play This* and features two roads of Scalextric that run parallel and intersect, accurately depicting roads in Israel and Palestine.
- Visitors can contribute towards a **Flatgame** all about *Now Play This*; the public are invited to hand draw their own designs, which will become digitised and incorporated by professional designers into this special game over the course of the weekend. Other Flatgames also feature, including **Overground** by Rosa Carbo-Mascarell, one of the creators of CorbynRun. The game is based on sketches she made of people on her daily two-hour commute from East to West London, so festival goers may even be able to spot themselves in the game.
- Kevan Davis has created a special version of his **Wikipedia: The Text Adventure** for *Now Play This*. The game draws live from Wikipedia and invites participants to embark on a journey in the style of a traditional text adventure, asking to "go north", for example. Players start at London landmarks and can explore at will, or try to find Somerset House, encountering unexpected corners of the city. Players embark on their journey, unbound by time, discovering past, present and future places and spaces across the world.
- Videogamo's **Dobotone** gets four players to compete at a seemingly traditional console game, while a fifth person takes on the role of the powerful 'Game Remixer' on a control box with switches and dials. The 'Game Remixer' alters the rules of play in real time, from speed and threats, to the shape of the digital space, and the players' aim.
- **vr 3**, created by Pippin Bar, is a museum of digital designs of water, showcasing different types of water that games designers can buy and use in their own games. Each type is exhibited in a small plinth with its creator, date and price, inviting players to ponder the innumerable tiny choices that make up a finished game.
- Ruohong Wu's **Chinese Games** takes Ping Pong and Tai Chi and transforms them into intricate, reinterpreted diagrams, each one highlighting a different aspect and allowing visitors to consider the different ways of looking at the experience of play.

OUTDOOR GAMES:

Two outdoors games take place on site for 2018, open to all visitors of Somerset House. Staged on the River Terrace, and produced especially for *Now Play This*, the first is **Musical Trip** by Sabrina Shirazi. Textured paths are laid on the ground, and as players roll suitcases over them, different sounds emerge based on the number of participants, their speed, direction, and even the contents of the suitcase.

The second game, a new work by David Helbich also takes players on a musical journey. Visitors randomly select different cards in the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court where a number of musicians are playing in different locations. Cards instruct players to listen from a particular point or even join in using instruments and objects in the space. Equally the cards can instruct the musicians to, for example, speed up their playing, or follow the player for a brief period. This enables players to transform the performance through their participation.

Ends

For further details, please contact Somerset House Press Office: press@somerset-house.org.uk / 020 7845 4624.

Notes to Editors:

Dates: 6 - 8 April 2018

Opening Hours: Friday 6 April: 11.00-20.00; Saturday 7 + Sunday 8 April: 10.00-18.00; times of outdoor games vary

Address: Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 1LA

Admission: £8/£6.50 concession/£35 Weekend Pass

Transport: ☉ Temple, Embankment, Covent Garden ➡ Charing Cross, Waterloo, Blackfriars

Somerset House public enquiries: 020 7845 4600 | www.somersethouse.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse>

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Hashtag: #NowPlayThis

About Somerset House

Inspiring contemporary culture

A unique part of the London cultural scene, Somerset House is an historic building where surprising and original work comes to life. From its 18th-century origins, Somerset House has been a centre for debate and discussion – an intellectual powerhouse for the nation. Somerset House is today a key cultural destination in London in which to experience a broad range of artistic activity, engage with artists, designers and makers and be a part of a major creative forum – an environment that is relaxed, welcoming, and inspirational to visit while providing a stimulating workplace for the cultural and creative industries.

Since its opening in 2000, Somerset House has built up a distinctive outdoor public programme including Skate, concerts, an open-air film season and a diverse range of temporary exhibitions throughout the site focusing on contemporary culture, with an extensive learning programme attached. In October 2016, Somerset House launched Somerset House Studios, a new experimental workspace connecting artists, makers and thinkers with audiences. The Studios provide a platform for new creative projects and collaboration, promoting work that pushes bold ideas, engages with urgent issues and pioneers new technologies. Somerset House is also one of the biggest community of creative organisations in London including The Courtauld Gallery and Institute of Art, King's College London Cultural Institute and over 100 other creative businesses. It currently attracts approximately 3.4 million visitors every year. www.somersethouse.org.uk

About Games London & London Games Festival

Games London is a ground breaking programme delivered by Film London, the capital's screen industries agency, and UK games industry trade body Ukie. The project is backed by the Mayor of London with funding worth £1.2m from the London Enterprise Action Panel.

Established in 2015, Games London runs a number of initiatives to make London the games capital of the world. It relaunched the London Games Festival in April 2016 with the celebration of the culture and business of games now attracting over 50,000 every year. Other areas of activity include inbound and outbound trade missions and work connecting and supporting games development skills in London.

London Games Festival 2018 runs from 5 April to 15 April covering over 40 events across the city. Highlights include Now Play This (6-8 April) the LGF HUB including BAME exhibition 'Ensemble' (9 & 10 April), the Games Finance Market (11 & 12 April), BAFTA Games Awards (12 April), EGX Rezzed, (13-15 April) and the Games Character Cosplay Parade (14 April). More information at www.games.london

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

About British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government.
www.britishcouncil.org

