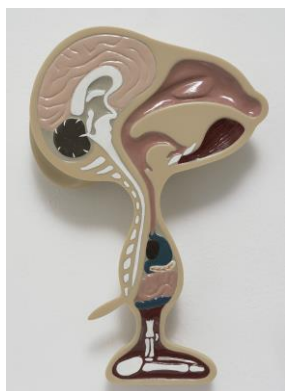


PRESS RELEASE

Somerset House opens landmark exhibition **GOOD GRIEF, CHARLIE BROWN! Celebrating Snoopy and The Enduring Power of Peanuts**

25 October 2018 – 3 March 2019



Exhibition highlights:

- **80 original comic strips**, hand-drawn by *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz, and many of his personal effects
- Works by **20 international contemporary artists**, inspired by the issues explored in *Peanuts*, from film to fashion and street art to sculpture
- Interactive installations include: a real-life **reimagining of Lucy's Psychiatric Help booth**, Snoopy typewriters, where the public can **collectively create a novel starting with 'It was a dark and stormy night'**, light boxes to **learn how to draw the Peanuts gang** and a **Snoopy Cinema**, complete with bean bags on a baseball pitcher's mound, with over an hour of remastered *Peanuts* TV specials

The Power of Peanuts – How Peanuts Has Penetrated Popular Culture as Explored in the Exhibition

- Snoopy became **an official write-in candidate** in the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections where some voters named him as an alternative candidate. A series of banners in support of the 'Snoopy for President' campaign is on show.
- In 1981, **Oxford English Dictionary** editor John Simpson wrote to Charles M. Schulz to enquire about the origins of **'security blanket'**, a term popularised by the *Peanuts* character Linus, who often carried one. This correspondence can be seen in the show.
- Snoopy became **NASA's Safety Mascot** in 1968 ahead of the Moon Landings – its 'Silver Snoopy Award' honours outstanding achievement in flight safety and mission success still today. An original 'Silver Snoopy', the highest honour bestowed by NASA for outstanding services to space safety even today, presented to Charles M. Schulz – whose award has even been to the moon and back – is on display.

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- Snoopy became interwoven into the **iconography of the Vietnam War** for serving US soldiers. Keepsakes featuring Snoopy and the gang from Vietnam War veterans reveal more.
- *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is a festive standard in the USA and it has become **the seventh-biggest-selling Christmas album** since current records began. Visitors can watch clips from this special in the Snoopy Cinema or see the toy piano used in the recording of *Jingle Bells* for it.
- Many prominent figures are fans of *Peanuts*. Letters to and from prominent public figures including **Ronald Reagan, Hillary Rodham (Clinton)** and **Billie Jean King**, who influenced the strip's storylines in the characters' fight for equality in sports, are on view. Fashion designer Kim Jones has also lent his **personal collection of vintage Peanuts sweatshirts**.

Further facts on the Power of Peanuts:

- French satirical magazine **Charlie Hebdo** was named after the *Peanuts* protagonist Charlie Brown
- **Matt Groening** described Charlie Brown as 'his personal hero' and was inspired by *Peanuts* in his own work – **numerous references to Peanuts can be found in The Simpsons**
- **The Beatles' 'Happiness is a Warm Gun'** on their 1968 White Album is a play on Lucy's aphorism 'Happiness is a Warm Puppy'
- All of **Wes Anderson's** films evoke the spirit of *Peanuts* in some way, from the name Snoopy for the dog in *Moonrise Kingdom*, to the fashions of Max Fischer in *Rushmore* or the musical scores of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* incorporated into the soundtrack of *The Royal Tenenbaums*

Snoopy, Charlie Brown and co. have arrived at London's Somerset House this autumn for an exhibition exploring the world's most influential comic strip, *Peanuts*. It is the **first significant show** on the comic strip, created by American artist Charles M. Schulz, in the UK and Somerset House presents an unparalleled insight into the life and legacy of both Schulz and his beloved creations, with some **objects never seen on show before**.

GOOD GRIEF, CHARLIE BROWN! Celebrating Snoopy and The Enduring Power of Peanuts investigates the impact of *Peanuts* on the cultural landscape globally, from 1950 to the present, and reveals its relevance for readers today.

The premise of *Peanuts* is 'big thoughts in little heads' and the exhibition uncovers the comic strip's recurring themes of anxiety, failure, love and loss and its commentary on issues such as feminism, racism and war, which resonate as much in 2018 as when they were first printed and have spoken to scores of contemporary creatives in their own work.

Alongside 80 of Charles M. Schulz's original hand drawings, 20 figures from the worlds of art, fashion and music have contributed works and collections to the exhibition, offering fresh perspectives on the compelling comic strip. Contributors include fashion designer **Kim Jones**, street artist **KAWS**, Turner Prize winner **Helen Marten** and Turner Prize finalist **Fiona Banner**, artist **Ryan Gander** and sound artist **Mira Calix**.

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GOOD GRIEF, CHARLIE BROWN! Celebrating Snoopy and The Enduring Power of Peanuts marks the 70th anniversary of Charles M. Schulz's iconic character Charlie Brown (who first appeared in one of Schulz's earlier strips). *Peanuts* ran daily from 1950 until 2000, with the prolific artist producing 17,897 strips in total. At its height, it was syndicated to over 2,600 newspapers in 75 countries and translated into 21 languages, reaching a readership of 355 million people worldwide.

Schulz's comic strips are showcased in their original state and size (the biggest are around A1; they were subsequently shrunk for printing and publication), enabling audiences to admire his artwork up close and in detail, with every inky thumbprint and correction marks also laid bare. Objects belonging to Schulz are on display, as well as original vintage products, publications and correspondence with such figures as **Billie Jean King** and **Hillary Rodham (Clinton)**, exposing fascinating stories from some of the most momentous times in modern history and proving the power of *Peanuts* within popular culture.

Testament to this in the exhibition is the very personal and articulate appreciation of *Peanuts* from contemporary artists and designers, who grew up with the comic strip and incorporated it into their work later in life. From film and fashion to street art and sculpture, all the contributors had previously involved *Peanuts* in their creative practice, responding to the comic strip's social, political and philosophical complexities, though half of the artists have produced new pieces especially for the Somerset House exhibition.

Somerset House has also collaborated with the **Peanuts Global Artist Collective** to create three large-scale light installations by Californian art collaborative **FriendsWithYou** that illuminate the entrance to the exhibition. The Peanuts Global Artist Collective is a worldwide arts initiative that has engaged seven international artists (André Saraiva X Mr. A, AVAF, FriendsWithYou, Kenny Scharf, Nina Chanel Abney, Rob Pruitt, Tomokazu Matsuyama) to blend Schulz's signature vision with their own individual styles and mediums. More works by the Peanuts Global Artist Collective feature on a capsule collection, curated by **Browns**, which is available in the exhibition shop as well as Browns East and [Brownsfashion.com](https://www.brownsfashion.com)

Alongside the exhibition, Somerset House presents a rich programme of spin-off events, taking place at lunchtimes, evenings and weekends. Charles M. Schulz's widow and founder of the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center, Jean Schulz, will start the series by sitting in conversation with contributing artist and lifelong *Peanuts* fan Andy Holden on the opening day of the exhibition (25 October). A special Exhibition Late on Valentine's Day (14 February) will close proceedings, with a look at unrequited love, the love that was typically portrayed in *Peanuts*. Tickets for talks, tours and Exhibition Late events are available, along with the exhibition tickets, through Somerset House's website.

The special exhibition shop includes limited-edition prints of Charles M. Schulz's original strips,

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signed by Jean Schulz, and limited-edition lithographs, designed and drawn by the internationally acclaimed artist Christo, of his *Wrapped Snoopy House* (an admirer of the extraordinary environmental artworks by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Schulz paid tribute to the artists in a 1978 strip). Somerset House has also collaborated with Tatty Devine to create a custom jewellery collection of playful *Peanuts* pieces, handmade in Tatty Devine's distinctive style. A range of original and inspired gifts for all ages, from clothing (including a large range of T-shirts and sweaters by TSPTR), accessories, collectibles and Christmas decorations to homewares, games, books and stationery, are also available.

An exhibition catalogue, beautifully illustrated and featuring all the fascinating stories from the show, accompanies at £20.

GOOD GRIEF, CHARLIE BROWN! Celebrating Snoopy and The Enduring Power of Peanuts is curated by Somerset House's Senior Curator Claire Catterall, with the support of the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center.

EXHIBITION IN DETAIL

EMBANKMENT WEST

The Boy From Saint Paul

Charles Monroe Schulz was born on 26 November 1922 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and grew up in Saint Paul, a quiet town in the heart of America's Midwest. Throughout his childhood Charles grew up with the mantra "don't get a big head". He was not encouraged to aspire to success of any sort or to stand out from the crowd.

Strips in this section allude to Schulz's parents and it features personal effects such as his baseball mitt.

Sparky and Spike

Nicknamed 'Sparky' at two days old, after the racehorse Spark Plug from the *Barney Google* comic strip, Charles 'Sparky' Schulz grew up instilled with a love of comics. Around the age of six, 'Sparky' was delighted to discover that he too could draw like the cartoonists he idolised.

When Sparky was 13, the Schulz family took ownership of a new family pet – a mixed-breed dog called Spike. Famous for his tricks, his intelligence and the ability to eat almost anything, Spike was an unusual dog – mischievous, independent and with a big personality. In later years Schulz used Spike as the model for Snoopy, who inherited Spike's markings and was designated a 'Beagle' only because the word sounded funny. Snoopy was so named because Schulz's mother had said before her untimely death that if they ever had another dog they should name him Snoopy.

Strips in this section comment on 'Sparky's' love of comics and dogs and it features personal effects such as his childhood Spark Plug figurines and his first appearance in Ripley's *Believe It or Not!*

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The Perfect Sheet of Ice

Sport played an important role throughout Schulz's life. Growing up in the chill winters of the American Midwest, he dreamed of 'the perfect sheet of ice' to skate on. The terminally shy 'Sparky' gained his first experience of the bonds of friendship through the games of ice hockey played on his homemade ice rink.

The yearning for the 'perfect sheet of ice' would become a metaphor for his life as well as a recurring motif, underlining the importance of community and friendship, but also speaking to his persistence, his search for perfection, his attention to detail and his love of sport. In 1969, he even opened his own ice rink in sunny Santa Rosa, in Sonoma County, California, where he played ice hockey and put on special 'Snoopy on Ice' shows, which attracted many ice skating stars.

Strips in this section showcase ice skating and ice hockey by the *Peanuts* gang and it features personal effects such as Schulz's own ice skates.

Becoming a Cartoonist

When Schulz was in his final year at High School, he answered an advert for a correspondence course run by a company called Art Instruction. Attracted by their emphasis on cartooning, Schulz completed all his lessons by mail at a cost of \$170, which his father struggled to pay in instalments. This was Schulz's only art training.

The following years were the most challenging and life-defining for Schulz. In February 1943, he was drafted into the US Army, an experience he found traumatic. At the same time his mother fell gravely ill, suffering from what was later discovered to be a pernicious form of cervical cancer. On a brief trip home from his local training camp, he said his last goodbyes and only a few days after she died, he was sent to begin his army career in Camp Campbell, Kentucky.

After a short spell of service in France and Germany, Schulz returned to his hometown of Saint Paul and started work at Art Instruction, the same company from which he had taken his correspondence course. While working there, he set about trying to sell his own cartoons, eventually selling a series of one-panel cartoons to the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1948, his first sale to a major magazine. At the same time, he developed a cartoon based around the antics of small children called 'Li'l Folks' which ran in the local newspaper, the *St Paul Pioneer Press*. Schulz eventually sold a refinement of *Li'l Folks* in comic strip format to a syndicate, who renamed it *Peanuts*. The very first strip appeared on 2 October 1950, in seven newspapers nationwide.

Strips in this section relate to his time serving in the US Army and it features films of his friends from these times, sharing their memories of 'Sparky'. There are also a number of strips showcasing his mastery of line, language, sound and emotion. It unpicks Schulz's process, with examples of his tools of the trade, plus a projected film with Schulz describing how to draw the *Peanuts* gang.

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MEZZANINE

The majority of contemporary works are located on the Mezzanine (including the film works either side of the Snoopy Cinema). Ruth Proctor's work is located in Somerset House's Seamen's Hall (outside of the exhibition). The contributing artists are: Fiona Banner, Mel Brimfield, Mira Calix, Steven Claydon, Marcus Coates, François Curlet, Mark Drew, Ryan Gander, Eloise Hawser, Andy Holden, Des Hughes, Ken Kagami, KAWS, Lauren LoPrete, Helen Marten, David Musgrave, patten, Matthew Plummer-Fernandez, Lucas Price and Ruth Proctor.

***Yaugh!* Peanuts and Existentialism**

Peanuts was the first popular comic strip to introduce complex philosophical ideas about the meaning of life, with its characters expressing deep feelings of anxiety, loneliness, failure and despair.

The strip created a microcosm of human behaviour, illustrating how we struggle to create meaning in a universe where no meaning is evident – the classic theory of existentialism.

***The Doctor is in!* Peanuts and Psychiatry**

Schulz's sensitive understanding of the human psyche, as well as his sense of humour, poking fun at the rise of 'shrink culture' in America, meant that *Peanuts* became both a balm to soothe and a tool to heal.

The profession of psychiatry recognised very quickly the value of *Peanuts* in describing complex ideas and making them accessible to a wide audience. In 1955 the paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott asked for permission to use Linus' blanket as an illustration of a 'transitional object', and in 1986 the term 'Security Blanket' entered the Oxford English Dictionary. Schulz never claimed to have invented the term, though he certainly encouraged its popular usage.

***Snoopy for President!* Peanuts, Society and Politics**

Peanuts debuted at a turbulent time in US history and from the earliest strips Schulz introduced themes that reflected contemporary concerns. The strip subtly – and, at times, explicitly – engaged in such issues as the Vietnam War, the Draft and Civil Rights. Many of young adult readers appropriated *Peanuts*, and Snoopy in particular, to communicate their own feelings, seeing in the free-thinking and unconventional dog a reflection of their own mindset, and adopting him as a natural figurehead of the counter-cultural movement taking shape among their generation.

Other highlights to the strips include correspondence on the introduction of the character Franklin, a letter from Ronald Reagan, a selection of items championing Snoopy's presidential campaign, keepsakes from Vietnam War veterans and an original 'Silver Snoopy', the highest

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honour bestowed by NASA for outstanding services to space safety even today, presented to Charles M. Schulz – whose award has even been to the moon and back.

Happiness is ... Peanuts and the Bittersweet

In the 1960s and 1970s, the commercialisation of *Peanuts* and the explosion of related products from licensed companies such as Determined Productions and Hallmark brought accusations of ‘selling-out’, as the darker resonance of the strip gave way to more saccharin sentiments, encapsulated by the best-selling book *Happiness is a Warm Puppy*.

Pow! Peanuts and Feminism

In contrast to many other comic strips, Schulz’s cast of female characters was confident, complex, headstrong and opinionated. Lucy, in particular, never played second fiddle to anyone. Peppermint Patty, too, was taken up as a feminist icon. Better at sports than any boy, she was fierce, freckled and hated wearing shoes and dresses. An early supporter of women’s rights, Schulz regularly introduced themes in Peppermint Patty’s storylines that challenged gender norms.

Other highlights to the strips include correspondence with Billie Jean King and Hillary Rodham (Clinton).

It’s The Great Pumpkin: Peanuts, Faith and Morality

In his youth Schulz was a devout Christian. In adulthood, however, his understanding of faith began to change and in later life he came to describe himself as a ‘secular humanist’. Schulz was unafraid of bringing his views on religion into the strip and he led his readers on a journey that mirrored his own. Schulz’s theology was less than traditional; above all, it was his deeply held belief in the good in humanity that came to shape many of the strip’s storylines. But while Schulz questioned the nature of faith, his love for the message and the language of the scriptures remained undiminished.

That’s Art! Peanuts and Art

Schulz’s great love for the arts permeated the strip. He channelled his artistic nature – an obsessive perfectionism and solitude born of dedication to his craft – through Schroeder, whose love of Beethoven and ability to create music from nothing but a toy piano with painted-on black and white keys matched his own sensibilities and talent with paper and ink. But art infiltrated the strip on many other levels too, and Schulz referenced many artists, writers and filmmakers. Snoopy even had a Van Gogh in his doghouse. To many young adults reading the strip, their first introduction to the giants of the arts came from this portal in their daily newspaper.

EMBANKMENT EAST

PEANUTS AND PLAY

Inspired by the story-telling of Schulz and the work of artists displayed, this area gives visitors the chance to add their voice to the story using some of Peanut’s most iconic motifs and imagery.

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Who Knows? by Marcus Coates

Artist Marcus Coates invites the public to share their own ‘life questions’ on the wall and to take a turn in the real life recreation of Lucy’s Psychiatry Booth offering advice.

The booth will be occupied by an advisor 12:00-13:00 on Tuesdays and Sundays, as well as other times during the exhibition opening hours.

Echo Youth by Matthew Plummer-Fernandez

British-Colombian artist and Somerset House Studios resident Matthew Plummer Fernandez worked with a group of young children, who contributed their voices and visions for a better future onto placards. The placard was a frequent motif in the comic strip, often used by those without a voice in *Peanuts* (such as Snoopy and Woodstock) to communicate their messages. These placards have populated an Augmented Reality app called *Echo Youth*, which allows users to virtually place these demonstration signs in public spaces. A video version of *Echo Youth* will also feature in the exhibition.

A Story in 4 panels

The public is invited to creating a panel for the show’s collective strip, using the lightbox tables to trace characters or add their own to take the *Peanuts* gang on new adventures.

Good luck with the second sentence...

Schulz shared his love of literature through Snoopy’s attempts to be a great novelist. The famous beagle’s epic novel was constantly interrupted, never getting much beyond the sentence “It was a dark and stormy night.” The public is invited to add a second sentence or more and share their story on the wall of typewriters.

FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

press@somersethouse.org.uk/0207 845 4624

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

ABOUT SOMERSET HOUSE

Inspiring contemporary culture

One of the city’s most spectacular and well-loved spaces, Somerset House is a new kind of arts centre in the heart of London, designed for today’s audiences, artists and creatives – an inspirational community where contemporary culture is imagined, created and experienced.

From its 18th Century origins, Somerset House has played a central role in our society as a place where our culture and collective understanding of the world is shaped and defined. In 2000, it began its reinvention as a cultural powerhouse and home for arts and culture today, creating unique and stimulating experiences for the public, bringing them into direct contact with ideas from the greatest artists, makers and thinkers of our time. Our distinctive and dynamic year-round

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programme spans the contemporary arts in all its forms, from cutting-edge exhibitions and installations to annual festivals, seasonal events in the courtyard including Film4 Summer Screen, Summer Series and Skate, and an extensive learning and engagement programme.

As well as welcoming over 3million visitors annually, Somerset House houses the largest and most diverse creative communities in the country – from one-person start-ups to successful creative enterprises including MOBO, British Fashion Council, Dance Umbrella, Improbable Theatre, Hofesh Shechter Company, and Dartmouth Films.

In 2016 we launched Somerset House Studios – a new experimental workspace connecting artists, makers and thinkers with audiences. Currently housing over 80 artists and Makerversity (a community of over 250 emergent makers), the Studios are a platform for the development of new creative projects and collaboration, promoting work that pushes bold ideas, engages with urgent issues and pioneers new technologies. www.somersethouse.org.uk

ABOUT THE CHARLES M. SCHULZ MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER

The Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center is home to the world's largest collection of Peanuts comic strips. Opened in 2002, the Museum presents the work of Charles M. Schulz with exhibitions and programs that build an understanding of cartoon art, illustrate the scope of the artist's multi-faceted career, and celebrate the stories he communicated to a global audience. Across the street is Snoopy's Home Ice, designed and built by the Schulz family.

Visitors can ice skate, enjoy the comfort of the Warm Puppy Café, and browse in Snoopy's Gallery and Gift Shop. Located in the heart of Sonoma County, California, the Museum is uniquely situated in a region known for world-class vineyards, magnificent redwoods, and beautiful ocean vistas. www.schulzmuseum.org