

PRESS RELEASE

Now Play This

6 – 14 April 2019



New Wing/Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court/River Terrace
£8 / £6.50 concessions available from somersethouse.org.uk
Weekend Pass £25
Free outdoor installations

Annual games festival **Now Play This** returns to Somerset House in April for its biggest edition ever, with even more exciting hands-on gameplay for all ages to enjoy. Part of the city-wide London Games Festival, *Now Play This* brings the latest independent and experimental game design from around the world, across an extended nine-day season.

From solo games to multiplayer collaborative experiences, *Now Play This* shows how games can be used as a medium to explore unexpected subjects unflinchingly, from looking for love to living with a disability. With works from a host of multidisciplinary artists and creators, from authors and poets to contemporary artists and gaming collectives, *Now Play This* allows visitors to interact with a diverse range of outdoor and indoor gaming installations, many of which premiere for the first time at the festival. Players will also have the chance to try their own hand at game-making with interactive, participatory installations, as well as live zine-making.

This year's extended festival focuses on the idea of community, exploring how the forming of dedicated communities amongst players and game-makers alike feed into the creative process behind some of the most inventive and thought-provoking games of today.

For the opening weekend, visitors with a **Makers' Weekend Pass** receive both unlimited entry to the festival across the two days as well as special access to **The Makers' Corner**. This space provides pass holders with the unique opportunity to delve deeper into the game-making process through a series of insightful talks, workshops and activities with many of the designers

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and artists taking part in the festival.

During the week, families can enjoy a series of child-friendly workshops and themed activities. An illustrated trail will lead families on an adventure around Somerset House, whilst a wide-range of table top games, from familiar classics to emerging titles such as **Nibcard's Safe Journi**, will be available to play in a dedicated board games lounge.

GAMES HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Somerset House Studios' Makerversity** resident **Common Works** present an **immersive karaoke experience**. Taking over its own room in Somerset House's New Wing, **Malapropic Karaoke** resembles an 80s-style karaoke booth - complete with silver fringe foil curtains and a retro television. Players can select their song of choice, however once the song begins to play, the original lyrics which visitors sing along to are replaced with words of a similar sound, delivering unconventional, unexpected and amusing results.
- **Crip Casino**, a three-part work by interactive artist and writer **Abi Palmer**, premieres with a new instalment at *Now Play This*. The work draws upon Palmer's **personal experience of living with a disability and time spent in NHS rehabilitation centres** to create three works which unpick the narratives constructed around ideas of wellness. Visitors are invited to take part in the ritualistic playing of three four-wheel slot machines, with each button pressed or handle pulled revealing words and phrases related to aspects of living with a disability, including labelling, misguided support and physical social barriers.
- Bringing visitors together in cooperative gameplay, **Patrick LeMieux's Octopad** is a 1980s games console reimagined. Consisting of eight different controllers with just one button on each, *Octopad* transforms the common single-player experience into one of teamwork, where all eight **players must work together to successfully navigate through classic gaming titles such as Super Mario Bros, The Legend of Zelda and Tetris**.
- Dutch Indie game collective **sokpop** serve their community of dedicated fans by creating and releasing two new quirky games every month. Encouraging visitors to give game-making a go themselves, sokpop have created an easy-to-use digital game-making tool specifically for *Now Play This*. Visitors can work together in groups or individually to digitally draw characters, objects and scenery, as well as create simple game rules and actions to **produce their very own series of sok-stories**.
- Voted by *The Guardian* as one the best video games of 2018, **Florence**, created by **Mountains**, is an **award-winning interactive love story which follows the life of 25-year-old Florence Yeoh in a journey of blossoming romance and self-discovery**. Presented on a tablet as a one-player experience, individuals must complete a

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series of micro-tasks – from shaking a polaroid picture to unpacking belongings in a new flat - to reveal the next step in the quiet yet tender love-story.

- **We Throw Switches**, a creative studio specialising in creating interactive games for social spaces, present one of their latest works at *Now Play This*. Formed of a large table with ten in-built neon light-up surfaces, players must work together in this **ultimate reaction test**, pressing the panels which light up as quickly as possible as they increase in speed.
- **Wrong Box**, a collaboration between new media artist and internet personality **Molly Soda** and indie game maker **Aquma**, invites players to explore the forgotten online worlds of the noughties, from glitter graphics and empty chat rooms to pop-up ads and virtual pets.
- Since its launch in 2006, the online game **Tale of Tales' The Endless Forest** has formed a dedicated community of players and followers, who come together to feed its evolution through forums and suggestions with the developers to create a 'living universe'. Set in a peaceful enchanted forest, **each player adopts the form of a deer which can only interact and communicate with other players through sounds and body language**. Presented on a mounted screen, visitors can wander the idyllic setting, as well as engage with several activities, which range from picking flowers to shapeshifting.

OUTDOOR GAMES:

Four free outdoor games take place on site for 2019, open to all visitors of Somerset House. Staged across the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court, and produced especially for *Now Play This*, is New-York based games designer and conceptual artist **Zach Gage's Labyrinth**. Gage leads visitors around the courtyard in a circular trail which leads to a central core, inspired by the systems of both winding church pathways and airport queues, which invites feelings of tranquillity juxtaposed with physical order and structure.

Interactive designer **Viviane Schwarz** and game designer **Kevan Davis** will lead visitors on an adventurous playable trail around Somerset House in an exciting newly commissioned work.

Further works include a newly commissioned interactive installation by 3D artist and maker **Kristi Minchin**, where visitors are encouraged to work together to uncover hidden faces within a sculptural work, as well as the latest and largest instalment in an ongoing interactive series by artist **Robin Baumgarten** consisting of 228 touch-sensitive colourful springs and LED lights.

Now Play This is conceived by **Somerset House** and **Matheson Marcault** with support from **Games London**. This year's edition of *Now Play This* is further supported by **Ukie**, the not-for-profit trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry, which has provided funding to underpin the expansion and cultural impact of the event.

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FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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ADDITIONAL LISTINGS INFORMATION

Address: Somerset House, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA

Transport: Underground: Temple, Embankment / Rail:
Charing Cross, Waterloo, Blackfriars

Website: www.somerset-house.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse

Somerset House Twitter: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Hashtag: #NowPlayThis2019

NOTES TO EDITORS

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 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 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.somerset-house.org.uk

ABOUT MATHESON MARCAULT

Now Play This has been produced since its founding in 2015 by game design studio [Matheson Marcault](http://www.mathesonmarcault.com), which works with play, culture, history and physical space.

ABOUT GAMES LONDON

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 over three years.

The Games London programme includes a number of initiatives to make London the games capital of the world. It re-established the London Games Festival in April 2016. Other areas of activity include inbound and outbound trade missions and work connecting and supporting games development skills in London.

ABOUT UK INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT (UKIE)

Ukie (UK Interactive Entertainment) is the only trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry.

A not-for-profit, it represents businesses of all sizes from small start-ups to large multinational developers, publishers and service companies, working across **online, mobile apps, consoles, PC, esports, VR and AR**.

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Ukie aims to support, grow and promote member businesses and the wider UK games and interactive entertainment industry by optimising the economic, cultural, political and social environment needed for businesses to thrive.

Ukie works closely with the sector to influence government and decision makers, lobbying successfully for the **2014 Video Games Tax Relief**, the **UK Games Fund**, and the **Next Gen Skills** campaign which resulted in a new **Computer Science Curriculum**. Ukie makes connections for businesses and help them access the opportunities a digital economy offers, via a successful **International Trade** programme, running **UK Games Industry** stands at the biggest international industry events.

It promotes the industry by working with the media to raise awareness of the sector's positive cultural and economic contribution, as well as the societal benefits of games. Ukie runs **askaboutgames.com**, where families can learn about safe and sensible online practices, parental controls and age ratings.

Ukie's skills work serves to increase inclusion and diversity, advocating a **STEAM** approach to education. Initiatives include the **Digital Schoolhouse (DSH)**, **Video Games Ambassadors (VGAs)**, a **Student Membership** scheme, and a **professional development programme**.

Ukie commissioned the **Blueprint for Growth** report in 2015, an independent review of the UK games industry with recommendations for decision makers in Parliament for how the industry can grow.

In 2016 Ukie partnered with **Film London** to deliver **Games London**, a ground breaking new three-year programme to promote the UK as the games capital of the world, the focal point of which is the annual **London Games Festival**.

Website: ukie.org.uk

Twitter: [@uk_ie](https://twitter.com/uk_ie)

Facebook: [Ukie](https://www.facebook.com/Ukie)

Linked in: [Ukie](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ukie)

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ABOUT FILM LONDON

Film London is the capital's screen industries agency. We connect ideas, talent and finance to develop a pioneering creative culture in the city that delivers success in film, television, animation, games and beyond. We work to sustain, promote and develop London as a global content production hub, support the development of the city's new and emerging filmmaking talent and invest in a diverse and rich film culture. Funded by the Mayor of London and the National Lottery through the BFI, we also receive support from Arts Council England, Creative Skillset and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Film London's activities include:

Maintaining, strengthening and promoting London's position as world-class city to attract investment through film, television, animation and games

Investing in local talent through a range of specialised production and training schemes

Boosting employment and competitiveness in the capital's screen industries by delivering internationally facing business development events

Maximising access to the capital's film culture by helping audiences discover film in all its diversity

Promoting London through screen tourism

Film London also manages the British Film Commission (www.britishfilmcommission.org.uk) through a public/private partnership which is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport through the BFI, and the Department for International Trade.

www.film london.org.uk

[@Film_London](https://twitter.com/Film_London)