

Somerset House announces landmark exhibition, *The Horror Show!*, exploring 50 years of creative rebellion

PRESS RELEASE

27 October 2022 – 19 February 2023



From 27 October to 19 February 2023, Somerset House presents ***The Horror Show! A Twisted Tale of Modern Britain***, a major exhibition exploring how ideas rooted in horror have informed the last 50 years of creative rebellion. The show looks beyond horror as a genre, instead taking it as a reaction and provocation to our most troubling times. The last five decades of modern British history are recast as a story of cultural shapeshifting told through some of our country's most provocative artists. *The Horror Show!* offers a heady ride through the disruption of 1970s punk to the revolutionary potential of modern witchcraft, showing how the anarchic alchemy of horror – its subversion, transgression and the supernatural – can make sense of the world around us. Horror not only allows us to voice our fears; it gives us the tools to stare them down and imagine a radically different future.

Featuring over 200 artworks and culturally significant objects, this landmark show tells a story of the turbulence, unease and creative revolution at the heart of the British cultural psyche in three acts – **Monster**, **Ghost** and **Witch**. Each act interprets a specific era through the lens of a classic horror archetype, in a series of thematically linked contemporaneous and new works:

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Monster

Opening *The Horror Show!*, **Monster** begins by delving into the economic and political turbulence of the 70s and the high octane spectacle and social division of the 80s. Against a backdrop of unrest and loud uprising, it charts the origin story and ascent of the individuals who will go on to disrupt, define and destroy British culture, while exploring the monsters which plague society today.

Punk prophet **Jamie Reid** opens the show by conjuring his *Monster on a Nice Roof* (1972), painting a prescient picture of the dark skies gathering over Britain. **Chila Burman's** *If There is No Struggle, There is no Progress - Uprising* (1981) and **Helen Chadwick's** *Allegory of Misrule* (1986) refigure social discontent and anxiety in the image of horror, as the socio-political and monstrous collide. In a jarring dislocation of British cultural identity, **Guy Peellaert's** *David Bowie, Diamond Dogs* (1974) and the otherworldly creatures captured by **Derek Ridgers'** nightlife photography point to the emergence of the cultural provocation and rebellion that defined an era. *Monster* revels in a resoundingly British spirit of nonconformity, with a spectacular display of **Pam Hogg's** new *Exterminating Angel* (2021) and works by Somerset House Studios artist and designer **Gareth Pugh** and the late visionary **Leigh Bowery**. Elsewhere, **Noel Fielding's** *Post-Viral Fatigue* (2022) shows how the imagery of horror resonates still in our Covid-ravaged contemporary reality. As the nightmarish and otherworldly fills the gallery, a newly commissioned mural by **Matilda Moors** sees the walls dramatically clawed at by a monstrous hand.

Contributing artists include **Marc Almond, Bauhaus, Judy Blame, Leigh Bowery, Philip Castle, Chila Burman, Helen Chadwick, Monster Chetwynd, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Tim Etchells, Noel Fielding, Mark Moore & Martin Green, Pam Hogg, Dick Jewell, Harminder Judge, Daniel Landin, Jeannette Lee, Andrew Liles, Linder, London Leatherman, Don Letts, Luciana Martinez de la Rosa, Lindsey Mendick, Peter Mitchell, Dennis Morris, Matilda Moors, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, Guy Peellaert, Gareth Pugh, Jamie Reid, Derek Ridgers, Nick Ryan, Ralph Steadman, Ray Stevenson, Poly Styrene, Francis Upritchard** and **Jenkin van Zyl**.

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Ghost

The show's second act, **Ghost**, marks the collapse of hyperinflated 80s culture into an uncanny temperature change that presided over the 90s and early 00s. It traces an unsettling path through to the global financial crisis of 2008, a turning point in time between a century of old and new, at the dawn of a digital age of faceless audiences and invisible cyber wars.

Derek Jarman's last feature and magnum opus, *Blue* (1993), offers a profound evocation of the artist's final days, marrying comforting connection with disconnection from the world, warmth with coldness, as Jarman poetically narrates his approach towards death. A stunning sound installation from **Nick Ryan** highlights the strange frequencies of an age that saw the emergence of trance music and readily accessible sampling machines: voices form a call-and-response, as visitors become spectator, spectacle and a ghost in the machine. Works from **Jeremy Millar** and **Gavin Turk** unsettle with a paradoxical clash of ghostly presence and absence, familiarity and otherness. **Cornelia Parker's** map, scorched with a heated meteorite fragment, tells a tale of apocalypse for the end of the millennium and the fear of the unknown.

Contributing artists include **A Guy Called Gerald, Barry Adamson, Hamad Butt, Adam Chodzko, Kevin Cummins, Graham Dolphin, Tim Etchells, Angus Fairhurst, Paul Finnegan, Laura Grace Ford, Ghostwatch, Lucy Gunning, Paul Heartfield, Susan Hiller, Matthew Holness & Richard Ayoade, Stewart Home, Derek Jarman, Michael Landy, Richard Littler (Scarfolk), Jeremy Millar, Haroon Mirza, Drew Mulholland, Pat Naldi & Wendy Kirkup, Cornelia Parker, Steve Pemberton, Nic Roeg, Nick Ryan, Scanner (Robin Rimbaud), Adam Scovell, Sensory Leakage, Reece Shearsmith, David Shrigley, Iain Sinclair, Kerry Stewart, Tricky, Gavin Turk, Richard Wells, Rachel Whiteread** and **Words & Pictures**.

Witch

The exhibition's final act, **Witch**, focuses on a Britain spanning 2008's financial crash until the present day, and celebrates the emergence of a younger generation and their hyper-connected community – a global coven readily embracing a dynamic grounded in integration and equality. **Linder's** *The Goddess Who has Sky as Hair* (2019) and **Zadie Xa's** *Three Thousand and Thirty High Priestess of Pluto* (2016) forgo the patriarchal occult and druidism of old, in favour of a new sorcery rooted in ecology and bodily autonomy.

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Among the works on display are newly commissioned works from **Somerset House Studios** artists **Tyreis Holder** and **Col Self**, as well as a new commission from **Linda Stupart & Carl Gent**. The act's final scene features a striking presentation of Turner Prize winning-artist **Tai Shani's** *The Neon Hieroglyph* (2021), inspired by the incredible true story of the Maiara, flying witches commemorated on the remote Italian island of Alicudi. The sculpture, seen for the first time in the UK, can be seen alongside an audio installation by **Gazelle Twin** specially commissioned for *The Horror Show!*

Contributing artists include **Ackroyd & Harvey, Josh Appignanesi, Jane Arden, Ruth Bayer, Anna Bunting-Branch, Juno Calypso, Leonora Carrington, Coil, Charlotte Colbert, Marisa Carnesky, Damselfrau, Jesse Darling, Eccentric Research Council, Jake Elwes, Tim Etchells, Gazelle Twin, Bert Gilbert, Rose Glass, Miles Glyn, Tyreis Holder, Matthew Holness, Sophy Hollington, Bones Tan Jones, Isaac Julien, Tina Keane, Serena Korda, Linder, Alice Lowe, Hollie Miller & Kate Street, Grace Ndiritu, Col Self, Tai Shani, Oliver Sim, Penny Slinger, Matthew Stone, Linda Stupart & Carl Gent, Suzanne Treister, Cathy Ward, Ben Wheatley, Zoe Williams** and **Zadie Xa**.

Each of the exhibition's acts opens with 'constellations' of talismanic objects. These cabinets of curiosities speak to significant cultural shifts and anxieties in each era, while invoking a haunting from the counter-cultural voices in recent British history. Alongside these introductory artworks and ephemera is an atmospheric soundtrack, conjuring the spirit of the time with music from **Bauhaus, Barry Adamson** and **Mica Levi**.

Monster, Ghost and *Witch* culminate in immersive installations, combining newly commissioned work, large-scale sculpture, fashion and sound installation, with each chapter signed off with a neon text-work by **Tim Etchells**. *The Horror Show!* offers an intoxicating deep-dive into the counter-cultural, mystic and uncanny, with the signature design of the three acts courtesy of architects Sam Jacob Studio and Grammy-winning creative studio Barnbrook.

The Horror Show! is co-curated by **Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard** and **Claire Catterall**, who also conceived the idea. Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard are BAFTA nominated filmmakers and resident artists at Somerset House Studios. Claire Catterall is Somerset House's Senior Curator.

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The exhibition will have an accompanying programme of talks and events, full details of which are to be announced soon. More information available at www.somersethouse.org.uk.

The special exhibition shop, edited by Faye Dowling's alternative art store GothShop.co, will feature an exclusive range of limited-edition items, including a collectible exhibition catalogue priced at £15, alongside a selection of original and inspired gifts from clothing and accessories to limited edition prints, books and zines.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with original texts by John Doran, Nathalie Olah and Patricia MacCormack, introductions from co-curators Claire Catterall, Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard and a foreword from Jonathan Reekie. The catalogue is edited by Faye Dowling.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Press images available [here](#)

For further information, please contact: Alex Kemsley, Senior Press Officer

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#TheHorrorShow @somersethouse

LISTING INFORMATION:

THE HORROR SHOW! A TWISTED TALE OF MODERN BRITAIN

Dates: Thursday 27 October 2022 – Sunday 19 February 2023

Tickets: £16.50/£12 concessions. Money-saving exhibition tickets combined with catalogue and poster purchases also available. *Tickets via* somersethouse.org.uk.

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<https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/press/horror-show-twisted-tale-modern-britain>

Content guidance: This exhibition contains some graphic and disturbing artworks and therefore may not be suitable for children under 12.

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.

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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.