

DESIGN | 5 JUN 2021 | BY [ROSA BERTOLI](#) | PHOTOGRAPHY: [ED REEVE](#)

What to see at London Design Biennale 2021

London Design Biennale is open at Somerset House until 27 June 2021. With 30 national participations and a series of satellite projects highlighting design's impact on the world, this new edition is a multisensory design experience in the heart of London



London Design Biennale 2021 is now open until 27 June at Somerset House. An in-depth view of the world-changing power of design, London Design Biennale is a multisensory exhibition where critical thinking is demonstrated through creative installation that often combine sound and scent to catapult visitors into an immersive discovery journey. Responding to the theme of 'Resonance', each installation, project or pavilion offers a thought-provoking experience through design.

President, London Design Biennale, noting that the event was designed to 'entertain, inform and spark action.'

The Forest by Es Devlin at Somerset House



Es Devlin's immersive Forest installation acts as an anchor to the London Design Biennale was created in collaboration with Project Everyone, and its impressive scale offers a welcome refuge within Somerset House's courtyard. Visitors are invited to walk within the Forest, featuring 400 trees from 23 local species and with an immersive soundscape by Brian Eno, Cheryl Tipp and the British Library Board. A central clearing features totems each representing one of 17 Global Goals with further information on each Goal.

Pavilion for the African Diaspora: talks and events programme



The first iteration of Ini Archibong's Pavilion of the African Diaspora landed in Somerset House and will be the centre of a rich programme of events and discussions throughout the month. Serving as a stage for conversation and a platform that will honour African contributions and celebrate the Black community. The programme of talks and events kicks off on 5 June 2021, with Archibong participating in talks including 'Navigating Design industry while black',

Devlin.

Design in an Age of Crisis



The exhibition by London Design Biennale and Chatham House, [Design in an Age of Crisis](#) is the result of an open call to gather proposals on how to tackle important issues in the fields of health, environment, society and work. The 500 submissions span over 50 countries and six continents, covering themes of environment, society, work and health.

London Design Biennale Souvenir





In lieu of a traditional exhibition catalogue, the London Design Biennale Souvenir is a box of keepsakes (available to purchase from Somerset house) that extends the exhibition experience. Curated by former Wallpaper* digital Design Editor Sujata Burman and designed by Pentagram, the box includes a publication that acts as an exhibition companion and features contributions by Es Devlin on the theme of Resonance as well as information on each national contribution and special project, a series of limited-edition prints, stickers and even an acorn; something to plant for future generations to treasure and enjoy.

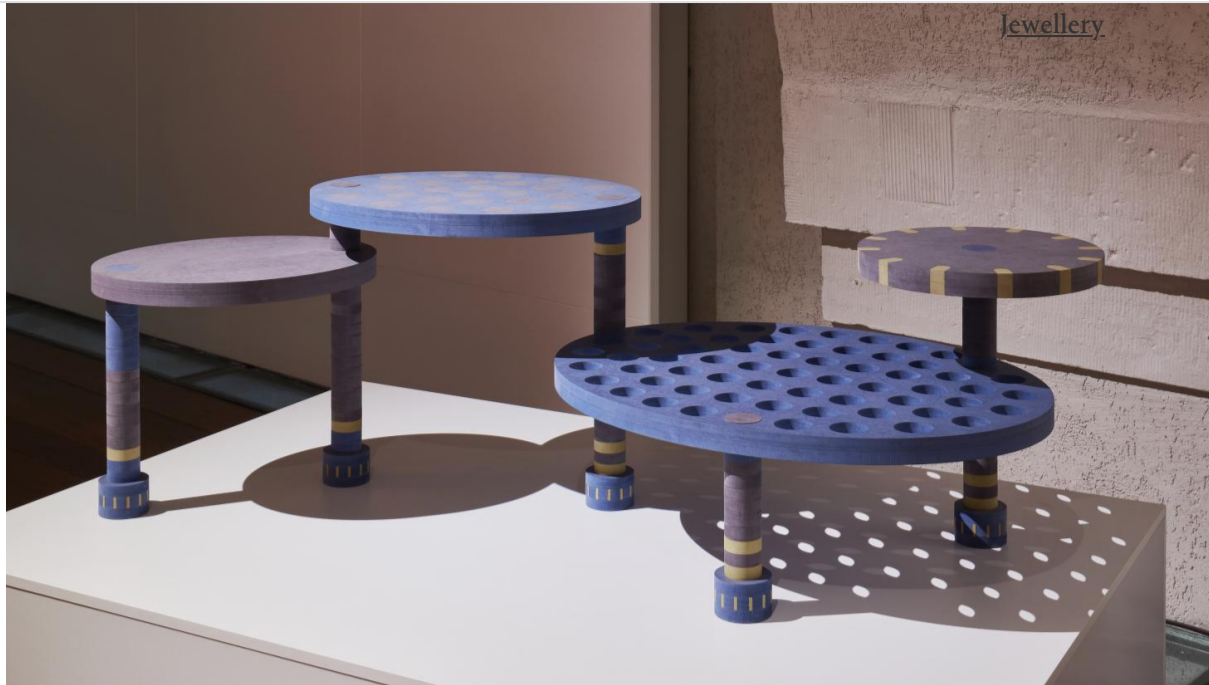
Designers in the Middle



Hamsa by Talia Mukmel, a reference to the Arabic word meaning 'five' and relating to the fingers of a hand. *Photography: Mark Cocksedge*

'Stream of Consciousness' is an exhibition of works by designers from the MENA region, featuring pieces inspired by their Levantine heritage with a contemporary look at themes of nomadism, craft, tradition and diversity. All objects on display were made in London using sustainable wood supplied by Spanish manufacturer FINSA.

Co-founded by designer Rona Meyuchas Koblenz and curator and Wallpaper* Editor Suzanne Trocme, Designers in the Middle is a celebration of creativity and culture from Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine and Qatar. '2021 is the first time we are able to bring our thoughts and motivation to a physical exhibition, creating works from an unfamiliar material that has enabled us to create a contemporary Casbah,' says Trocme.



Rujum by Rona Meyuchas Koblenz, meaning 'stone pile' or 'stone cairns' in Arabic as well as in modern Hebrew.
Photography: Mark Cocksedge

The objects were inspired by the concept of Casbah (Old City) as a living habitat module, a nod to the shifting of life/work boundaries brought about by the ongoing pandemic. 'I was always curious to explore different design cultures as there is a rich culture of arts and crafts in the Middle East,' says Meyuchas Koblenz. 'Local and traditional crafts are the backbone of the design industry, and this has a strong social impact on our lives.'

National Pavilions at London Design Biennale 2021

The 30 pavilions of London Design Biennale 2021 are arranged across Somerset House's East and West Wings, as well as Seaman's Hall to the South of the courtyard. Each national participation responds to the theme of 'Resonance', and to the Biennale's artistic director Es Devlin's call to action, answering the question: 'how can design provide solutions to the major challenges and crises the world faces today?'

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Highlights from the pavilions include Ghana's Amplify installation by textile designer Chrissa Amuah and architect Alice Asafu-Adjaye, exploring the connections between Ghana, Great Britain and Denmark through the centuries.



From Argentina, designer Cristian Mohaded and his long-term collaborator, artisan Lorenzo Reyes created pieces using the Simbol, a plant that grows in the north of the country, to create an installation that comes alive through light.



Germany's 'Spoon Archaeology', inspired by the European ban on plastic cutlery, is a colorful exploration of a soon to be forgotten, still ubiquitous product design category.



The Canadian pavilion's 'Duck' installation is an impressively physical reflection on the threat of global warming, expressed through a large-scale reproduction of the heating ducts commonly found in buildings worldwide. Guests are invited to duck under the exaggerated gold ducts, triggering 'personal reflection towards a common threat.'



The immersive installation of the Greece Pavilion by the country's Prince Nikolaos features a golden, illuminated olive tree while sounds of nature fill the room. 'Not much has changed in the way we grow and harvest olive trees from ancient times until today,' reads an exhibition statement: through the project the olive tree is celebrated for its properties and centennial history.



Artist Ben Cullen Williams's installation for the Antarctic pavilion features three screens depicting AI-generated video created from footage of the Larsen-B Ice shelf, which splintered off from the Antarctic peninsula in 2002. The footage was collected by the artist on an expedition to Antarctica with polar explorer Robert Swan, and the project is supported by fashion brand Pangaia.

INFORMATION

London Design Biennale is now on view at Somerset House, 1-27 June 2021
londondesignbiennale.com

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