



## Inaugural London Design Biennale Summit a call to action for the world's design community

### Responsibility, environmental impact and international collaboration to set the agenda for the 2020 edition

27 June 2019, London, UK – On Tuesday 25 June, London Design Biennale's 2020 Artistic Director, Es Devlin, chaired a dynamic day of talks to inform the agenda of the third edition, attended by designers, curators, businesses and international participating nations.

The event also explored the potential of the theme – Resonance - encouraging participating nations to consider the ripple effect of design concepts on the way we live; the impact of big thinking on the way we behave; and the choices we make.

Devlin noted that the Summit was an “opportunity for designers to respond to urgent and radical shifts in every aspect of design that we are all aware need to take place in order for our species to have a chance of survival on this planet.”

Speakers from the AA Polar Research Lab, Google Arts & Culture, UNESCO, BBC Studios, NESTA, The Dots and the British Council, amongst over 20 others, considered the immediate need for design and the design community – across the public and private sectors – to help tackle the most pressing issues of our times, with a particular focus on the changing face of the environment.

Key take aways from the day included:

- A call for the international creative industry to work together to tackle environmental issues, working across borders and disciplines – along with working with big business to activism. Speakers throughout the day identified

entrenched consumerist behaviours as a key contributor to the climate crisis, urging the audience to think deeply about their responsibility as global citizens

- The need for designers to demonstrate that there are alternative paths. In conversation with **Es Devlin**, the renowned architect **Bjarke Ingels** emphasised the importance of innovative design in creating new sustainable systems, saying 'the superpower we have as human beings is that we are able to adapt'
- Ending on a resoundingly positive note, **Mike Gunton's** final session on BBC's Blue Planet, Planet Earth and Dynasties, exemplified design's unique ability to connect with, and reach, audiences on a global, yet personal level. He exhibited how design can tell powerful, poignant stories, which galvanise audiences to take action.

Discussions that followed explored the impact and responsibility that designers have in today's society, and how we can best promote sustainable practice.

**Will Sorrell, Managing Director, London Design Biennale** said, "The Biennale has always been an instrument to look at design's ability to address the most relevant global issues in many different ways. This Summit is about tangible ideas; we've got a genuine opportunity to think about how design can impact on our lives and shape our future - I ask everyone to make the most of this opportunity, to come away with tangible ideas to make positive social and environmental change, which can be developed and evolve."

In an opening keynote, **Margot James MP, Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries**, said: "London is the design capital, so a fitting backdrop for the Biennale. Design thinking can revolutionise our approach to global issues and can be a catalyst for crucial cross border collaboration. I want design to be at the heart of social, economic and social policy, as it helps develop and transform society."

**Justine Simons, Deputy Mayor of London for Culture and Creative Industries**, echoed this sentiment in her talk on political resonance, saying, "The pace and scale of change and challenges as global citizens are unprecedented. Intelligent design can make our lives easier, thoughtful design can improve our neighbourhoods and great design can make an impact."

Discussions included:

- The role design can play in proposing potential solutions to climate change and sustainability was explored by leading thinkers in **Environmental Resonance**. Chaired by Stephen Jamieson, Head of Sustainable Business Innovation SAP, the session included Ben Parker, Creative Director and Founder, Made Thought; Francesco Bandarin, Joint Coordinator, AA Polar Research Lab, former Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO; Angela Chan, Climate Change Communicator, Worm: art + ecology; and Sara Grahn, Partner, White Arkitekter.
- **The Resonance of the Biennale** was discussed by Dr Christopher Turner, Keeper of Design, Architecture and Digital, V&A; HE Ms Baiba Braze, Ambassador of Latvia to the United Kingdom; Priya Khanchandani, Editor, ICON Magazine; and Jay Osgerby, Founder, Barber & Osgerby; looking at the role of the Biennale

in forging international relationships, as well as the multiple stories that the Biennale can tell through its global exhibitors.

- Justine Simons, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries; Meherunnisa Asad, Director of the Lel Collection; Eliza Easton, Head of Policy at NESTA; Alex Marshall, Cultural European Reporter, New York Times; and Sarah Mann, Director of ADF, British Council; spoke about **Political Resonance** – the relationship between design and politics across the globe, as well as the role design can play in harnessing diversity.
- The connections between design, data and the digital world were confronted by Suhair Khan, Google Arts & Culture; Greg Williams, Editor, WIRED UK; Lucy Hardcastle, Director, Lucy Hardcastle Studio; and Pip Jamieson, Founder, The Dots. **Digital Resonance** looked at human creativity and spontaneity versus the capabilities of the ever-expanding digital world.
- Es Devlin & celebrated architect Bjarke Ingels were in conversation, looking to the future of sustainable development practices that bring architecture, design, urbanism and nature together, and the responsibility that designers have in legacies for future generations.
- Mike Gunton, Creative Director, BBC Natural History Unit - the world's largest production unit dedicated to wildlife filmmaking - led a keynote speech on the power and reach of programmes such as Blue Planet and Planet Earth to resonate with, and change perspectives of, audiences internationally.

The Summit concluded yesterday, 26 June, with a series of surgery sessions, workshops and guided tours building on discussions at Somerset House.

Please find the full list of speakers, images and assets [here](#)

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### About London Design Biennale

Established in 2016 by Sir John Sorrell CBE and Ben Evans CBE, London Design Biennale is a prestigious biannual event and a highlight on the global cultural calendar. The 2018 Biennale welcomed the world's most exciting and ambitious designers, innovators and cultural bodies to the capital with over 200,000 visitors to Somerset House over the three-week period.

The third edition of London Design Biennale, 8-27 September 2020, will be curated by Artistic Director Es Devlin. Taking over the entirety of Somerset House, including the Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court and River Terrace, participants will respond to the theme, Resonance.

### About Google Arts & Culture

Google Arts & Culture puts the collections of more than 1,800 museums at your fingertips. It's an immersive way to explore art, history and the wonders of the world, from Van Gogh's bedroom paintings to the women's rights movement and the Taj Mahal. The Google Arts & Culture app is free and available online for iOS and Android. Our team has been an innovation partner for cultural institutions since 2011. We develop technologies that help preserve and share culture and allow curators to create engaging exhibitions online and offline, inside museums.

Read about our latest projects on the Google Keyword blog.

### About Es Devlin OBE

Es Devlin OBE practises across the worlds of art, opera, music and technology.

She is known for creating large-scale performative sculptures and environments that fuse technology and poetry. Her luminous fluorescent red Please Feed The Lion sculpture roared AI-generated collective poetry to crowds in Trafalgar Square in September 2018 for London Design Festival. The Singing Tree, a collective choral installation at the Victoria and Albert Museum, merged machine-learning with sound and light in 2017. The 2016 Mirrormaze in Peckham, London, and 2017 ROOM 2022 at Miami Art Basel both explored reflective labyrinthine narratives and geometries.

Devlin has conceived touring stage sculptures for Beyoncé, U2, The Weeknd, Adele and Kanye West, and collaborated with celebrated theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli on an interpretation of his book *The Order of Time*, read by actor Benedict Cumberbatch, at BOLD Peckham in September 2018.

Es Devlin has pioneered an artistically and technically ambitious approach to her practice that bridges the gap between audience and performance, often using surface, light, projection and reflection to create dramatic and ambiguous spatial and psychological environments.

Devlin's work was the subject of a documentary in the Netflix series *Abstract: The Art of Design*, and she has recently been named winner of the much-coveted commission to design the UK Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai. The 2020 PoemPavilion will continue to explore the concept of the AI-generated collective poetry first conceived with Hans Ulrich Obrist at London's Serpentine Galleries in 2017.

### About Somerset House

A unique part of London's cultural scene, Somerset House is a 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 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 accompanying extensive learning programmes.

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 creative projects and collaboration, promoting work that pushes bold ideas, engages with urgent issues and pioneers new technologies. Somerset House is one of the biggest communities of creative organisations in the capital, including The Courtauld Gallery and Institute of Art, King's College London Cultural Institute and over 100 other creative businesses. It currently attracts approximately 3.2 million visitors each year.