

NO COMPLY: SKATE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 11 June – Tuesday 18 August 2020



**Part of the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series
Terrace Rooms, South Wing
Free Admission**

This summer, Somerset House presents **No Comply**, a free exhibition exploring the phenomena of skateboarding and the impact of its culture and communities on the UK over the past 45 years. Through the work of leading photographers, designers and filmmakers, *No Comply* celebrates the country's vibrant and diverse skateboarding scene, documenting the transformative influence the subculture has played in shaping people, cities and culture in the UK, and beyond.

No Comply is curated by Somerset House and Tory Turk, from an original idea by Frankie Shea, with expert insight from acclaimed British skateboarder and Somerset House Visitor Experience Manager Helena Long. Contributors include **Alex Turnball, Bedir Bekar, Ben Powell, Betongpark, Blast Skates, Brixton's Baddest, Daryl Mersom, Dan Buck Joyce, Dan Magee, David 'Dog' Vivaldini, Far Skate, Free Movement, George Booth-Cole, Henry Kingsford, Iain Borden, Jenna Selby, Lovenskate, Marc Vallée, Matt Lloyd, Norma Ibarra, Palomino, RaD Archive, Reece Leung, Rich Gilligan, Rich West, Rom Boys, Sam Ashley, Skate Nottingham, Skate Pal, Stu Maclure and Wig Worland.**

Highlights include:

- Striking imagery from the community's foremost photographers, including **Wig Worland, Sam Ashley, Henry Kingsford, Rich West, Reece Leung, Norma Ibarra, Jenna Selby** and **Rich Gilligan** spanning across three decades
- **New original films**, specially commissioned by Somerset House, exploring themes such as the freedom of skateboarding, its community spirit and individual sense of style

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- Archive objects and photography exploring the influence of skatewear on skateboarding's collective identity as well as mainstream **fashion trends**, featuring brands such as **Palace Skateboards**
- Inspiring case studies from the UK and beyond of **grassroots campaigns and non-profit initiatives** helping to promote positive change through skateboarding, including **SkatePal** and **Freedom Movement**

“Skateboarding is finally being seen in its true light: at once critical and caring, rebellious and entrepreneurial, non-conformist and mainstream.”

Iain Borden, Writer and Cultural Historian

Up and down the country, skateboarding is thriving. Nationally, there are currently over 750,000 skateboarders, 1,500 active skateparks, and for the first time in history, skateboarding will make its debut at the 2020 Olympics Games in Tokyo, providing skaters from across the UK the chance of competing for the very first time. Yet despite its prevalence, the story of skateboarding's longstanding influence has remained under the radar. Bringing together film, sound, art, fashion, design, photography and archive material, *No Comply* seeks to unpack the dynamic story of skateboarding in the UK, through three enduring themes that define the subculture's ethos: **the city as playground, skateboarding communities** and **D.I.Y. culture**.

Arranged across three rooms, specially developed by creative practice **Studio LP**, *No Comply* invites visitors to reimagine the urban landscape which surrounds them, with works exploring and documenting the ways in which skateboarders occupy, reclaim and repurpose regimented urban spaces into sites of creativity and play. With works spanning from 1970s to present day, *No Comply* features images from some of the community's foremost photographers, including **Wig Worland, Sam Ashley, Henry Kingsford, Rich West, Reece Leung, Norma Ibarra, Jenna Selby** and **Rich Gilligan** whose works capture skateboarding scenes across the UK, from Nottingham, Somerset, Woking, Manchester, Leeds, Bristol and Oxford to the UK's most established skate parks such as Stockwell, ROM, Dean Lane, Southsea, Knebworth, Buszy Skate Plaza and Livingston. With film and video playing a key role in enabling skaters to document their local scenes, the exhibition will feature a selection of new films specially commissioned by Somerset House, exploring the freedoms and joys of riding a skateboard, its community spirit and embodiment of independence and difference.

Drawing upon skateboarding's D.I.Y. ethos of interdependence, creativity and resourcefulness which has always been at the heart of skateboard culture, *No Comply* also examines the significance of print culture in shaping the face of the UK skate scene. Visitors are invited to explore early editions of independent titles such as **Alpine Sports, Read and Destroy** and

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Architectural Digest whose mapping of skatespots provided an invaluable resource in connecting skaters from across the UK in the 1970s & 80s. Recent publications made by skaters for skaters embody the creative and rebellious spirit of skateboarding, with publications including **Vague Mag**, **Confusion**, **Concussion**, **Do I Look Like I Care**, **Blood Fever**, **Mersey Grit**, **Dog Piss**, **Faces and Places** and **Snotty Kid** available to view.

No Comply explores how skateboarding continues to influence the mainstream, permeating the world of fashion and video games. Visitors will discover how design continues to define the subculture's collective identity, exploring the origins of the influential skater-owned **Palace Skateboards**, whose laidback yet playful style has attracted a global following. Audiences will also have the chance to test out their skills with the first video game created to give players the chance to experience street skateboarding in a UK location, **Thrasher: Skate and Destroy by British Publisher Rockstar Games** (1999).

Throughout the exhibition, *No Comply* spotlights stories from skate communities in the UK and beyond, from inspiring initiatives promoting positive change through skateboarding, to the preservation of sites in which the communities are formed and maintained. The exhibition tells the story of one of the most successful UK grassroots campaigns for creative space in recent decades, **Long Live Southbank**. Told through archival objects, photographs and personal anecdotes, the exhibition will explore how skateboarding's grassroots community, artists and general public came together to protect the Undercroft at the Southbank Centre, 'British skateboarding's most precious home'¹ from closure.

Further highlights include stories of non-profit initiatives beyond the UK, such as **Freedom Movement** and **SkatePal**, working to incite positive change, providing skating supplies and lessons for everyone to enjoy, no matter their age, gender or background, as told through personal objects of skateboarders travelling abroad to share their passion. The exhibition also looks at progression within the subculture, with members working to increase awareness around gender notions within the community, from genderqueer skate zine **XEM Skaters**, whose materials provide visibility for non-binary, queer and trans-skaters, to skateboarding magazine **Skateism**, which helps to provide a platform for LGBTQ+, female, and non-western skaters.

To coincide with the exhibition, South London's leading skate shop and community hub **Brixton's Baddest** and online retailer of independent, skateboarder-owned brands, **Palomino** will bring a specially curated pop-up store to Somerset House, where visitors can purchase the very latest in skate hardware, clothing, publications, videos and accessories. An accompanying *No Comply* publication, featuring a new essay from curator, Tory Turk, will also be available to purchase.

¹ Iain Borden, *Skateboarding and the City: A Complete History*, 266.

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A programme of monthly gallery lates, screenings and exhibitor talks will accompany *No Comply*, delving deeper into the themes explored within the exhibition. To coincide with the exhibition's opening and launch of **Somerset House's Youth Collective**, which brings together creatives aged 18-30 to collaborate, co-produce and develop their skills, Studios artists **OOMK** will work together with the Youth Collective to create a new flag to fly above the Somerset House courtyard, alongside a manifesto, which celebrates the changing shape of our communities, encouraging ideas of self-expression and freedom.

The Youth Collective will also work with Somerset House Studios resident artist **Seth Pimlott** to create an original short film inspired by the skateboarding community, ideas of creative content, collectives and the world we live in, which will be exclusively screened each evening as part of Somerset House's Film4 Summer Screen programme this August.

No Comply will be the next exhibition in the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series, an ongoing partnership with the leading law firm to present a wide range of free exhibitions reflecting the broad interests of both organisations.

FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:
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Charing Cross, Waterloo, Blackfriars

Website: www.somerset-house.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook:

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Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Hashtag: #NoComply

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. 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.

ABOUT THE CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS TERRACE ROOM SERIES

The Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series of free exhibitions profiles the work of living artists in one of the most

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accessible spaces at Somerset House, bringing the public into contact with a diverse and engaging range of creative thinkers. The series provides a platform for artists to develop and amplify the messages within their practice and engage openly with Somerset House's visitors. Every exhibition in the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room series is free and contributes to our on-going commitment to public access and engagement with arts and culture.

ABOUT CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

Charles Russell Speechlys works with clients in the UK and throughout the world. Our lawyers are based in 11 locations across the UK, Europe, Asia and the Middle East and through each of these locations clients are able to access the full range of the firm's skills and expertise.

We have a broad range of skills and experience across the full spectrum of business and personal needs. This gives us a wider perspective, clear insight and a strongly commercial long-term view.

It has made us a leader in the world of dynamic growth and family businesses, and among the world's leading creators and owners of private wealth and their families. Major corporates and institutions find our more considered and personal approach a refreshing alternative to conventional business law firms. www.charlesrussellspeechlys.com