

SOMERSET HOUSE PRESS RELEASE

The Influence Project
27 June - 22 August 2018
East Wing Galleries
Free



© Alexis Chabala

New exhibition premieres photographic portraits of R&B, Funk, Soul, Afrobeat and Hip Hop pioneers

This summer, Somerset House is proud to present *The Influence Project*, a new photography exhibition celebrating the impact that leading black musicians have had on contemporary sound and culture.

Congolese, London-based photographer **Alexis Chabala** and producer **Lorayne Crawford** have captured the characters of both icons and contemporary artists through captivating portraiture, film and sound, to offer visitors a unique and important interpretation of musical history. Featuring photographs shot since 2014, *The Influence Project* will investigate the connections between these established and emerging pioneers, reaching across time to shape the sound that we hear today.

The exhibition chronicles pioneering voices of the mid to late 20th century music scene including revolutionary R&B influencer and the force behind the Parliament/Funkadelic machine, **George Clinton**; international stars of disco, **Sister Sledge**; legendary soul singer and four-time Grammy Award nominee, **Candi Staton**; Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee **Bill Withers**; and **Shuggie Otis**, the 'Heir to Hendrix' whose hit record *Strawberry Letter 23*, famously covered by The Brothers Johnson, was used by Quentin Tarantino for the *Jackie Brown* soundtrack and sampled in 2003 by Beyoncé.

Contemporary artists include Dr Dre protégé, **Anderson .Paak**, alongside previous *Somerset House Summer Series* headline performers such as British singer-songwriter and winner of two MOBO awards, **Laura Mvula**; the free-thinking pianist, **Robert Glasper**, who has dominated the Jazz charts, won two Grammy Awards, and recorded with the likes of Mos Def, Kanye West, and Kendrick Lamar; and **Aloe Blacc**, the chart-topping musician known for his singles 'I Need a Dollar' and 'The Man'. The legendary hip hop collective and one of this year's Summer Series highlights, **The Roots**, have also been photographed for the exhibition.

Celebrating artists through the ages addressing social issues using their music, the exhibition also includes **Kojoy Radical**, hailed as 'One to Watch' by The Guardian for the young British poet's drive to create socially conscious rap music, and **Rapsody**, the only woman nominated for Best Rap Album at this year's Grammy awards – an album tackling war, drug abuse, gender dynamics and police violence.

Portraits will be accompanied by quotes and details, highlighting the history and the significance of their music throughout the generations. From literal and direct forms of sampling, to the role of mentors and role models, the exhibition will explore the range of ways musical innovators have influenced today's

artists, and how they in turn might inspire the next generation – creatively, socially and politically. The show will also include a new film featuring artists talking candidly on camera about their inspirations and the ongoing challenges of appropriation, whilst a unique soundtrack will fill the gallery floor.

The Influence Project will form part of the ***East Wing Edit***, a summer of exhibitions, talks, pop-ups, events and workshops, delving deeper into the stories showcased in Somerset House's season of music, film, independent print and contemporary circus performances. All taking place in Somerset House's East Wing, the *East Wing Edit* includes discussions and performances from key musicians involved in the exhibition, including a performance from American R&B legend, **Lalah Hathaway** and a week-long pop up from **#RealMusicRebels**, a collective of socially conscious artists, co-founded by Hathaway, spearheading the movement for musical integrity and activism. Ambassadors include Robert Glasper, Christian Scott and Shabaka Hutchings.

The exhibition will also be exclusively accessible to holders of Summer Series Enhanced Tickets in the evenings during each live performance at this year's festival.

For press enquiries, please contact:

Frances Teehan, Senior Press Officer on press@somersethouse.org.uk / 0207 845 4624

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Dates: 27 June – 22 August 2018

Times: Times vary, please check the website for more details

Tickets: Free

Address: East Wing Galleries, Somerset House, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA

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

Website: www.somersethouse.org.uk

Somerset House Facebook: www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse

Somerset House Twitter: @SomersetHouse

Somerset House Instagram: @SomersetHouse

Hashtag: #InfluenceProject

About Somerset House

Inspiring contemporary culture

A unique part of the London cultural scene, Somerset House is an 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 a 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 an extensive learning programme attached. 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 new creative projects and collaboration, promoting work that pushes bold ideas, engages with urgent issues and pioneers new technologies. Somerset House is also one of the biggest community of creative organisations in London including The Courtauld Gallery and Institute of Art, King's College London Cultural Institute and over 100 other creative businesses. It currently attracts approximately 3.4 million visitors every year. www.somersethouse.org.uk

About Alexis Chabala

Alexis Chabala is an independent photographer based in London. Having studied Fine Art & Photography in Brussels, Alexis worked at Metro Imaging Studio and Arie Media & Panavision before pursuing his personal projects. Since then, Alexis has worked with clients such as Wallpaper, Tatler, Muse Magazine, Viewpoint, Men's Health, Luxure Magazine, Burberry, Clam Magazine, Volt Cafe, Abbey Road Studios, and many others.

About Lorayne Crawford

Driven by a passion for music since childhood, Lorayne Crawford has extensive experience in the music industry, including over ten years working as Artist Liaison for some of the UK's largest summer music festivals. Lorayne has worked on major television projects such as Channel 4's Power into Art documentary on the conversion of London's Bankside Power Station into the Tate, and a two-part documentary on the construction of the International Space Station.