
London Design Biennale

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is London Design Biennale?

London Design Biennale is a major design exhibition hosted at Somerset House, London. Now in its third edition, the event will take place from 7 – 27 September 2020.

Exhibiting nations will form an international network of global design countries and territories, each invited to take part to celebrate their unique cultural identity in the field of design.

2. What is the theme for 2020 and how should I respond to it?

Each design installation should express its national design identity in response to the central theme, “Resonance”. Under the artistic direction of award-winning artist and designer Es Devlin, participants are asked to respond to this theme, which she presents as follows:

We live in an age of hyper resonance, the consequences of which are both exhilarating and devastating. Everything we design and everything we produce resonates. Each idea we generate has the power to reach a mass digital audience undreamt of by previous generations, while the lifespans of the physical products we create often endure long beyond our own. Whether in the social media feeds of millions or in the bellies of marine animals, our ideas and our objects stick around.

Designers have the power to influence and amaze their audiences into profound shifts of perspective, using the mass networks available to them to resonate ideas and practices to help build a more sustainable future. Creative thinkers, artists and makers also face the intractable dilemma that they use resources to talk about the problem of the overconsumption of resources.

The world’s most ambitious nations and territories will have the extraordinary opportunity to exhibit the best of their design talent and creative culture, and to make valuable connections at government, business and public level.

3. What are the benefits of taking part in London Design Biennale?

With a global reach of international contacts through our media channels and press, London Design Biennale is an unrivalled opportunity to promote national design identity on a world stage. The network of participant nations will gain international recognition and profile, forge links with a new generation of global leaders and creators and be part of a global conversation about design's socio-economic role in our collective future.

By exhibiting at the Biennale, countries and territories will position themselves in the vanguard of global innovation and creativity.

4. Where is the London Design Biennale held?

The Biennale is held in London's Somerset House. Somerset House is a historic Grade 1 listed building in Central London. It is one of the top ten most visited attractions in London with 3.4 million visitors annually. It has a track record of hosting large, ambitious and international cultural events and a well-established infrastructure for supporting exhibitors.

5. What are the expected audiences for the event?

The second London Design Biennale in 2018 welcomed 32,000 ticketed visitors and 200,000 public visitors over the three-week run. We expect this to grow to 40,000 visitors for the 2020 edition. Our audience includes the international design community, business leaders, journalists, opinion formers, diplomats and trade officials, and also provides a highly accessible way to appreciate the power of design for those outside of the creative sector. September is at the centre of London's cultural calendar, and as such, the Biennale is well placed to benefit from this.

6. What are the networking opportunities before and during the Biennale?

The Biennale will welcome 50 countries in 2020. This diverse gathering of international participants and designers provides an incredible opportunity for networking and cross-disciplinary discussion of the value of design.

A large-scale launch event to celebrate the opening will be attended by VIPs, dignitaries, senior press, and international figures of eminence. All participating countries will be invited to be a part of this celebration.

Medals will be awarded to the best national contributions at a special ceremony.

7. Will participants be able to host their own events?

Embassies and partner organisations from each country and territory will have the chance to stage their own bespoke receptions at the Biennale and will be able to hire some of Somerset House's most elegant spaces, such as the Portico Rooms with their striking river and courtyard views at preferential rates. This will be conducted on a first-come first-served basis.

8. What are the commercial opportunities for participants?

We encourage partnerships to be forged at London Design Biennale. It is an important opportunity for countries to celebrate and market their cultural assets and put a national designer or design practice on the world stage. We encourage all participating countries to foster new business relationships and creative partnerships during the event.

Many installations from the 2016 and 2018 Biennales established a legacy for participants with some designs being exhibited at subsequent international exhibitions or being added to national collections.

The Biennale is also an opportunity for each project's partners and sponsors to engage with the Biennale community and programme, so as to establish new connections in the UK and abroad.

9. What opportunities are there to raise awareness for the project?

Our international communication campaign reaches millions of people worldwide, through our newsletter, social media, website, advertising and comprehensive coverage on TV, radio and in print.

In particular, participants will receive significant digital exposure to the London Design Biennale online community of 670,000.

The Biennale will operate a comprehensive cross-channel promotional communication campaign.

The Biennale is a truly global stage and the presentations of our participating countries will be part of a visual conversation that will be captured, shared and amplified all over the world. Additionally, a catalogue will be published to accompany the Biennale and will feature all participating countries.

10. Can participants work with sponsors?

Yes – we strongly encourage participants to work with sponsors to fund and realise projects. Sponsors will be appropriately credited and will receive a set of benefits, which the London Design Biennale team is available to discuss in more detail.

11. How much will it cost to take part in the Biennale? What is covered in these costs?

Participation fees start at 6,000 GBP +VAT and scale upwards depending on the size and location of the space secured over the three-week exhibition.

Participation fees cover exhibition space, a marketing and communications package, as well as support and advice from our team. To request a price list of available spaces, please contact Elisa Bramati, International Relations and Programmes Manager (elisa@londondesignbiennale.com).

A deposit of 5,000 GBP +VAT, deductible from the overall participation fee, will be required to accompany each country's project once selected by London Design Biennale. The final instalment is expected at the time of the final design submission.

Other costs will vary depending on the scale and detail of the project administered. We will distribute a manual of approved contractors, insurers and shipping agents to help participants finalise costs. Costs to be covered by the participating countries include:

- Fees to design teams;
- Material and production costs;
- Project management and delivery;
- Packing and shipping;
- Insurance;
- Permissions and copyright;
- Installation and de-installation;
- Costs associated to individually hosted receptions and events at Somerset House.

12. Can design installations that have been exhibited elsewhere be involved?

We expect entries to be newly commissioned works but will consider proposals that develop pre-existing creative projects. In all cases, the installation must relate to our theme.

Installations should be site-specific for the galleries and rooms at the Biennale's venue. Installations may vary in size, from the intimate and domestic, to the more architectural.

13. Are there any special considerations regarding exhibiting at Somerset House?

Somerset House is a Grade 1 listed building and, as such, extreme care must be taken during the install, live and de-rig periods. You will be required to work with Approved Contractors for any work which may affect the fabric of the building.

Please note that all participants are required to appoint a Project Manager from the offset, who will be responsible for co-ordinating the project, and managing the budget.

14. Can participants select an exhibition space at Somerset House?

Participants can express a preference, and the London Design Biennale Project Team with the curation of the Artistic Director are available to advise on the spaces that best meet their requirements.

15. What kind of assistance is provided by the London Design Biennale team?

The London Design Biennale team is available to assist you with each step of your application. The Project Team will work collaboratively with participating countries and territories to match participants with the most effective exhibition space at Somerset House to meet the requirements of their design proposal and budget.

16. Do the designer and/or contributors have to be the same nationality of the country they are representing?

No, but the designer and/or contributors should have a demonstrable or credible connection to the country they represent and be supported by a recognised national organisation.

17. What are the next steps?

Official applications will open on the London Design Biennale website www.londondesignbiennale.com on 8 March 2019 and will be accessible to all categories of applicants until 1 July 2019.

Diplomatic Offices and Cultural Institutions:

From January 2019 administering bodies can contact Elisa Bramati, International Relations and Programmes Manager (elisa@londondesignbiennale.com or +44 203 7946783) to request more information and reserve a space.

When applying online, diplomatic offices and cultural institutions will be asked to provide their contact details.

Independent curators and designers:

Independent curators and designers who wish to submit a design proposal will be asked to describe how it responds to the theme and engages with the Biennale audience, and to provide an initial budget, partnership and funding plan.

Successful applicants will be notified within a few weeks after the closing date and will receive further guidelines from the London Design Biennale Project Team.

18. Timeline

January 2019 onwards

Secure participation

From January 2019, Diplomatic Offices and Institutions can secure their country's participation in the London Design Biennale.

08 March 2019

Submission: Applications Open

Online applications open. Here you must include information regarding the design team, funding strategy and initial design concept. This is the first formal step to register your interest in taking part and preliminary design concept, including space requirements.

March – June 2019

Design Development: Consultancy Phase

Development of design concepts. London Design Biennale team will be available for guidance and advice during the application phase including exhibition space requirements; and to support diplomatic offices and institutions with open calls.

3 May 2019

Deadline to receive free tickets to the Symposium

Participants who have returned a deposit by this date will receive three complimentary tickets to the London Design Biennale Symposium.

25-26 June 2019

Symposium

1 July 2019

Submission: Design Concept & Return of Deposit

Return deposit and submit detailed design concept, including sketches, images, prototypes, references and inspirations. Applications will be assessed, and teams will be formally notified within a few weeks regarding their participation.

8 July 2019

Applications' Review

Applications will be assessed, and teams will be formally notified within a few weeks regarding their participation. Second deposit will be invoiced.

July – December 2019

Design Development: Feasibility

Successful participants will receive a second review with the Artistic Director. Detailed conversations between Design Teams and London Design Biennale team, to address any feasibility concerns. Feedback to strengthen proposals in advance of final design submissions, and installation queries addressed.

12 December 2019

Submission: Final Design Proposal & Remaining Participation Fee Participants submit their final design proposal – a detailed plan and elevation view, with information on materials, and any AV requirements. Remaining participation fee is invoiced.

January – April 2020

Project Development: Contractor / Fabrication quotes

We will put you in touch with Somerset House Approved Contractors to receive quotes for installation, fabrication & shipping; and guide you through the detail of making your project a reality, and ensuring you have all the information required for the Final Project Submission.

May – July 2020

Design Production

Ongoing work on installation fabrication and design production. Completion of all necessary paperwork for London Design Biennale and Somerset House Health & Safety teams.

July – start of August 2020

Freight to London

Deliveries to arrive in London by mid-August so they can be consolidated before being delivered to Somerset House together.

1 - 6 September 2020

Installation at Somerset House

Access during these dates will depend on the installation schedule.

7 September 2020

London Design Biennale Key events

Medal Ceremony and Opening Event – our most important, invite only events (schedule to be confirmed).

08 – 27 September 2020

London Design Biennale 2020

Biennale is open to press and public.

27 – 30 September 2020

Deinstallation at Somerset House

Access during these dates will depend on the deinstallation schedule.

* The dates set out are subject to adjustments. Further correspondence from the London Design Biennale Project Team should be closely noted.

SELECT OVERVIEW 2018



AUSTRALIA: FULL SPECTRUM

DESIGN TEAM: FLYNN TALBOT LTD ADMINISTERING BODY: AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION, UNITED KINGDOM
MEZZANINE INSTALLATION

USA: FACE VALUES

ADMINISTERING BODY: COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM
EMOTIONAL STATES MEDAL WINNER



LEBANON: THE SILENT ROOM

DESIGNER: NATHALIE HARB
TERRACE INSTALLATION

GUATEMALA: PALOPÓ

DESIGN TEAM: OLIVERO BLAND STUDIO WITH ZYLE ADMINISTERING BODY: EMBASSY OF GUATEMALA IN THE UK PUBLIC MEDAL WINNER

