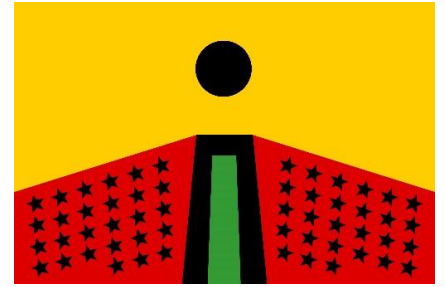


# SOMERSET HOUSE PRESS RELEASE



## SOMERSET HOUSE CELEBRATES A SEASON OF AFRICAN ART WITH SPECIAL COMMISSIONS

### **HASSAN HAJJAJ: LA CARAVANE**

Part of the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series

**5 October 2017 – 7 January 2018**

**Terrace Rooms, Somerset House**

**Free Entry**

### **LARRY ACHIAMPONG: RELIC TRAVELLER**

**25 July 2017 – 31 January 2018**

**A new Somerset House flag commission**

*Somerset House to host a season of exhibitions and events, talks and new commissions to celebrate African Art this autumn*

### **HASSAN HAJJAJ: LA CARAVANE**

From 5 October, Somerset House and *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair*, are proud to present *Hassan Hajjaj: La Caravane*, a homecoming exhibition of the British-Moroccan artist, showcasing his vibrant fusion of contemporary cultures through new and celebrated works. The exhibition will then continue beyond *1:54* as a standalone show throughout Somerset House's winter season.

The exhibition will be the first UK solo show of his work in seven years, celebrating his multi-layered works which fuse traditional and contemporary North African culture with familiar Western imagery and iconography.

Born and raised in Larache, Morocco, Hajjaj moved to London aged twelve and his artistic practice sees him spend much of his life travelling between these two countries and cultures. His artworks reflect his neo-nomadic lifestyle and the relationships he has formed with a variety of characters along the way, from musicians to artists and athletes to street performers. These individuals inspire Hajjaj's diverse artworks from photographic portraits to video installations, sculptures, music, design and handcrafted objects.

Infused with a bold palette, the materials Hajjaj uses include patterned textiles, furniture, clothes and props often created by the artist to inform our understanding of the person in the image. All of these elements, including the frames made out of everyday items in which his images sit, are chosen deliberately to highlight these individuals' identities.

He is perhaps best known for his colourful photographic portraits, including the *Kesh Angels* series, from which there will be several new works in the exhibition. Blending the glossy aesthetic of a fashion shoot with Moroccan tradition and street culture, these witty and poignant images, although outwardly light-hearted, challenge Western perceptions of the hijab and female disempowerment.

Another new body of work in the exhibition is *My Rock Stars: Volume 2*, a nine screen installation of distinctively dressed musicians. Each musician occupies an individual screen and takes it in turns to play their instrument, while the other performers turn to watch. The clothes and brightly patterned backdrops in each screen have been carefully selected by Hajjaj to highlight each player and their individual

performance. Visitors can view the performances from Hajjaj's signature *Le Salon* installation, which takes the form of a customised sofa, whilst the music travels throughout the whole exhibition.

A number of public events will accompany Hassan Hajjaj's exhibition. Somerset House is delighted to welcome writer and broadcaster **Ekow Eshun** to join Hassan Hajjaj in conversation on 5 October. Eshun will explore the multifaceted nature of Hajjaj's work, and how the artist assimilates different worlds, cultures and individuals into his work. Eshun has also contributed to a full colour catalogue to coincide with the exhibition, available at £9.95.

On 6 January a free special event will take place to celebrate the final weekend of the exhibition and Somerset House's season of African Art, including live music and a family workshop inspired by elements of Hajjaj's work.

The exhibition will be the first 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.

## **LARRY ACHIAMPONG: PAN AFRICAN FLAG FOR THE RELIC TRAVELLERS' ALLIANCE A NEW SOMERSET HOUSE FLAG COMMISSION**

On the occasion of Hassan Hajjaj's exhibition and *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair*, Somerset House has commissioned one of its Studios residents to create a flag to fly over its famous courtyard for the duration of Hajjaj's exhibition.

British-Ghanaian artist Larry Achiampong was one of the first residents to join Somerset House Studios, Somerset House's innovative artist workspace, on its launch in October 2016. His practice employs iconography, aural and visual archives and live performance to explore ideas of cross-cultural and post-digital identity.

In the first of a new series of flag commissions by artists responding to the cultural programme at Somerset House, Achiampong has created a flag which explores Afro-futurism and African diasporic identity. Its design represents 54 stars for the 54 African countries, with a symbolic colour palette including green reflecting the land, red as a reminder of the struggles that the continent has endured and yellow gold to represent a new day and prosperity. Achiampong has configured these colours and symbols into a form suggestive of a human figure in flight; an afro-futuristic icon moving towards unity and equilibrium.

Larry Achiampong's flag was raised above Somerset House on 25 July and is on display for the duration of *1:54* and Hassan Hajjaj's show until 31 January. Achiampong will present a special performance, *Voyage of the Relic Traveller*, in association with his new commission by Somerset House on 5 October at 20:30 in the River Rooms.

For press enquiries and images, please contact:  
[press@somersethouse.org.uk](mailto:press@somersethouse.org.uk) / 020 7845 4624.

Video content, which can be shared on request, can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFGRYGa2mfs> (Produced by Somerset House for *Hassan Hajjaj: La Caravane*; Direction and Editing - Ewan Jones Morris; Camera - Tom Swindell; Music - Hamo Sidi by Simo Lagnawi; Courtesy of World Music Network)

**Ends**

### **Notes to Editors**

**Dates:** Hassan Hajjaj: *La Caravane*: 5 October 2017 - 7 January 2018  
Larry Achiampong: *Relic Traveller*: 25 July 2017 – 31 January 2018

**Open Daily:** Somerset House opening hours: Saturday – Tuesday: 10:00 – 18:00, Wednesday – Friday: 11:00 – 20:00  
Opening times during *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair* may vary – please consult the website for up-to-date information.

**Address:** Terrace Rooms, South Wing, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 1LA

**Admission:** Free

**Transport:** London Underground: Temple, Embankment, Covent Garden; Rail: Charing Cross, Waterloo, Blackfriars

**Somerset House public enquiries:** 020 7845 4600 | [www.somersethouse.org.uk](http://www.somersethouse.org.uk)

**Somerset House Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/SomersetHouse>

**Somerset House Twitter:** @SomersetHouse

**Somerset House Instagram:** @SomersetHouse

**Hashtag:** #HassanHajjaj and #SomersetHouseFlag

### **About Somerset House**

A unique part of the London cultural scene, Somerset House is an historic building where surprising and original work comes to life. From its 18<sup>th</sup>-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.somerset-house.org.uk](http://www.somerset-house.org.uk)

### **About Hassan Hajjaj**

Born 1961 in Laroche, Morocco. Lives and works in London and Marrakesh. Hajjaj's work is in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, NC; the Newark Museum, New Jersey; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the Farjam Collection, Dubai; Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris; Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Tunisia; Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA, and more. The artist lives and works between London, UK and Marrakech, Morocco. Hassan Hajjaj is represented by Vigo Gallery.

### **About 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair**

A reference to fifty-four countries that constitute the African continent, the title of 1:54 establishes the parameters of the fair's ethos as a platform that strives to represent multiplicity and showcase the diversity of contemporary African art and cultural production on an international stage. Initiated by Touria El Glaoui in 2013 in London, 1:54 is the leading art fair in Europe and the United States focusing on contemporary art from Africa and the African Diaspora. May 2016 marked the second edition of 1:54 New York, while 1:54 London will return for the fourth consecutive year from 6 – 9 October 2016 at Somerset House.

### **About Ekow Eshun**

Ekow Eshun is a writer and broadcaster. The former director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, he is Chair of the Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group, overseeing London's most significant public art project. He is a contributor to TV and radio shows including The Today programme, Saturday Review and Channel 4 News and his writing appears in publications including the Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Observer, the New Statesman, Vogue and Wallpaper. His book, Black Gold of the Sun, was nominated for the Orwell Prize for political writing.

### **About Larry Achiampong**

Larry Achiampong's solo and collaborative projects employ imagery, aural and visual archives, live performance and sound to explore ideas surrounding class, cross-cultural and post-digital identity. In particular, unpicking the intersections between pop culture and the postcolonial position. Achiampong has exhibited, performed and presented projects within the UK and abroad including Tate Britain/Modern, London; dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel; The Institute For Creative Arts, Cape Town; The British Film Institute, London; Modern Art Oxford, Oxford; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin; Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation, Accra; The Mistake Room, Los Angeles; Logan Center Exhibitions, Chicago; and 'Diaspora Pavillion – 57th Venice Biennale' (Venice).

### **Relic Traveller**

Relic Traveller is a new multi-disciplinary project by artist Larry Achiampong manifesting in performance, audio, moving image and prose. Taking place across various post-industrial landscapes locations, the piece builds upon a post-colonial perspective informed by technology, agency and the body, and narratives of migration. Relic Traveller builds upon ideas in previous works and takes new approaches, marrying linguistic threads and an original synth-based score to open cinematic landscapes. The title character (who first appeared intermittently in the video component of 'Ph03nix Rising') is a child-like individual that is featured across a seemingly desolate post-industrial United Kingdom uncovering materials and audible data. These fragments present clue-like testimonies of a forgotten Empire. The Relic Traveller soon finds himself in an atmosphere that delivers poetic moments of the sublime with increasing claustrophobia and tales of trauma.

### **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.