

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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Images: available to download [here](#)

The Southbank Centre launches 75th anniversary celebrations with the Pin Drop

- The Pin Drop, a 20 metre-high temporary installation designed by Gareth Pugh and Carson McColl visible across London, kickstarts the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary celebrations and marks the start of *You Are Here*, a sitewide takeover taking place on Sunday 3 May
- Also opened is Skate 50, a multimedia exhibition that celebrates the 50-year history of the Southbank Centre's Undercroft skate space



The Pin Drop, a 20-metre-high temporary installation by Gareth Pugh and Carson McColl, rises above the Southbank Centre as the centrepiece of its 75th anniversary celebrations, launching *You Are Here*, a sitewide takeover taking place on Sunday 3 May © Matt Alexander/PA Media Assignments

LONDON, Friday 1 May 2026 – Celebrating its 75th anniversary at the centre of the UK's cultural landscape, the Southbank Centre today unveils the Pin Drop, a temporary installation that towers over Europe's largest arts centre, marking the start of *You Are Here* – the centrepiece of the 75th anniversary programme.

Designed by Gareth Pugh and Carson McColl, the Pin Drop stands 20 metres tall and is suspended 20 metres from the ground. Echoing the optimism of the Festival of Britain and the area's cultural rebirth in 1951, the Pin Drop draws inspiration from Skylon, a slender,

seemingly floating vertical landmark that became an emblem of post-war renewal on the South Bank.

The Festival of Britain galvanised the nation, using art, science, technology and design to imagine a brighter future after the trauma of World War Two. Taking place from May to September 1951, the Festival kickstarted the regeneration of the South Bank, revitalising the area into a thriving cultural hub. Seventy-five years on, the Southbank Centre is Europe's largest arts centre, welcoming over 11.6 million people a year to its 11-acre site, with over 55% of its programming free for everyone to enjoy.

The Pin Drop stands taller than eight double decker buses and is the length of a cricket pitch. It is made from durable nylon and weighs 360kg. The structure is suspended from a 150-tonne crane, reaching a height of 50 metres at full installation. It is made from 600 square metres of material and incorporates nearly 20,000 individual LEDs, which can illuminate the work during the night.

The work is the largest piece ever produced by Glow Inflatables, based in Sleaford, Lincolnshire and assembled at a partner test facility near Leeds before being transported to the South Bank. The Pin Drop will occupy the site from Thursday 30 April until Monday 4 May, when it will be deinstalled and the fabric reused and turned into merchandise that will be sold at the Southbank Centre Shop.

Gareth Pugh, designer of the Pin Drop and co-creator of You Are Here, said: *"There's a lineage of radical spectacle interrupting the South Bank's skyline, going back 75 years to Skylon in 1951, and the Pin Drop is very much in conversation with that. It's about visibility and presence – a sculptural punctuation mark in the landscape. We wanted this work to feel like a distilled moment of energy and promise: something simple in idea, but charged with optimism – looking outwards across the city, rather than inwards, and saying 'you are here'."*

Carson McColl, designer of the Pin Drop and co-creator of You Are Here, said: *"The Pin Drop is conceived as a moment to interrupt the skyline and rhythm of this city. We were thinking about optimism made visible: a structure that feels both weightless but with clear, emphatic meaning; it hovers like a kind of shared signal. The Pin Drop aims to not just occupy space but change the way you look at that space, and your own place within it."*

Jenny Hutchinson, Creative Director of Glow Inflatables, said: *"The Pin Drop is a striking fusion of inflatable architecture and light, suspended from a crane to create a bold presence in the skyline. At 20 metres, it's the largest inflatable we've made so far and a great example of how much we enjoy taking on new challenges and pushing what's*

possible. Inside, a carefully built structure of LEDs creates a soft, even glow, turning the piece from a sculptural form in the day into a dramatic light form at night. The scale and illumination give it a real sense of weightlessness, transforming the space around it."

London's Deputy Mayor for Culture & the Creative Industries, Justine Simons OBE, visited the installation of the Pin Drop, meeting Londoners Anne Jones (84), John Laing (88) and Brian Everitt (82) who attended the Festival of Britain in 1951 as children.

The Deputy Mayor also met the creative team behind *You Are Here* alongside a number of performers from Southbank Centre Resident Organisation Kinetica Bloco, who are taking part in the anniversary extravaganza.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: *"London is a global cultural capital and for 75 years the Southbank Centre has been at the heart of this success. A much-loved cultural institution it has showcased incredible talent, nurtured new creative voices, entertained and inspired millions of audiences. Irreverent and bold, this celebration is a fitting way to mark this historic moment and launch the exciting events to come this year."*

You Are Here is created by leading voices across film, theatre, literature and fashion – **Gareth Pugh, Carson McColl, Danny Boyle** and **Paulette Randall**, with **Sabrina Mahfouz** and **Natasha Chivers**, transforming the Southbank Centre in a one-day, sitewide experience: an immersive fusion of theatrical performance, live music, dance, fashion and visual art that reveals the throughlines between cultural movements that have shifted Britain's kaleidoscopic identity.

You Are Here takes place on Sunday 3 May - 75 years to the day since the Royal Festival Hall opened its doors to the public, the first chapter in the story of the Southbank Centre.

Paulette Randall, co-creator of You Are Here, said: *"You Are Here is fundamentally a story about who we are as a country, told on an ambitious, collective scale. It brings together a team of storytellers to create something that feels both epic and deeply personal, reflecting the many voices and experiences that have shaped Britain's cultural life. It's a special opportunity to bring to life a colossal work that invites audiences to see themselves within that shared narrative."*

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, said: *"The Festival of Britain in 1951 was the moment after the war that the UK transformed from black and white into glorious technicolour. From day one, the Southbank Centre has continued in that spirit - offering a vibrant, optimistic, forward-looking energy. The Pin Drop marks the start of a summer of extraordinary fun, open to everyone - from You Are Here and Skate 50 to Harry*

Style's Meltdown, Anish Kapoor's landmark exhibition and Dua Lipa's London Literature Festival. There's never been a better time to visit the Southbank Centre and experience culture in all its forms. As we mark our 75th anniversary, this moment reflects both past and future: open, experimental and shaped by the cultural pioneers of this country."

As part of her visit to the Southbank Centre, the Deputy Mayor also attended **Skate 50** (30 April - 21 June), a multimedia exhibition telling the 50-year history of the iconic skateboarding space and the communities it has fostered over the past half century. Developed alongside active members of the Southbank skate community, **Skate 50** will include new commissions utilising photography, moving image and sound to delve into the stories that have shaped one of the most recognisable spaces in skate culture.

From archive footage, to fashion-forward portraiture of the noughties and contemporary depictions of the skate space today, **Skate 50** presents a variety of documentary style films made up of moving image and photography, interspersed with stop-frame animations and soundscapes to tell the story of the Undercroft Skate Space. Keeping the skate community at the heart of the project, **Skate 50** stems from a series of workshops facilitated by filmmaker Winstan Whitter, bringing together different generations who have used the space over the years to identify notable events across the five decades.

Filmmaker and skateboarder Winstan Whitter, said: *"The South Bank Undercroft offered me a space I could hold with my friends, to fully express myself growing up there in my early teens to adulthood. It's an extremely important space for young people, to have free spaces they can hold which is still echoed today and beyond"*

You Are Here and Skate 50 are part of the landmark 2026 season at the Southbank Centre. Channelling the founding spirit of the 1951 Festival of Britain, a moment of national renewal and optimistic energy, the 75th anniversary season also includes **Harry Styles' Meltdown** (11 - 21 June), **London Literature Festival** (21 October - 1 November) curated by **Dua Lipa**, **Goalhanger: The Rest Is Fest** (4 - 6 September), **Anish Kapoor** returning to the Hayward Gallery (16 June - 18 October) and **Creative Intelligence** (11 - 13 September), a weekend takeover exploring the intersection of creativity and technology.

The Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary also includes a national programme of art, literature and music - aiming to reach one million people in over 40 towns and cities across all four nations of the UK.

For more information about the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary celebrations, visit the 75th Anniversary page [here](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information contact press@southbankcentre.co.uk (Christopher Bramah-Calvert, Director of Communications, Southbank Centre)

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), two resident organisations (Kinetika Bloco and Tomorrow's Warriors) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

About the original Skylon sculpture

The original Skylon sculpture was designed by Hidalgo Moya, Philip Powell and Felix Samuely, and fabricated by Painter Brothers of Hereford. It was situated between Westminster Bridge and Hungerford Bridge on the South Bank and was unveiled in May 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations, before being dismantled with the rest of the exhibition in 1952.

About Glow Inflatables

Glow Inflatables Ltd is a UK-based specialist in the design and production of premium bespoke inflatables, delivering projects from concept through to manufacture, installation and aftercare. Working at the intersection of engineering, creativity and large-scale spectacle, Glow has established itself as a trusted partner to leading global names including SpaceX, Coldplay, FIFA, the BRIT Awards and Glastonbury Festival.

With a strong focus on innovation and visual impact, Glow has developed a growing reputation for creating ambitious inflatable art installations, collaborating with artists and institutions on exhibitions and public works across the world. The company is also recognised for its advanced LED-integrated inflatables, delivering striking illuminated pieces for live events and large-scale productions.

Combining technical expertise with a highly collaborative approach, Glow works closely with clients to realise complex creative visions at any scale. Known for its attention to detail, speed of delivery and commitment to quality, the company consistently delivers high-impact results, earning a reputation for excellence across both commercial and cultural sectors.

www.glowinflatables.com

About Gareth Pugh and Carson McColl

Gareth Pugh and Carson McColl are creative directors and co-founders of the award winning independent design studio HARD+SHINY.

The pair started in fashion – showing under Pugh's name they ran a successful fashion brand for over fifteen years, staging critically acclaimed fashion shows in London, Paris and New York – before shifting focus toward stage and screen, and large scale special projects.

Over the past decade the couple have steadily gained a reputation for an audacious and original creative approach, rigorous attention to detail, and high impact, unforgettable storytelling.

Together they have worked with some of the most popular artists of our time – including Beyoncé, Lady Gaga and Rihanna – and with some of the world's most important cultural institutions, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Louvre, as well as designing shows for the New York City Ballet, the Opéra Garnier and the Royal Ballet & Opera.

Most recently the pair moved into film, heading up both production and costume design for Danny Boyle's 2025 blockbuster '28 Years Later' and on his upcoming feature, 'Ink.'

About Paulette Randall

Paulette was the Associate Director of the Opening Ceremony for the 2012 London Olympic Games. Paulette was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honors List for her services to Drama.

Television credits include: Coronation Street, The Wives, Waterloo Road, EastEnders, Hollyoaks, Tin Star, Death In Paradise, Casualty, River City, Holby City, The Real McCoy,

Desmond's, Porkpie, C4, The Crouches, Comin Atcha, Kerching!, The Little Miss Jocelyn Show (Creative Consultant).

Theatre credits include: The Fellowship (Hampstead Theatre), Doctor Faustus (The Globe), Love Letters To The NHS (National Theatre Wales), Daisy Pulls It Off (Park Theatre), The Disappearance of Dorothy Lawrence (Vital Exposure), Obama-ology (RADA), Play Mas (Orange Tree Theatre), Frankie and Johnny in the Clair De Lune (Chichester Festival Theatre), Rudy's Rare Records – starring Lenny Henry (Birmingham Rep and Hackney Empire), Fences (Theatre Royal Bath, Tour and West End), the sketch show Funny Black Women on the Edge.

About Sabrina Mahfouz

Sabrina is a writer and maker, whose theatre shows include A History of Water in the Middle East (Royal Court), With a Little Bit of Luck (Paines Plough/BBC) and Metamorphoses (Shakespeare's Globe). She writes and produces TV, most recently on Beef (Netflix), Golf (Netflix), Full Circle (HBO) and #1 Happy Family USA (Amazon). She has written non-fiction with her debut book These Bodies of Water: Notes on the British Empire, the Middle East and Where We Meet (Tinder Press) and has edited a number of anthologies. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

About Natasha Chivers

Natasha is a London based lighting designer. Her work has been seen in over 20 countries and in a wide variety of places from the Berghain club in Berlin to Kensington Palace, and from an old Jam Factory near Tower Bridge to Studio 54 in New York. Recent theatre and dance credits include Inter Alia (West End/ National Theatre); Prima Facie (West End/ Broadway/UK Tour – Drama Desk Winner, Olivier and Tony Award Nominated); Peaky Blinders (Rambert/ World Tour); Evening All Afternoon (Donmar Warehouse); Oedipus (West End/Broadway); The Hills of California (Broadway/West End – Tony Nominated); Message in A Bottle (Sadlers Wells/Tour); Oresteia (West End/ Park Avenue Armory/Almeida – Olivier Nominated).

Awards: Winner of the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Lighting Design for a Play for Prima Facie. She won the Olivier Award for best lighting for Sunday in the Park with George.

She was nominated for a Tony Award for Prima Facie in 2023 and in 2025 for Hills of California.