

Design Version 1 November 2022

What are the design considerations at Somerset House?

Somerset House is a Grade I listed building and so has special requirements to consider which might differ from other venues you have worked in. Below is a guide to inform your team of what they can expect and what needs to be factored into your design.

The Venue

London Design Biennale occupies the entirety of Somerset House, a protected Grade I Listed Building recognised for its exceptional national, architectural and historical importance. To protect the building's interiors and exteriors, several considerations must be made when planning your project and whilst operating onsite during the build, exhibition and de-rig phases of LDB.

The LDB Project Team can help to arrange site visits and provide plans for your exhibition space in advance. All plans have been provided by Somerset House and, whilst they are updated regularly, you should note that Somerset House is a 18th century building and has characteristics that cannot be communicated through floor plans alone. Therefore, any crucial measurements should be checked onsite before entering into production or fabrication phases of any site-specific work. This

should be carried out either by yourself, or by appointing an Approved Contractor to undertake this on your behalf.

Please note: LDB does not accept any responsibility or liability for any resultant loss or inconvenience which you or your organisation may suffer as a result of the use of these floor plans.

Fabricators & Installers

As a listed building, extreme care must be taken during the build, live and de-rig phases. Design Teams and contractors must carefully consider the following points when conceptualising projects to guarantee its feasibility and compliance within its allocated space.

FIXINGS

Only Somerset House Approved Contractors are allowed to fix anything into or onto the panelled MDF walls in your room. Approved Contractors must be appointed for all installation works unless otherwise agreed with the LDB Project Team and Somerset House.

It is only possible to fix into MDF walls and wall panelling. Original walls, ceilings, floors and fittings cannot be fixed into. Please refer to specific room plans featuring the positioning and dimensions of these walls. Some areas do not have MDF panels or wall panelling for fixing, in which case the installation must either be freestanding or temporary freestanding walls can be erected at an additional cost. To enquire about this option, and to find out more about Approved Contractors and their services, please refer to the [Production Manual](#) and complete the [Production Form](#).

- Fixing into woodwork such as window and door frames, fireplaces, shelving, skirting boards, dado rails etc. is not permitted.
- Fixing into ceilings and floors as well as stone walls is not permitted.
- Hanging objects and installations from architectural lighting tracks is not permitted.
- Vinyl signage and other materials/items stuck to the walls must be fixed with low tack adhesive to prevent damage and work completed by an Approved Contractor. If you fix anything to the walls which causes damage, you will be responsible for the cost of repair.
- No paints, adhesive or coating may be applied to existing Somerset House walls without prior consent from LDB. Sticky backed Velcro and other strong adhesives are not allowed (light adhesives and museum putty are permitted).

FLOORINGS

- Protection and padding must be built into installations involving heavy or sharp elements directly in contact with floors.
- Adequate lining and protection must be integrated into installations involving water to prevent direct contact with the floor.
- Only trolleys fitted with soft rubber wheels may be used. Trolleys with hard plastic wheels and pallet trucks cannot be used inside the building.
- Floor protections (such as corex) must be used during the build and de-rig.

Audio-Visual & Interactive Works

If your proposed design includes any audio-visual (AV) or interactive elements, you will be required to work with the Approved AV Contractor to ensure that your design is feasible, how it can be achieved within the venue and at what cost.

LDB and Somerset House work with one of the UK's leading AV companies specialising in visual arts exhibition production. They have worked in some of the most iconic venues in London and have in-depth experience of delivering high-end visual design and art installations. More information on the Approved AV Contractor can be found in the [Production Manual](#). If you have a complex proposal, your LDB Project Manager will discuss these requirements with you on receipt of your initial proposal and before you have completed your [Audio-Visual Form](#).

Specifications of West Wing Galleries

Located in a prime position and directly accessed from The Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court, the West Wing offers a blank canvas space with beautiful high ceilings and large windows with a series of open plan, interlinking rooms.

As part of Somerset House's Covid mitigations, at least one window in each space must be left open throughout the duration of the exhibition's open days to allow for sufficient ventilation. Therefore, these spaces are not suitable for completely darkened environments without specific measures in place such as installing air conditioning or mechanical ventilation systems to counterbalance any lack of natural ventilation. If you have any questions relating to this, please speak to your LDB Project Manager.

Walls

- Brick with Lime Plaster finish. Painted in Dulux Diamond Matt Emulsion: Jasmine White.

Wall Panelling

- Several walls and sections of walls are clad with MDF panels to protect the existing fabric of the building and to allow for fixing by approved contractors only. These panels are painted to match the existing wall colour. Please refer to room-specific plans featuring the positioning and dimensions of these panels.

Ceiling

- Lathe and Lime Plaster. Painted in Dulux Matt Emulsion: RAL 9010.

Floor

- Aged Softwood Traditional Floorboards with Bona Traffic HD Satin finish.
- Nothing may be fixed onto the venue floor. Any floor coverings must be free laid to protect historic floorboards.
- Where water is to feature in a design (i.e. temporary kitchens or art installations), the installation of 1000 gauge continuous sheets of polythene under temporary coverings is compulsory.
- The maximum loading of floors is 2.5 kN/m² (254 Kg per m²). Installations involving floor loadings approaching this limit must be supported by calculations. In some instances, Somerset House will require for the plans and calculations to be reviewed by their in-house engineers (at an additional cost).

Woodwork Architraves and Skirting

- Painted in Farrow & Ball Acrylic Eggshell: Clunch.

Window Frames

- Window frames painted in Dulux Acrylic Eggshell RAL 9010.

Doors and Access

- Panel doors with raised and filled panels. Painted in Farrow & Ball Acrylic Eggshell: Off Black 57.
- Maximum Door Dimensions in West Wing: 950mm (width) x 2000mm (height).
- Please ensure that all materials and equipment brought to site as part of your installation fit within these measurements.

Power

- All plans can be found in the Resources area of your online dashboard. These plans detail power available in each room. All power sockets are standard UK domestic 13a sockets. The voltage is 220-240 (single phase). The maximum loading is 1000W per socket.
- If you require additional power sockets, bespoke mains power feed or any other electrical requests, you can order this through the Production Form.

Lighting

- Lighting schemes should be considered at an early stage.
- In the West Wing, suspended tracks can be raised or lowered at an additional cost to accommodate for exhibit heights.
- No lights are included in the room hire and they must be ordered separately.
- Lighting packages are available from Beam Lighting and come with a dedicated lighting technician to install and focus them for you to achieve high quality gallery lighting. Please refer to the [Production Manual](#) for more

information on this. Drawings, specifications and plans will need to be submitted with your [Lighting Form](#).

- Lighting specifications can be found in the [Resources section](#) of your dashboard.

Additional Considerations of Somerset House

Heating & Ventilation

- Spaces are heated using traditional radiators (which are mostly positioned under the windows) and natural ventilation. Please note there are no environmental controls.
- The East Wing, South Wing and Embankment Galleries are very open plan in their natural state. Maintaining any constant temperature in any one of these spaces is therefore extremely difficult.
- Overheating spaces can prevent projectors from working correctly.
- If you are considering projections within your installation, be aware that all rooms can get particularly hot during June and we advise you to maintain window opening access.
- We advise that you consider air conditioning as part of your design to ensure the room does not overheat and become uncomfortable for yourselves, staff and visitors.

Power

- All power sockets are standard UK domestic 13a sockets. The voltage is 220-240 (single phase).
- The maximum loading is 1000W per socket. If you require additional power sockets, bespoke mains power feed or any other electrical requests, you can order this through the [Production Form](#). Please refer to the [Production Manual](#) for more information on how to do this.

- All power plans detailing each room's specification can be found in the [Resources](#) section of your dashboard.

Storage

- There is no storage onsite at Somerset House. Please factor in storage space requirements when planning your project for items such as printed materials, bags, staff belongings etc.
- You can also arrange storage of empties through the Official Shipper. You can outline this request on your [Shipping & Returns Form](#).

Waste

- Somerset House do not provide waste disposal facilities for build and de-rig waste, crates or packing materials.
- Design teams and their contractors must remove all construction waste on an ongoing basis during the build and de-install phases.
- All waste material from the build phase must be cleared from site by 20:00 on 31 May.
- Domestic waste will be disposed of during the exhibition period.
- All waste material from the de-rig must be cleared from site by 18:00 on Friday 30 June.

'Making Good' – Returning the room to its original condition

- At the end of LDB, all indoor and outdoor spaces must be returned to their original state. Basic 'making good' costs (such as a coat of paint on exhibition space walls) are included in the LDB participation fee.
- Any additional costs for holes in the wall or potentially extensive damage will be charged directly to the Design Team.
- 'Making good' costs will be assessed upon submission of your Final Plan and any additional exhibition requirements.

- The financial responsibility for the cost of 'making good' falls with the Design Team.
- LDB reserves the right to raise a subsequent invoice once the installation is de-rigged if the Design Team has incurred additional 'making good' costs as a result of changes to the approved installation plan.

Signage

LDB works with Pentagram to create a comprehensive, site-wide signage scheme to publicise participating countries and facilitate visitor access. Each pavilion will benefit from an introductory panel composed by LDB with input from the exhibiting Design Team.

- Signage will be approximately 720 x 1456 mm in height. Please ensure to consider its location within your space when you design.
- **No additional branded signage is permitted** in or next to your pavilion. This is to ensure the continuity of signage and event design across the whole site-wide exhibition.
- Small interpretation labels relating directly to the works in each room will be permitted, but should adhere to the following guidelines:
 - **Location:** additional panels should be used sparingly to avoid overloading visitors with information. The centreline of the panels should be mounted 1200mm from the floor so that visitors can read comfortably whether sitting or standing.
 - **Word count:** maximum of 200 words per panel.
 - **Font size:** should be a minimum of 26 point, increasing to 48 if panels are in dim light or at a high level and far away from the viewer.
 - **Colour:** there should be a high level of contrast between text and background colour, with text typically in a dark colour on a light

background. The background should be a solid colour and un-patterned to increase text visibility.

Designing for Visitor Experience

Somerset House is one of the most visited venues in the UK. In 2021, over 130,000 people visited Somerset House during LDB, including over 21,000 (covid-capcity) ticketed visitors during the three-week exhibition. As such, Design Teams should carefully consider the following advice to ensure that visitors can experience installations throughout the duration of the exhibition:

Access

- Reasonable provisions must be made to make installations and exhibition spaces accessible in compliance with current UK DDA (Disability Discrimination Act 2005) standards. Doors, walkways and entrances should be designed and specified using minimum clear opening widths of 800mm in and around the installation.
- You must consider how the signage, lighting and layout of the pavilion can impact the experiences of LDB's broad range of visitors. For example, avoid putting wall elements in corners where wheelchair users cannot get close enough and interact to the same effect that a non-wheelchair user would be able to.
- Where possible, installations should be designed with step-free access. You may be requested to adapt your design if it is not sufficiently inclusive of LDB's broad range of visitors.
- Desk cases should aim to be 915mm high with the base of the case at least 685 from the ground to allow for visibility from wheelchair heights.

Outdoor exhibits

- London weather is very unpredictable, even in June. As such, pavilions may have to close temporarily if floors become slippery from wet weather.
- Consideration should be given to protect installations and pavilions from water ingress to ensure outdoor installations can remain open at all times.

Interactivity

- Audiences enjoy interactive installations and Design Teams are advised to consider interactivity in their work. If certain aspects of the installation are to be protected from interactions (e.g. fragile items not to be touched), adequate safeguards should be factored in to the design and communication of the installation to audiences. Measures could vary from museum barriers to invigilation by staff and costs will vary accordingly. Please refer to the Exhibition section of the manual for further information.
- Regarding pavilions with interactive digital technologies, exhibits must remain operational during the exhibition period. This should include adequate memory and storage, instructions that are easy for visitors to follow and understand, spare auxiliary equipment and technical support from your team. The LDB Exhibitions Manager will be able to advise further.
- Robustness of exhibits should be taken into consideration to ensure they can withstand the large number of visitors over the four-week period.