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SOUTHBANK CENTRE OPENS FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS FOR EASTER

- Site transformed with gardens, urban beach, beach huts, art installations, vintage funfair and original 50s room set

Southbank Centre opens its Festival of Britain 60th anniversary celebrations with MasterCard on Good Friday 22 April 2011 with the unveiling of an outdoor landscape which pays homage to the landmark 1951 Festival – described at the time as ‘a tonic to the nation’ – and the South Bank Exhibition, situated on what is now Southbank Centre.

Visitors to the anniversary celebrations, which will take over the 21-acre site for four months (22 April – 4 September), can go on a seaside holiday down by the river where a 70-metre urban beach and 14 artist-commissioned beach huts transform Queen’s Walk; take a stroll or relax at the bar/café in a new garden on the rooftop of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, created in partnership with the Eden Project; visit the British countryside and its wildlife, including a giant straw fox; enjoy traditional vintage funfair rides, including Austin cars and a helter skelter; and cool off in Jeppe Hein’s popular Appearing Rooms fountain. Visitors can also listen to live music on the new bandstand for Southbank Centre Square created by RIBA London with students and graduates of architecture; shop for Festival of Britain anniversary products; have their 4D image encapsulated in crystal, or a memento photograph taken on a Royal Ensign motorbike and sidecar; and eat and drink al fresco at weekly markets and pop-up structures across the site, including a retro fish and chip van, a jaunty popcorn tricycle, the Bombay beach-inspired café Dishoom Chowpatty Beach (from 13 May) and the Magners Pasture of E4 Udderbelly’s giant purple cow on Jubilee Gardens.

Alongside the outdoor Festival experience, visitors to Southbank Centre can enjoy a rich artistic programme throughout the anniversary celebrations’ four-month run, with differently-themed
weekends, strands, performances, talks, events and exhibitions celebrating the best of British culture and creativity today (see separate events highlights press release).

Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, said: "I am thrilled to unveil our site-wide celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Festival of Britain. This summer, we pay homage to this extraordinary event – and the thinking and vitality behind it – which paved the way for a better future for the country, following the aftermath of the Second World War. We have opened up less familiar parts of the site – with art installations, gardens and new exhibition spaces – and hope that visitors will be stimulated by the celebrations and see Southbank Centre in a new and refreshing light. I'd like to thank all the partners who have made this possible, in particular MasterCard."

The Mayor of London Boris Johnson, said: "We are delighted to be involved in the 60th anniversary celebrations for the Festival of Britain. Coming out of post-war austerity, it was an enormous fillip for London and the whole country. The event celebrated who we were as a nation, whilst looking ahead to the future. It also planted the seeds for the regeneration of a declining dockside area, and I am pleased this work continues today with the ongoing transformation of the South Bank into a significant creative quarter for London. I hope the can-do optimism embodied in Skylon infuses the city once again this summer."

At the centre of the Festival is the Museum of 1951, a temporary museum in the Royal Festival Hall, which brings together a vibrant collection of memorabilia, artworks, personal histories, models, memories and photographs. The Museum is curated by Southbank Centre and designed by Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway. Highlights of the Museum include the extraordinary, newly-restored Patchwork of the Century; artwork by Abram Games, the designer of all the graphics created for 1951; an original 50s room set; archive films that can be watched from original 50s cinema seats; and a projection created by Alex Haw of Atmos Studios, which for the first time reveals the interior of the Festival of Britain iconic architectural structure, the Skylon.

For the first time since it was unveiled at the 1951 South Bank Exhibition, John Piper's mural The Englishman's Home, depicting Piper's favourite English buildings, is on public display in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. On show in the Royal Festival Hall are panels from Feliks Topolski’s mural Cavalcade of the Commonwealth, commissioned for the 1951 Festival and originally displayed in the nearby Hungerford Bridge Arch. In addition, four ‘Festival ’51 View Points’, a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will be created over the summer by groups of volunteers responding to the Festival’s heritage. These installations will be displayed around the Royal Festival Hall.
Hany Fam, President, UK & Ireland Division, MasterCard, said: "We're delighted to be supporting our partners at Southbank Centre in opening this exciting summer of celebrations, which millions of people from the UK and abroad will enjoy. Our Priceless campaign celebrates those shared 'money-can't-buy' moments and we truly believe the Festival of Britain 1951 – 2011 will provide many such rewarding experiences."

The 1951 South Bank Exhibition, situated on what is now Southbank Centre, was primarily an outdoor festival where temporary buildings, artworks, exhibitions, fountains, cafes and shops all came together to form a ‘brief city’, visited by over 8 million people. For the anniversary celebrations, the site is animated by four distinct Lands, which take their inspiration from four of the themes of the South Bank Exhibition – Seaside, Land, Power and Production, and People of Britain. The outdoor experience opens up less familiar areas of the site, including a ‘High Street’ leading from Southbank Centre Square to the riverfront; a new outdoor exhibition space on the mezzanine area of the Hayward Gallery presenting an exhibition by photographer Robert Wilson; and a new staircase by Andrew Lock linking Southbank Centre Square and the Hayward Gallery’s terrace, featuring wild urban planting.

Outdoor landscape highlights include:

**Land**

 Bringing the countryside to London, the centrepiece of this area is a rooftop garden on the Queen Elizabeth Hall, created in partnership with the Eden Project (see separate press release). Other highlights, curated by Clare Cumberlidge, include Enclosure, three traditionally made dry stone walls, an artwork by Ben Kelly which explores how rural activities have changed dramatically in recent years; Marcus Coates’ and Geoff Sample’s Natural Soundscapes of Britain, a collage of recordings of British wildlife; and Kathleen Herbert’s *I may be a wage slave on Monday, but I am a free man on Sunday*, a film co-commissioned by Southbank Centre and the National Trust exploring the right to roam around the countryside through a journey from urban scenes of Sheffield to the natural beauty of the Peak District National Park. In addition Southbank Centre welcomes Urban Fox, a giant straw bale installation, designed and created by Pirate Technics, which adorns the back of the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

**Seaside**

 Stretching along Queen’s Walk, curated by Colette Bailey and created in partnership with Metal and Southend-on-Sea, this nostalgic celebration of what it means when the British go to the seaside, includes a 70 metre-long urban beach made out of 48 tonnes of sand; a parade of 14 specially-commissioned artists’ beach huts; Mark Dion’s giant seagull installation *Mobile Gull Appreciation Unit* on loan from the Folkestone Triennial and playing host to different seabird
conservation societies; the 2009 Guinness World Record Breaking Bunting as the longest strip measuring 1.3 miles, which is the same length as Southend-on-Sea’s famous pier; a seaside garden *A Great Day Out on Sea* by Southend-on-Sea’s award-winning parks team; retro Morris vans selling fish and chips and ice cream; a kiosk selling buckets and spades; and Dishoom’s *Chowpatty Beach*, inspired by Bombay café culture, above which hangs *Liverpool Jackpot*, a neon light piece by Franck Scurti (2007) commissioned by Metal and Liverpool Biennial.

The beach hut commissions are: an exhibition of vintage beachwear from the Beecroft Gallery in a hut designed by Bill Mitchell; *Sea View*, a ‘Literature Festival of the Sea’ hut designed by poet and Southbank Centre Associate Artist Lemn Sissay; Phill Jupitus’ *Essex Coastal Beach Hut* housing the installation *Before the Flood*, documenting the coastal floods of 1953; *The Under the Pier Show* hut designed by Tim Hunkin housing his work *Is This Art?*; Grenville Davey’s *Hut/Eye* housing a rolling gallery of exhibitions which changes every few weeks; a Peter Cusack installation, *Favourite Sounds: Southend-on-Sea*; comedian Markus Birdman’s *All Mod Cons (2011)* housing an exhibition of postcards on loan from Southend-on-Sea Museum; Patrick Loan’s *Weather Symbols 01* containing information on UK coastal towns; Hutstock creator Sadie Hennessey’s red and white stripe glitter encrusted hut *Jimmy Pursey’s Trousers*, which will feature live performances over the Hutstock weekend (4 – 5 June); a mosaic-clad hut and an original shell grotto by Southbank Mosaics; Oreet Ashery’s *Bare Life* hut; Gordon Allum’s *Dazzle Pillbox*; Richard Sharp’s *Grayscale*; and Heidi Wigmore’s *51/11*, inspired by 1951 textiles and pixelated for a modern twist.

**Power and Production**

Inviting questions about the nature of power and production in Britain today, this land features a staircase designed by Andrew Lock, which links Southbank Centre Square with the terrace of the Hayward Gallery. Made out of shipping containers, the staircase is planted with sodium tolerant plants which are irrigated with water pumped from the borehole below the Royal Festival Hall. Other elements include *Black Pig Lodge* by artists Heather and Ivan Morison, a remarkable chamber of coal sourced from a working mine in the Neath Valley in Wales, at once a monument to a celebrated British industry and a symbol of social decline in rural communities; new commissions from artist group Black Country Atelier led by Jing Lu, including an exhibition of photographs of manufacturers and inventors at work by Georgie Clarke; and Robert Wilson’s exhibition *Helmand*, presenting new photographs depicting the harsh realities of life amidst Afghanistan’s conflict zone.
People of Britain

This theme appears at various points across the Festival site with the aim of evoking questions around how the British identify themselves today. The centrepiece is a new installation made by artist Gitta Gschwendtner, evoking the Lion and Unicorn Pavilion at the 1951 Festival of Britain which depicted a flight of ceramic birds symbolising liberty. In homage to this piece, the artist, working with 50 young refugees and 4 poets has made a new piece for the terrace outside the Royal Festival Hall and in the outdoor corridor linking Hungerford Bridge to Waterloo Station. Additional People of Britain exhibits are housed in an Avenue of Portraits in the newly created ‘High Street’, leading from Southbank Centre Square to the riverfront. The Avenue of Portraits features a wide range of portraiture in different media, created by artists and young people, and an audiovisual installation from B3 Media including a series of photographs by Franklyn Rodgers of African-Caribbean elders who travelled to Britain in the late 50s and 60s and a soundscape by Gary Stewart. For the duration of the Festival, artist Lady Lucy will have a studio in the original Royal Festival Hall box office, where Festival volunteers can have their portrait painted and visitors to the site will be able to see her work in progress.

For further information, as well as press releases on the artistic programme and the differently-themed weekends, please contact Patricia O’Connor, Head of Press, on 020 7921 0632 / patricia.oconnor@southbankcentre.co.uk or Helena Zedig, Press Manager, on 020 7921 0847 / helena.zedig@southbankcentre.co.uk.

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For more information about events and offers please log on to southbankcentre.co.uk and southbankcentre.co.uk/MasterCard.

Two short films about the anniversary celebrations are available to view at Southbank Centre YouTube page http://www.youtube.com/southbankcentre. To link with the clips, please email lara.delaney@southbankcentre.co.uk to receive the embed codes.

Notes to Editors:

Southbank Centre
Southbank Centre is the UK’s largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London’s most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection.

1951 Festival of Britain
The Festival of Britain, which officially opened on 3 May 1951, was created to give Britons a feeling of recovery and progress following the Second World War, as well as celebrating the centenary of the 1851 Great Exhibition. At the heart of the nationwide Festival was the South Bank Exhibition, situated on what is now Southbank Centre. The exhibition was an unprecedented extravaganza,
filled with new technology, science, art, design, and iconic constructions such as the Dome and the Skylon as well as the Royal Festival Hall. It was attended by more than eight million visitors and laid the foundation for the arts centre as it stands today.

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