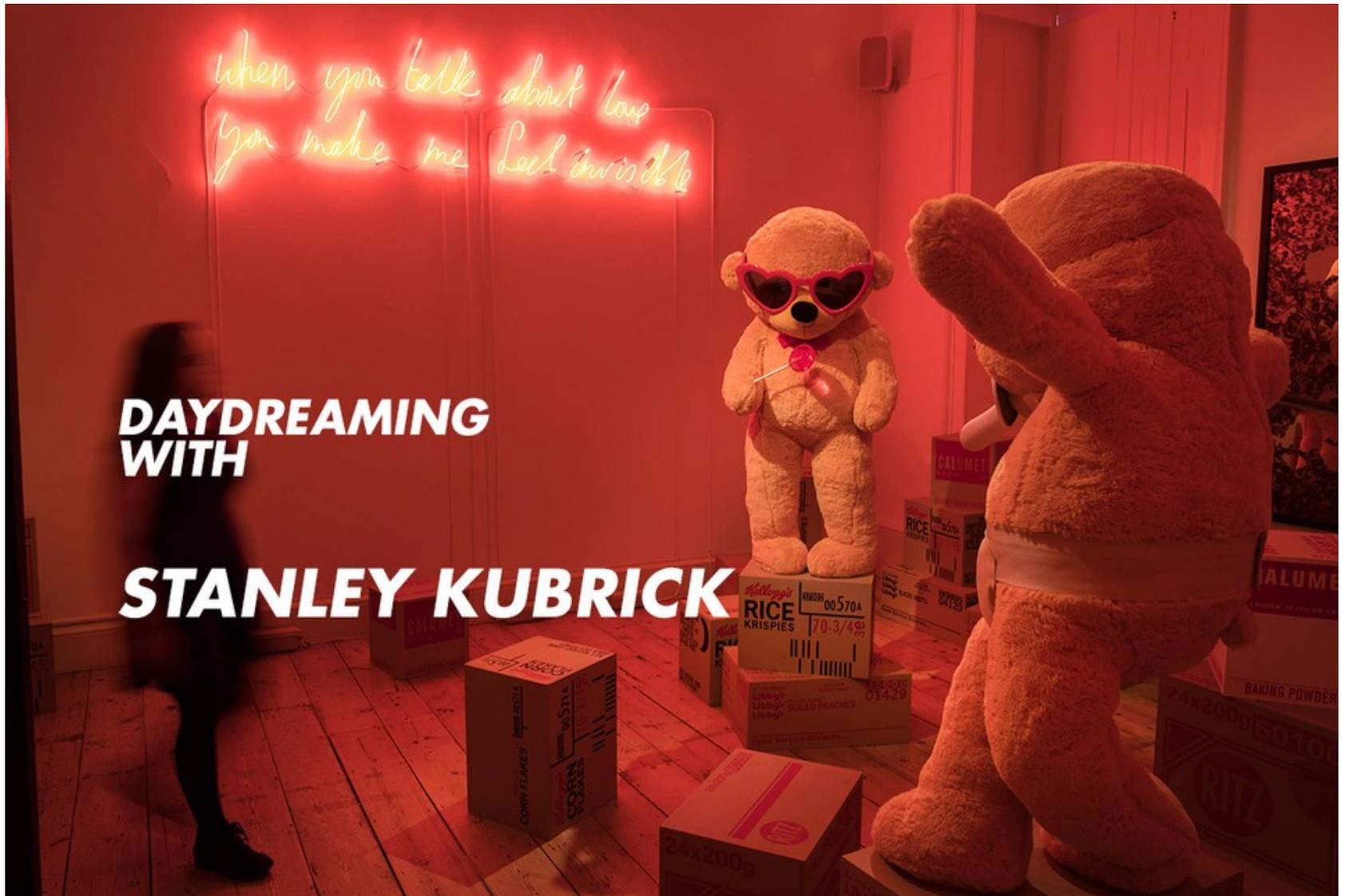


What You Need to Know About James Lavelle's Stanley Kubrick Exhibition



It's 1980-something and a boy, midway through his teenage years, sits in his living room, transfixed by the psychedelic light show taking place on his television screen. The days of 40" HD widescreen are decades away, but it doesn't matter. Over the last two hours or so, a rented VHS copy of Stanley Kubrick's sci-fi masterpiece, *2001: A Space Odyssey* has transported this unsuspecting adolescent from leafy Oxford into a world of sentient computers, epic space craft and trippy star children.

Fast forward a few years, and that same kid has managed to get his hands on a fuzzy, bootleg copy of the infamous *A Clockwork Orange*. Galaxies and cosmonauts have been replaced by Milk Bars and Droogs, but he feels that same unmistakable feeling of awe and otherworldliness as the music and visuals sweep him up into something extraordinary.

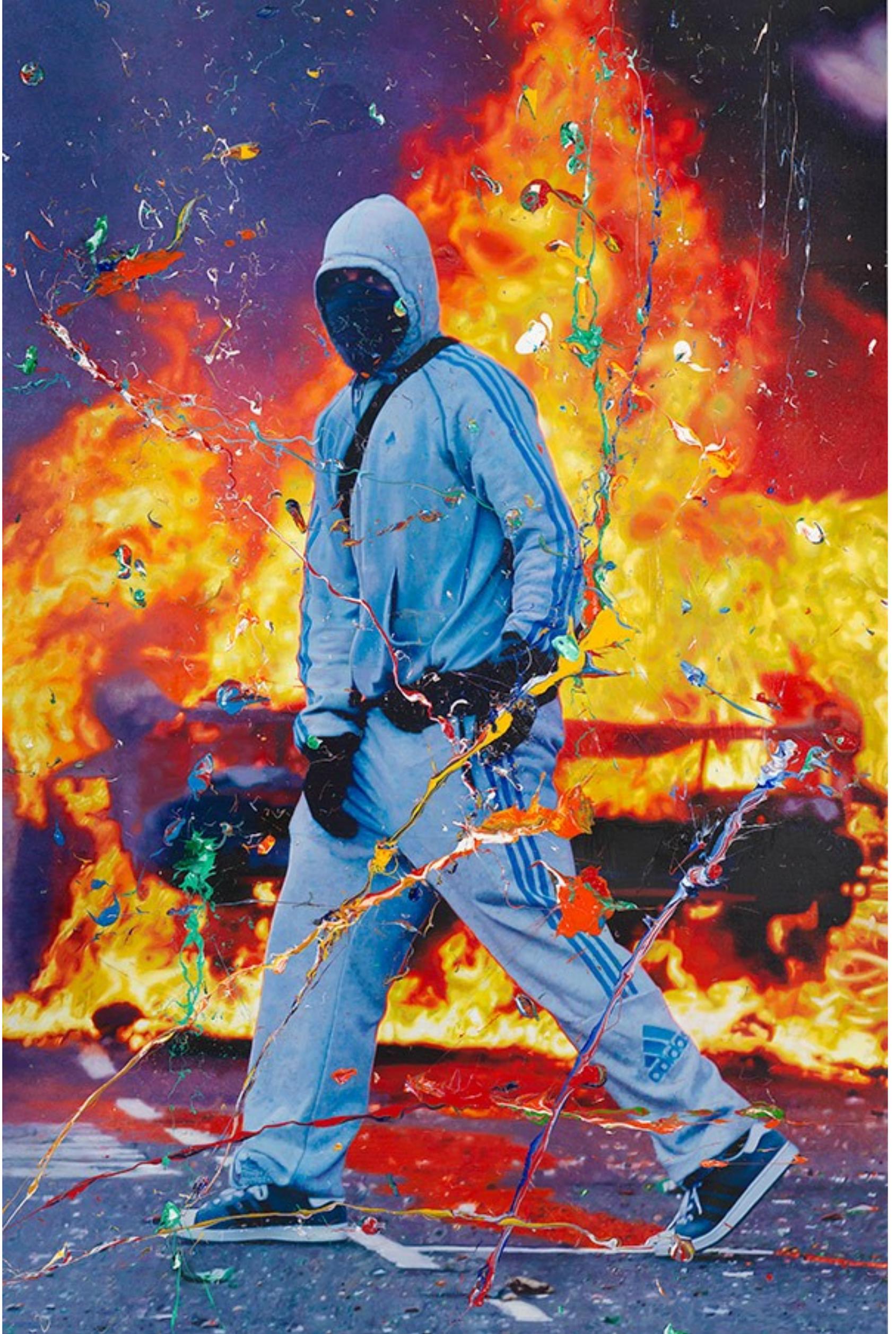
Skip forward again to the mid-'90s and that teenager has become James Lavelle, founder of Mo'Wax, one of the most influential record labels of that decade. He and his collaborator DJ Shadow are in the middle of creating the UNKLE album *Psyence Fiction*, and Lavelle, never one to shy away from approaching his heroes, puts in a call to Kubrick's people. Would the master director be interested in making a music video to accompany one of his tracks?



Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

“I tried to get hold of him to do a video for “Lonely Soul,” the track with Richard Ashcroft,” Lavelle remembers, a bit of regret still detectable in his voice. “I had some dialogue with his assistant, and there was this glimmer of hope. They told me he was interested in the idea but that he was busy making *Eyes Wide Shut*... And then, unfortunately, he passed.”

That was over 15 years ago, but Lavelle's fascination with Kubrick and his work is as strong as ever, and it's a testament to the man's tenacity (as well as his address book) that he has finally turned that missed opportunity into something that's arguably even more impressive and interesting.



“A few years ago I was working with artists and music in a gallery environment,” explains Lavelle, “and I was approached by a curator friend who was very good friends with the person who ran the Stanley Kubrick estate. So I had a meeting with them about the idea of doing something contemporary and new with Kubrick, and suggested the idea of this exhibition.”

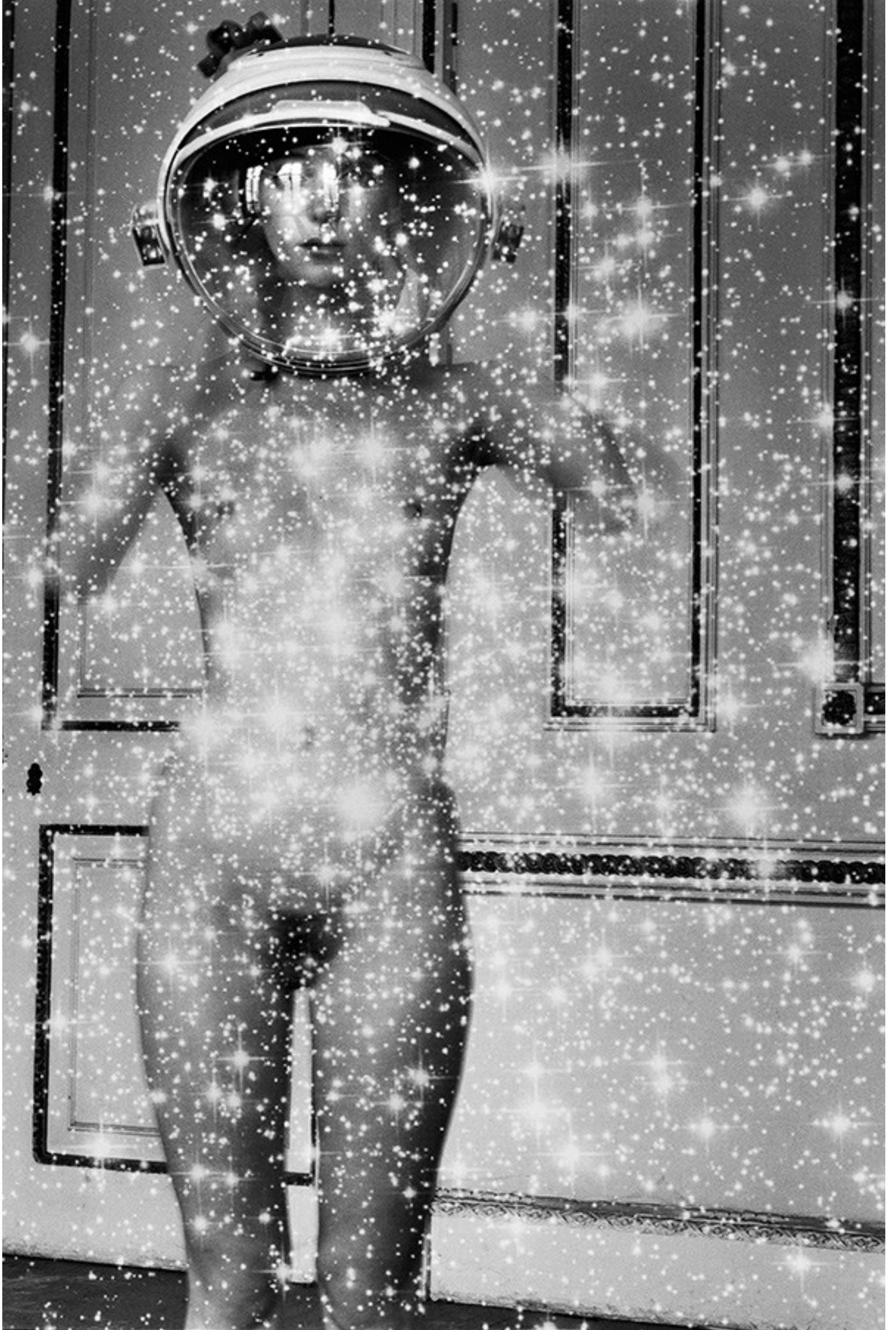
Over the last five years that idea has gradually become “Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick,” which opened at Somerset House this summer, and which sees some of today’s most exciting artists let loose to interpret and explore the work of one of the most innovative and influential film makers of our time.



Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

Lavelle has dug deep into his rolodex for this one, calling on creative friends old and new to build something more than just another gallery show. “Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick” is a full-on sensory experience that breathes new life into the epic, violent and sometimes surreal universe that Kubrick created through his films.

“Kubrick’s world was so vast,” Lavelle says. “From the theory, to the set design, to his technique. That’s an amazing canvas for people to react to. So ninety percent of the people I spoke to about contributing said he was one of their biggest inspirations. At the end of the day, it’s not a James Lavelle Show, it’s a Stanley Kubrick show and it’s about the artists, so there’s been no political agenda to deal with. Everyone involved has just incredibly gracious and I’ve been overwhelmed by the reaction.”



Charlotte Colbert

As you walk around “Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick” you can feel the raw enthusiasm and excitement that infected the teenage Lavelle, and which he’s passed on to the artists and filmmakers involved with what is obviously a real passion project. Lavelle and co-curator James Putnam have made smart use of Somerset House’s layout.

The stately hallways have been turned into ominous corridors, and rooms with high ceilings are now a disorientating maze full of strange delights. Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard’s installation “Requiem for 114 Radios” is one of the first pieces you come across as you enter the exhibition and it’s one of the most fun, potentially nightmare-inducing rooms you’ll ever visit. 114 analogue radio sets are crammed into a small, carefully crafted space, every one of them broadcasting an individual voice performing the same eery classical piece Kubrick used for both *Clockwork Orange* and *The Shining*.

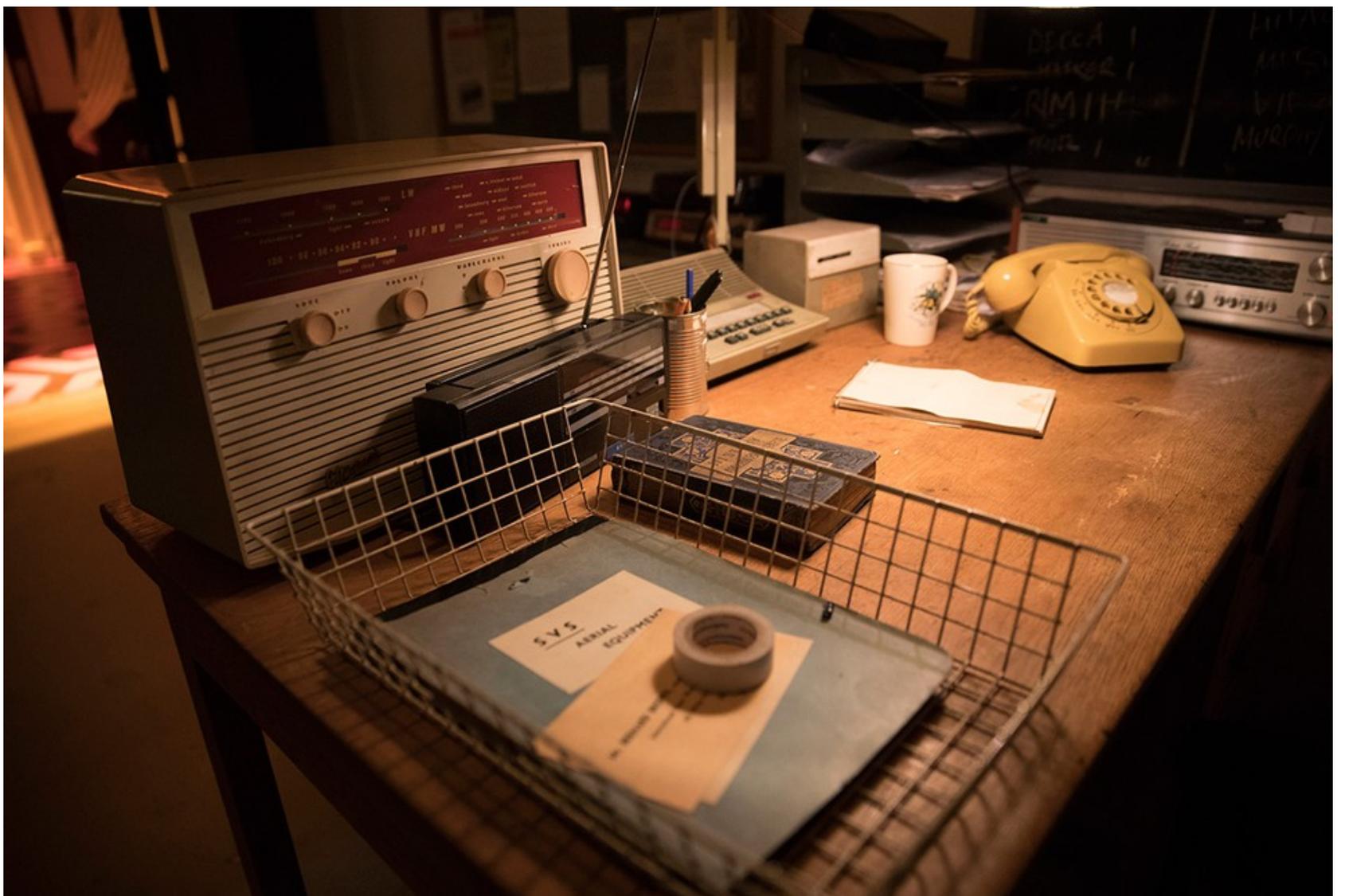


Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

Like every Kubrick film, it manages to be both unsettling and awe-inspiring, and there’s that Kubrickian attention to detail that gives you the

idea that every single object in there, no matter how tiny, must contain some sort of hidden meaning. It's the perfect introduction to the exhibition, and it only gets weirder from there.

Turn the corner and there's a pair oversized teddy bears sporting heart-shaped *Lolita* sunglasses and sinister Droog codpieces. Beyond that, there's an enormous concrete phallus courtesy of Sarah Lucas that riffs on *A Clockwork Orange's* themes of sex, violence and urban decay. In another room, a digital light tunnel pulses across a huge widescreen television, infinite shifting textures hypnotizing you until you can almost hear HAL's voice singing nursery rhymes in the corner of your mind.

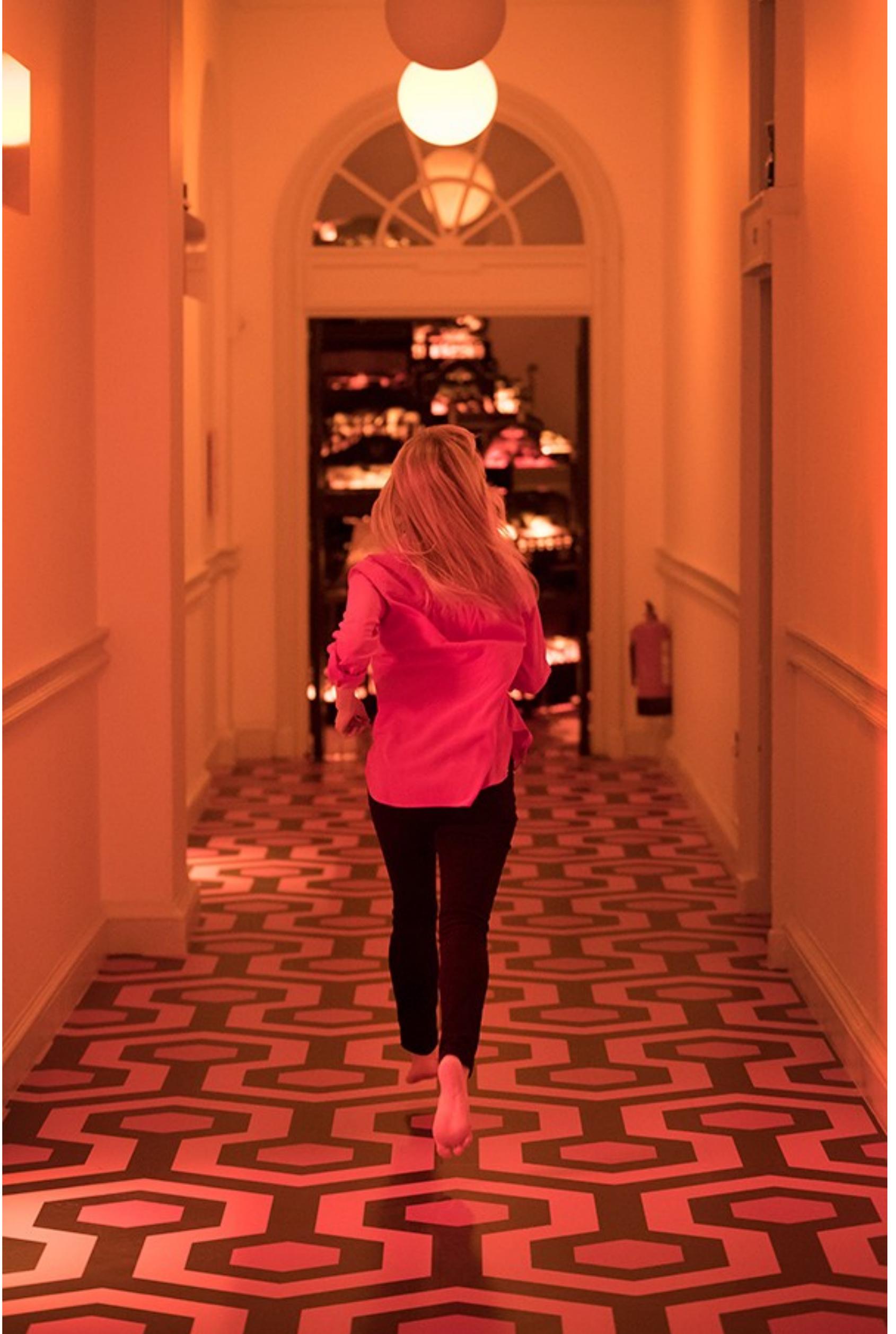


Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

And if you're not freaked out enough by that, Haroon Mirza and Anish Kapoor have teamed up to create a sculpture using sound and mirrors that is so discomfoting it's impossible to describe in words. Suffice to say, you'll be lucky to last more than a few minutes.

One of the most impressive parts of the whole exhibition comes from someone who readily admits he is "not an artist." Toby Dye is a filmmaker

whose CV contains music videos for Massive Attack and adverts for washing up powder. But his “Corridors” video installation takes his skill set to a whole new level.



Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

A square dark room is filled with four looping films projected onto the walls. Each one features a different character inspired by an iconic Kubrick protagonist. As they make their way down an endless hospital corridor to the soundtrack of UNKLE's "Lonely Soul," they occasionally overlap, stumbling into each other's storylines, before heading back to their individual walls. Eventually they simultaneously and seamlessly loop back to the beginning to start their stories all over again, like Jack Torrance destined to work at the Overlook Hotel for eternity.

Dye says the planning and editing process was "a nightmare," but his patience has paid off. This is the music video Kubrick never got to make. A masterful piece of work that not only pays homage to Kubrick but also bring an extra dimension to a filmography that you thought could not be improved upon. Dye needs to start making more art.



Peter MacDiarmid courtesy of Somerset House

As for Lavelle, he's keen to get back to what he calls his "day job." "The whole exhibition is a piece in itself. I'm very proud and humbled and I hope people have an incredible experience," he says, before letting out a

slightly exhausted sigh. "It's been an experience. A bit like making a movie, I guess. A lot of work."

But ask him if it was all worth it, and that teenage enthusiasm and energy comes straight back into his eyes.

"My 18-year-old daughter came to the build of the show the other day, and she wasn't really aware of Kubrick." Lavelle smiles. "Afterwards, she said, 'I'm going to go and watch a load of Stanley Kubrick films now.' That's all I wanted to do."

Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick in partnership with Canon, runs until August 24 at Somerset House, London.

For more art content, check out these [7 female artists to uncover this summer](#).