

Beloved Spirit of Soho mural to be celebrated after restoration

Storied work of public art celebrating the famous faces of Soho to get new lease of life



“The Spirit of Soho gathering her skirts around people of all nations, accommodating them as they appear throughout the ages” - Gaston Berlemont, proprietor for 45 years of The French House.

High-res imagery available [here](#)

London, 27 July 2026: The iconic Spirit of Soho mural, located on the corner of Carnaby Street and Broadwick Street, is currently undergoing a careful restoration sponsored by Shaftesbury Capital. This much-loved piece of community heritage will be celebrated in the first week of August following the completion of the restoration, reaffirming its place at the heart of Soho's cultural identity.

The restoration works, in collaboration with community groups Alternative Arts and the Soho Society, ensure the Spirit of Soho will remain a testament to the people and creative ethos that define one of London's most storied districts.

The reveal will bring together the community to celebrate the area's heritage and continued cultural influence in London, connecting the icons of the past with those shaping Soho's future.

Intended as a lasting monument to the people of Soho, the mural celebrates the history and working life of the area as home to tailors, restaurants, jazz bars and more. It was installed between 1989 and 1991 as the product of a wide-ranging and impactful community project organised by Alternative Arts.

It was designed and executed by Diane England and a team of artists from Free Form Arts Trust on a grand scale in the form of a polyptych altarpiece, with mosaics reminiscent of Latin American art and the murals of Mexico. The

Spirit of Soho is dominated by the statuesque figurehead of St Anne, after the parish church of Soho, St Anne's, which was consecrated in 1686 by Bishop Henry Compton. Her flowing skirts gather a tableau of the streets between Oxford Street and Shaftesbury Avenue.

The bottom panel collects an extraordinary range of famous and infamous faces who have called the cosmopolitan neighbourhood home: a stroll around Soho might lead you to the studio and lodgings of Venetian painter Canaletto at 41 Beak Street or William Blake's birthplace on Broadwick Street.

Old Compton Street was where writers Rimbaud and Verlaine would meet to read poetry, and Dylan Thomas allegedly left a manuscript of *Under Milk Wood* in the French House. It was above Quo Vadis that Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*, while Percy Bysshe Shelley lived for a time on Poland Street. Angelica Kauffman, who lived in Golden Square, was one of two women among the 36 Founding members of the Royal Academy of Arts.

Catherine Riccomini, Director of Marketing and Communications at Shaftesbury Capital, said: "The Spirit of Soho mural is a living embodiment of the creativity, diversity and independent spirit that have defined Soho for generations. Public art like this does more than celebrate the area's past; it helps shape the everyday experience of the neighbourhood and keeps its unique character visible for everyone who lives, works and visits here. Protecting Soho's heritage is central to our role as long-term stewards, so we are delighted to support this restoration, ensuring this much-loved landmark continues to inspire and connect people for years to come."

Maggie Pinhorn, Director at Alternative Arts, said: "The inauguration of the Spirit of Soho mural over 30 years ago represented a huge community effort, testament to the creative drive and collaborative nature of those living and working in the area. It was also a monument to the historic figures who have called the neighbourhood home over hundreds of years. It is so brilliant to see the mural given a new lease of life, safeguarding a cherished part of Soho's fabric for all to enjoy."

As part of the restoration project, Soho Parish Primary School students participated in artist led workshops inspired by the mural. The sessions covered the restoration process and covered off the mural's notable figures – Karl Marx among those recognised by older pupils - before they sketched or painted their favourite figure.

The restored Spirit of Soho mural is part of a programme of public art across Soho and Carnaby Street this summer. *iFrida Iconica!* was unveiled in June, a spectacular installation celebrating Frida Kahlo as *Frida: The Making of an Icon* opened at Tate Modern. Consisting of a hanging anamorphic mural forming Frida's face and vibrant papel picado the length of Carnaby Street, *iFrida Iconica!* has brought one of the summer's most anticipated exhibitions beyond the gallery walls.

ENDS

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About Soho

Soho is a world-famous shopping and dining destination in the heart of London's West End, synonymous with culture, creativity and innovation. Made up of one square mile of vibrant interconnecting streets including the globally renowned Carnaby Street, it's home to a multi-dimensional mix of international flagships, independent boutiques and innovative, new concept stores. The epicentre of London's dining scene, its unique day-to-night hospitality offer comprises high-quality restaurants, cafés, bars and pubs.

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About Alternative Arts

Alternative Arts champions the arts, investing in new artists and new ideas, developing community engagement, and creating highly accessible cultural experiences. We direct and produce programmes of diverse arts events including photography, fashion, literature, music, dance, theatre, art exhibitions and festivals. We are also highly experienced consultants. Throughout our history we have successfully helped to regenerate Covent Garden, West Soho, Marylebone High Street and Spitalfields, East London and we continue to be consulted on arts development and urban regeneration.

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