

Edinburgh Art Festival begins today

The UK's largest annual festival of visual art takes place right here in Edinburgh – and it begins today. If you are around the Royal Mile this afternoon then you may see some dragons taking a walk up the street!

Artists Walker and Bromwich will lead the performance and procession which will start at Trinity Apse on Chalmers Close at 2pm.

This will bring to life the ideas of a number of radical thinkers and Tam Dean Burn will be one of the players along with children from Canal View Primary School as the dragon.

Dancers from Dances-Ed University of Edinburgh will also take part.

But yesterday it was all about the formal launch of the 14th Edinburgh Art Festival. Although the youngest of the many festivals which take place here, it has a wide reach.



There are more than 50 venues involved including galleries, museums, public sites and a programme of special events across Edinburgh and beyond.

Christopher Baker Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (SNPG) welcomed the press to the SNPG yesterday morning and reminded everyone that Edinburgh is celebrating its 70th anniversary as a festival city. The Edinburgh Art Festival is the junior version of that as it is only in its 14th year, but nonetheless it is attracting more than 300 artists with performances, tours, workshops and talks.

Mr Baker said : “It is the perfect forum for celebrating Scottish and international art. It is very important.”

Sorcha Carey Director of Art Festival said : “This festival is really the grandchild of the rich festival culture which has flourished here for seven decades, and this has played such an important part in the development of the EAF over the past 14 years.”

This year we continue to bring in the very best visual art from across the world with no less than 300 artists, Scottish and international, leading and emerging presented over 40 venues throughout the city.

“A vitality is clearly reflected in our 2017 programme. Alongside Douglas Gordon’s extraordinary Black Burns and Graeme Fagen’s work in the contemporary gallery presented here today, the 2017 EAF includes major solo presentations. There is work by Stephen Sutcliffe at the Talbot Rice Gallery, Kate Davis at Stills as well as important thematic surveys including Edinburgh Printmakers’ New Edition which takes a closer look at artists’ work and collectors working in the medium of poster and print. And then there’s Dovecot’s Daughters of Penelope reflecting on the history of female artists working in textiles.

“As well as Platform, the Festival’s dedicated showcase for artists at the beginning of their careers, now in its third edition, you can enjoy a different presentation each week at The Number Shop’s MELON, discover the latest talent at Edinburgh College of Art at their main degree shower explore our rich and varied programme of Pop-Up events taking place across the city.

“100 years ago town planner, conservationist and social activist Sir Patrick Geddes published his manifesto, The Making of the Future. Written in 1917 at the height of the First World War, Geddes saw in the distraction of war an

opportunity to build a new and better society. He called for a much-needed transition from a 'machine and money economy' to a life economy. Thirty years later following the Second World War the Edinburgh International Festival was born with its vision to provide a platform for the 'flowering of the human spirit'. Despite being separated by a generation Geddes' pamphlet and the foundation of festival culture in our city have much in common."

Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Frank Ross, said: "In this milestone year for the Festival City, I am delighted the Council is supporting the EAF's innovative and creative Commissions Programme. Celebrating the city and the people of Edinburgh, I look forward to welcoming artists from all over Scotland and the world to take part.

"As one of the nation's pioneering town planners and botanists, Patrick Geddes shaped places in Edinburgh we still enjoy every day. From the Zoo to Camera Obscura, it is particularly fitting his work will be celebrated with a rare opening of another of his designs which was later to become his home – Ramsay Gardens."









Sorcha Carey is photographed with Edinburgh-based artist Bobby Niven who has built a site-specific garden studio for the urban wildlife reserve, Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden. This area was originally founded as a community garden by Sir Patrick Geddes at the end of the 19th century. A social sculpture this new structure will host artist in residence during EAF as well as act as a venue for environmentally focused workshops inspired by Geddes' thinking.



Sorcha explained that there are eight new projects by Scottish and international artists at six sites in and around Edinburgh's Old Town. This is called The Making of the Future : Now which pays homage to the physical and intellectual legacies of Geddes and the festival in the city, making a claim for the continued relevance of their core values and ideas today. This year EAF will open at several new venues many of which have not been open to the public before.

In Scotland's Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, the 2017 Commissions Programme invited artists to reflect on two important anniversaries for the city – the foundation of the first Edinburgh Festival in 1947, and the publication in 1917 of Patrick Geddes' *The Making of the Future: A Manifesto and a Project*.

Separated by a generation, both were born directly out of the experience of global conflict, and a strong belief that artists could play a critical role in helping societies to imagine new and better ways of living.

- [A new site-specific garden studio](#) by Edinburgh-based artist Bobby Niven for the urban wildlife reserve, Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden, hosting artists in residence and acting as a venue for environmentally focused-workshops.
- [A giant dragon within the gothic kirk](#) of Trinity Apse, by Walker & Bromwich, accompanied by a series of playful and utopian performative rituals and a public pageant, providing an alternative to the dominant capitalist model.
- [A major new multi-channel video work](#) by the recent winner of New Zealand's prestigious Walters Prize, Shannon Te Ao, addressing the physical and emotional depths of love, grief and healing.
- [A new sculptural work](#) by Glasgow-based Toby Paterson, creating a landscape for reflection in Chessels Court, another site in the Old Town closely associated with Patrick Geddes.
- **A weekend of events** exploring the themes of this year's programme, entitled *A Summer Meeting* (11-14 August), including a rare opportunity to visit the original home of Geddes, Ramsay Garden.
- [A dedicated showcase for emerging talent](#), *Platform: 2017*; selected by Graham Fagen and Jacqueline Donachie, featuring 4 artists, in a new festival venue: a former Victorian Fire Station, Lauriston Place.

There are also some wonderful things to see in the 2017 Partner Programme :

- **Internationally recognised artists**, including [Jac Leirner at The Fruitmarket Gallery](#); [Pablo Bronstein at Jupiter Artland](#); [Ed Ruscha at the Scottish National](#)

[Gallery of Modern Art](#); and [Patrick Staff at Collective](#).

- **Scotland's leading and emerging artists**, including [Douglas Gordon](#) and [Graham Fagen](#) at Scottish National Portrait Gallery; [Stephen Sutcliffe at Talbot Rice Gallery](#); [Kate Davis at Stills](#); [Charlotte Barker at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop](#); and the next generation of emerging talent at [ECA MA Degree Show](#) and [The Number Shop](#).
- **Historical and survey shows**, including [British Realist Painting at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#); ['Beyond Caravaggio' at the Scottish National Gallery](#); [an A-Z tour of City Art Centre's collection](#), and Britain's first war photographer at [The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse](#).
- **Significant group exhibitions** including the inaugural exhibition in the six-part series of [NOW at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#); pairings of artists at [Ingleby](#) to celebrate their 20th anniversary; and [Edinburgh Printmakers' 'New Edition'](#).
- **Contemporary artists working in expanded contexts** including new commissions at [Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden](#); female artists working with textile at [Dovecot Gallery](#), [Sue Jane Taylor at the National Museum of Scotland](#); ['Thought Collider' at New Media Scotland](#); and a collaborative project with writer [Jessica Yu at Rhubaba](#).

[The full programme is here.](#)