

Exhibition of portraits of celebrated research group will show you how to age well

Perceptive portraits of celebrated group captures how to age well

A group of people now in their eighties and nineties have been photographed as part of the Lothian Birth Cohort (LBC) study of which they are an integral part.

The exhibition of vibrant portraits at Edinburgh College of Art will honour the remarkable group of older people who are credited with fundamentally altering our understanding of ageing.



John Scott and his portrait with the artist Fionna Carlisle PHOTO Douglas Robertson

Painted by renowned artist Fionna Carlisle these works capture the personalities behind the group who are some of the most-intensively studied research participants in the world.

The LBCs are a unique group of people – now in their 80s and 90s – who sat intelligence tests as 11-year olds. Since 1999 they have taken part in thinking tests, brain scans, and health and lifestyle assessments, transforming our understanding of how early life influences healthy ageing.

Carlisle's new portrait of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor Peter Higgs who took part in a previous study of healthy ageing at the University of Edinburgh is included in the exhibition.

More than one billion data points have been collected for each of the LBCs' members. These have revealed that both genetics and lifestyle factors contribute to healthy ageing.

Ms Carlisle depicts the LBC members with graphic, bold brushstrokes. She has painted prominent figures in Scotland, including former First Minister Alex Salmond – which hangs in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery – and the late former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, which is part of the House of Commons Art Collection.

The paintings will be shown alongside scientific treasures from the study participants, including a 3D-printed brain and a highly-detailed crystal etching of the brain's wiring from one of the participants.

The Art of Intelligent Ageing: Portraits of the Lothian Birth Cohorts has been curated by former Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Dr Duncan Thomson. It is free to attend and will run at Edinburgh College of Art from Saturday 27 October.

Professor Ian Deary, Director of the Lothian Birth Cohorts and the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, said, "The Lothian Birth Cohorts have encouraged my scientific team to scour their minds, bodies, and histories to build rich and valuable accounts of their negotiating the 'whips and scorns of time'. Fiona's beautiful

portraits weave the life story of each individual into the painting.”

Fionna Carlisle, said: “These portraits were painted over seven years and reflect the relationship that I built up with the sitters over this time. With these paintings I wanted to filter age and show the youth and spirit of the older sitters as people who have real bodies and limbs, spirit and life.”

Wick-born artist Fionna Carlisle studied at Edinburgh College of Art and has exhibited her work across the world, including New York, Chicago, Moscow and Paris.



Alexa Purves with her portrait PHOTO Douglas Robertson