

# Edinburgh Science Festival 2020 – Elementary

Edinburgh is a city of firsts, and no bigger than the Edinburgh Science Festival which began as the world's first and Europe's biggest science festival.

This is the 32nd edition running from 4 to 19 April 2020, with hundreds of events, talks, workshops and exhibitions for both children and adults across dozens of venues in the Scottish capital.

This year's theme, *Elementary*, uses the ancient classification of Earth, Air, Fire and Water as lenses to explore global environmental challenges and opportunities. Striking a balance between urgency and optimism it highlights the roles that creative thinking, science, technology, engineering and related disciplines play in helping to secure a successful and sustainable future.

- Celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, and the rise of the environment movement, the Edinburgh Science Festival's 2020 theme is *Elementary*; using the ancient classifications of Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Aether as lenses to explore global environmental challenges and opportunities.
- As part of Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020, the Festival presents *Pale Blue Dot* at the National Museum of Scotland, a multi-sensory exploration of the depths of the seas and oceans and of their transformative and life-giving nature. While *Into the Blue* on Portobello Promenade, is a large-scale outdoor

photography exhibition showcasing Scottish coastlines, biodiversity and our relationship with our plentiful coasts and waters.

In our podcast with Creative Director Amanda Tyndall she explains the design on the front page of the programme (and the puns it allows!).

From biodiversity, ecology and food security (**Earth**) and clean air (**Air**) to energy and climate policy (**Fire**) and marine biodiversity (**Water**), the Festival places its focus firmly on our environment. As some of the ancients did, the Festival adds a fifth element, with a special focus on the digital world (**Aether**), exploring how to merge creative technology with live events to create new experiences for Festival audiences and on delivering more content online, taking science and culture to wider and more diverse audiences.



PHOTO John Preece

Some of this year's Festival highlights include:

- **Pale Blue Dot at the National Museum of Scotland:** an interactive exhibition aimed at audiences of all ages, it explores the essential and life-giving nature of our oceans, with a focus on their important biodiversity and their role as providers of energy, transport, food and opportunities for leisure and pleasure. This large-scale exhibition is part of Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 (YCW2020).
- **Into the Blue on Portobello Promenade:** also part of YCW2020, this large-scale outdoor photography exhibition takes its audiences on a fascinating journey around Scottish coastlines, highlighting their biodiversity and potential, our relationships with our coasts and waters as well as the threats they face. Opens on 18 March.

- **Elemental at Summerhall:** Bright Side Studios create a new digital immersive experience combining magic, alchemy and science. This art piece has been commissioned by Edinburgh Science and supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund.
- **Edinburgh Medal Address in Council Chambers:** the prestigious Edinburgh Medal is awarded to Sunita Narain, the Indian environmentalist and political activist who, as a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Climate Change between 2007 and 2014, played a major role in Indian and global environment and development policy formulation. Her Medal address and a linked event from the Scottish Parliament will explore climate justice, equity and the links between climate and development.
- **City Art Centre:** The Festival's flagship family venue is a unique 5-floor science playground filled with exciting hands-on science activities for young minds, including the all-time favourites *Blood Bar* and *ER* as well as two new activities including Ocean Constructors (part of YCW2020), where little explorers build an underwater landscape, and Creative Coding with Marty the Robot. The building will also house three digital artworks supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund.
- **Experimentarium at the Pleasance:** a five-day celebration of hands-on science for all ages, where keen young minds will get a chance to dance with molecules, meet Scotland's largest pests and prove that maths is anything but boring!
- **Gastrofest, various venues:** the ever-so-popular gastro-science strand takes inspiration from the Year of Coasts and Waters 2020 as it tickles the taste buds with events on coastal cocktails, seaweeds and seasonings, whisky and cheese.
- **European Stone Stacking Championships, Dunbar:** returning for the fourth year but its first time as part of the Science Festival, the Championship merge art and

science, celebrating land art and taking materials found in nature and working with Earth's gravity to create sculptural towers, archways and other awe-inspiring structures from rocks and stones.

**Amanda Tyndall, Festival and Creative Director at Edinburgh Science said:** “We share our planet with almost eight billion people and the collective environmental challenges we face have never been greater or more complex. As the custodians of planet Earth we have responsibility to ourselves and to future generations. The climate crisis is *the* defining local and global challenge of our age and as will be one of the great disruptors of the 21st century, radically reshaping how we live, work and play. But with disruption and uncertainty comes possibility...and with possibility comes hope... THIS hope is the elementary message at the heart of our 2020 Science Festival programme.”



Emily Raemakers of EdSciFest poses in the Botanic Gardens with the elements of the Festival's new look. PHOTO John Preece