

# The Open Air Drawing Room by Eric MacLennan

[www.ericmaclennan.com](http://www.ericmaclennan.com)

## Promoter's Pack



### 1. Brochure copy

Everyone's an artist in this thought-provoking performance inspired by the great 19th century painter of light and seascapes, JMW Turner and the 31 sea areas of the Shipping Forecast. You're invited to stop, reflect and see the bigger picture in this joyful celebration of our collective creativity, joining multiple artists working to paint a giant piece of art. This performance has been adapted to consider social distancing and the overall safety of audiences and participants.



## 2. About the show

The project is an example of socially engaged art practice.  
The work crosses boundaries between performance and painting.  
The project is a celebration of the collective effort.

***The Open Air Drawing Room*** was originally co-commissioned by the Turner Contemporary in Margate and Applause Rural Touring.

[www.turnercontemporary.org](http://www.turnercontemporary.org)  
[www.applause.org.uk](http://www.applause.org.uk)

It is a combination of performance and painting. It offers participants of all ages the opportunity to engage with a large scale example of the collective effort to collaborate in the making of a monumental painting.

The work is inspired by the innovative techniques of JMW Turner and the ideas of John Ruskin.

Ever evolving, it was first exhibited at Turner Contemporary in 2019 comprising two pieces:

A Sea Of Faces - A monumental painting produced by combining over 500 individual watercolours into a single harmonious whole.  
A Show Of Hands - A large photographic installation of all the contributors hands displayed together on the gallery terrace.

In the summer of 2021 the installation (of both paintings and photographs) are again exhibited at the Stephen Lawrence Gallery in Greenwich, with 768 paintings.

To date there are 1,029 paintings. A gallery to host the work is currently being sought for 2023.

The performances are continuing through 2021- 2023

Every contributor paints a stone from the same collection of thirty-one stones that correspond to the thirty-one shipping areas around the British Isles.

A stone that was once a mountain.  
A stone that - like us - is in a state of transition.  
A stone that will one day be a grain of sand on a beach.  
Somewhere.  
These stones were old when Turner was young.  
They will still be here when we are gone.

This project invites the public to engage in setting the world record for a painting that has been created by the largest number of artists ever!



### 3. About Eric MacLennan

Actor + Socially Engaged Artist. Maker of avant-garde performance crossing boundaries between Theatre, Movement & Art.

The work is bold, cutting-edge with a clear focus on its audience, challenging, provocative but always entertaining.

Inspired by philosophy and comedy in equal measure his work questions our unconscious habits, challenges conventions and isn't afraid to say the unsayable!



### 4. Target audiences and key messages/benefits /

**The Open Air Drawing Room** is designed to appeal to all ages. Currently the youngest participant is aged 3 and the eldest so far is aged 86.

The piece uses very little text and often works with gesture in a 'follow my leader' style to communicate.

The style is warm, gentle and inclusive.

The philosophical background is to offer a space in which to slow down and appreciate the beauty of nature.

Everyone makes their own painting. With gentle encouragement everyone is involved. The environment is warm - there is nothing intimidating. Everyone paints! All the paintings are beautiful. Each painting is of a single stone. A stone that was once a mountain. A stone that - like



us - is in a state of transition. A stone that will one day be a grain of sand on a beach. Somewhere. The painted stones are taken from a collection of thirty-one stones in **The Open Air Drawing Room**, each one corresponding to the thirty-one shipping areas that surround the British isles. These stones were old when Turner was young. They will still be here when we are gone. We consider Time. We consider Art. This project invites the public to engage in setting the world record for a painting that has been created by the largest number of artists ever! The participants in this socially engaged art project will be invited to attend the launch/private-view exhibition of this work in Margate and to meet one another. This work engages people who don't often engage with the arts in a public environment and offers something of lasting value, i.e. a celebration of friendship and connection. This seems to have a particular relevance now given the current divisions and lack of connection in the world. The heart of my practice looks at what it is to be human, celebrating the wonder of our life, in an accessible way with humour, giving space for the audience to complete the picture. The approach is part inspired by the philosophical writings of Xavier de Maistre, which offer a way of looking at the world differently, so that the everyday and the mundane appear extraordinary and new. In this area I have previously made an art installation/performance hybrid called **A Voyage Around My Bedroom**. This work toured extensively. Originally commissioned for Glastonbury, it was later selected for the Caravan Showcase 2016 and played internationally. This piece now has its own dedicated website [www.avoyagearoundmybedroom.com](http://www.avoyagearoundmybedroom.com) which offers a virtual interactive version of the work. In making tiny journeys, with the outlook of a great explorer, even a trip of a few centimetres can become an adventure filled with discovery and surprise! If everyone paints one stone, and we combine them - we will have a painting of the entire beach! **The Open Air Drawing Room** is an exploration of the small and the epic. This project is a combination of painting and performance following in the footsteps of Yves Klein. This project will produce the largest painting of a beach ever painted. The final artwork will set a world record for a painting created by the largest number of artists.



## 5. Engagement & Participation

As a socially engaged artist my work is sharply focussed on engagement and participation.

A residency version of the work is also available. Bespoke versions may be tailored to respond to different groups and may adopt the following format...

To meet with around 300 members of the public during a short residency/exhibition including visiting community groups and hosting public performances, to begin by asking them to bring me a pebble from home, (most people have one). Why do we pick up stones on beaches? We will examine these stones; talk about them; photograph them; paint them; We will make dances about these stones. We will tell stories about the mountains that they once were. We will tell stories about the grains of sand that they will eventually become. These pebbles - like us - are in a state of transition. The humble pebble will work as a catalyst to unlock stories in a supportive environment, this will be genuinely empowering. It will be a natural progression of my work ***The Open Air Drawing Room***, placing the found object centre stage, alongside the resulting artwork (on an equal footing) and in dialogue.

A shop location could offer a perfect opportunity to connect with members of the public in a friendly safe environment. These moments of connection with the public would be spread over a period during the summer (allowing the space to be used for other events).

I aim to give people an opportunity to slow down and see the beauty of nature. A pebble seems a good place to begin. Some of the participants will be natural curators; some will be organisers of stones; others, will be natural guides and will be good at receiving guests; some people may paint their stones; others, may express their natural found object through the movement; through earth science; through poetry or song.

Art galleries often favour the eye, but I aim to offer a more catholic space of peaceful contemplation. It would be exciting to make work that talks to our other senses in this domestic setting. Sound. Touch. Taste and smell. Sensory performance could point to what exists beyond the physical. The invisible. The spirit. We are much more than just physical. Art can show this with eloquence. The end destination is unknown, but a route map is drawn.

## 6. Technical details

RUNNING TIME.

30 Minutes.

PEOPLE.

2 touring in a small car.

TYPE OF VENUE/CONFIGURATION

The work is presented in the open air and is performed in-the-round. Outdoors (usually). and is well suited to a flat public space. The sole requirement is to be able to make a circular space/ playing area (achieved by drawing a perfect circle with sand) of diameter 4 x metres.

SCALE AND TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

There are no external technical requirements. The piece is self-sufficient. The piece performs to a maximum of 31 participants (one for each of the UK shipping areas).

COST

The piece currently costs £600 a day + Travel. The work is usually performed 3 x times a day. (The daily cost comes down when booked for several consecutive days).

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

My working practice crosses boundaries. Boundaries of form. I make work that is both fine art and theatre.

## 7. Performance dates

London Bubble, Rotherhithe. March 2019  
Mayfield Festival May 2019  
Almeida Theatre London May 2019  
Rusthall Village Fete May 2019  
Create Platform Ashford July 2019  
Create Music Festival Ashford July 2019  
Riverside Festival Gravesend July 2019  
NRTF Bangor July 2019  
Madhurst Music and Arts Festival August 2019  
bOing International Family Festival Canterbury August 2019  
Revoluton Arts Luton August 2019  
Lindfield Arts Festival September 2019  
Turner Contemporary December 2019  
Greenwich + Docklands International Festival September 2020  
Ashford, Kent August 2021  
Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, Kent August 2021  
North Lincolnshire Museum, Scunthorpe, Lincs August 2021  
Holbeach, Lincs August 2021  
Fyde House, Boston, Lincs August 2021  
The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton Upon Trent, Staffs August 2021  
All In The Mind Festival, Basingstoke, Hants 11th September 2021  
Henley Festival, Oxon 19th September 2021  
Hever Castle, Kent 17th October 2021

## 8. Audience responses / Tweets

*samantha bowen @makedoandSEND 22 Dec 2019*

*Took part in this magically immersive performance art yesterday with Lucy at @TCMargate. Not created for #SEND but very inclusive and all artists valued for their contribution to the world's largest art project "The Open Air Drawing Room" @DevRoseTurnerbrilliant commissioning!*

*Almeida Theatre@AlmeidaTheatre 30 May 2019*

*The Open Air Drawing Room with Eric MacLennan. A live art project celebrating the small and the epic.*

*georgia clark @georgia\_\_sea 7 Sep 2020*

*"Your stone was once a mountain, and one day it will be a grain of sand." I loved The Open Air Drawing Room.. intimate, expansive, and playful. Thank you @mybedroomvoyage @GDIFestival*

*Harper Bizarre Art @Harper\_Bizarre 6 Sep 2020*

*This afternoon me and my son took part in another @GDIFestival event, 'The Open Air Drawing Room' by Eric MacLennan. We each painted a designated stone which will become part of the largest painting of a beach ever, and it will be exhibited in Greenwich next summer. Thanks GDIF!*

*Applause Rural Touring @ApplauseTouring 30 Sep 2019*

*@TCMargate on Friday for the opening of #TurnerPrize2019 exhibition. From 6th Oct Eric MacLennan's A Sea of Faces will be displayed at Turner Contemporary, created from hundreds of*

*watercolours by members of the public who took part in The Open Air Drawing Room this summer.*

*Black Country Touring @bct\_us 2 Jul 2019*

*@MyBedroomVoyage has made us all into artists!*

*The open air drawing room will set a world record for a painting created by the largest number of artists, by combining paintings of rocks by the public to make a beach. Look out for rock no. 28! #HiVis2019 #LiveTweet*

*Great collaborative piece, Eric. Duncan Grant, Gravesend.*

*Felt so honoured to be part of this lovely project. Almeida Participant.*

*The whole experience was absolutely magical. Everyone who participated felt engaged and diverted and intrigued! And what a lovely piece of art to end up with! Helen Graves.*

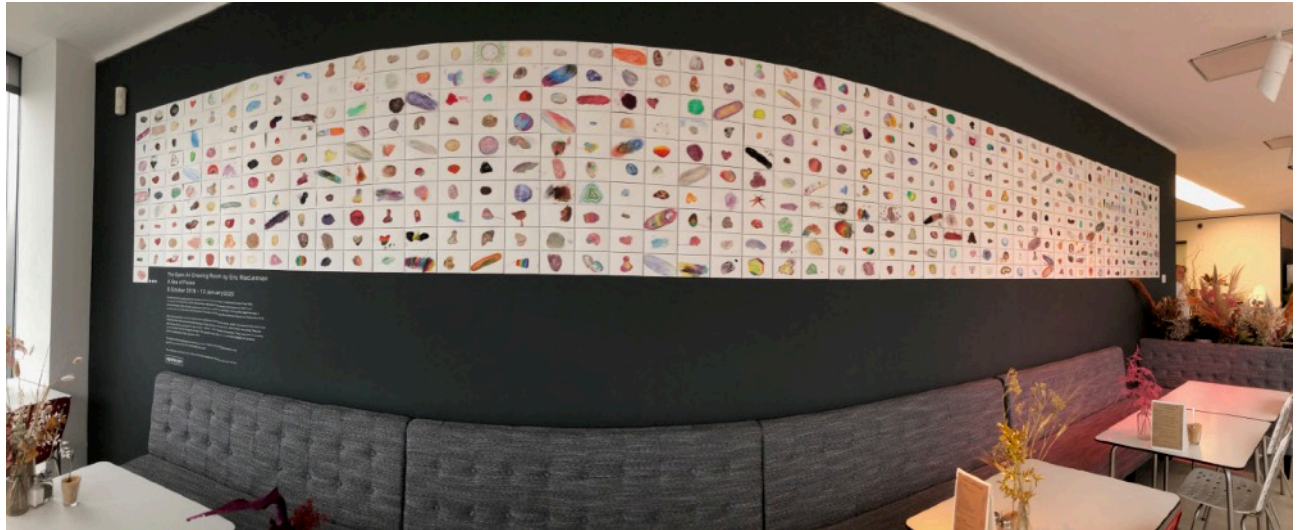
*What a beautiful project - inclusive, multi-layered, inspiring and warm. Beautiful in process and in product... Thank you! Julia*

*This has been such an inspirational and enjoyable experience - connecting us all with nature and our sea surroundings; engaging all ages in what I found to be an unforgettable experience. Thank you. Susan Moser*

## 9. Further production images











## 10. Production videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTrtrYUG73k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dty7KojXsXg>

## 11. Contact

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