



Pearls of the Sea: Landing Places

29 March – 1 June 2025

This spring, Hastings Contemporary presents *Pearls of the Sea: Landing Places*, a vibrant exhibition showcasing the creativity of 470 local primary school students.

The exhibition is the culmination of a year-long collaboration between Hastings Contemporary and eight local primary schools, which gives students the opportunity to visit the gallery, work with local artists in a series of workshops and then exhibit their artwork.

Taking inspiration from *The Stade* – the Saxon term for a landing place – students have explored the rich maritime heritage of their town. Through oral histories, foraged objects, traditional sea shanties, and a wide range of artistic mediums, they have created a striking collection of collaborative artworks.

This year the project was more ambitious than ever, expanding to include performance and video installation, in collaboration with The White Rock Theatre and Hastings International Piano. Students from Ore Village Primary Academy wrote and performed their own sea shanties at a live concert at The White Rock Theatre, which will now be on display as a video installation at Hastings Contemporary.

Other artworks include a fantastical fabric-mâché giant, prayer flags for the local fishing community, printed poetry banners, a suspended shingle beach, and detailed plaster-cast sculptures.

Students from Ark Castledown Primary Academy also visited The Fisherman's Museum, going on to monoprint a collection of heritage fishing boats which were then animated into a short film.

Pearls of the Sea is Hastings Contemporary's flagship schools programme. Since its launch in 2015, it has given thousands of local students the opportunity to engage with modern and contemporary art, develop their creativity through artist-led workshops, and see their own work exhibited in a professional gallery setting.

To celebrate their achievements, all participating students and their families are invited to visit the gallery free of charge.

Leah Cross, Director of Programmes at Hastings Contemporary, said: *"Pearls of the Sea is an integral part of our learning programme, providing an invaluable opportunity for local children to engage with contemporary art and explore their own creative voices. This year's exhibition is particularly exciting, combining storytelling, performance, and sculpture in ways that challenge expectations of children's art."*

Louisa O'Shaughnessy, Learning Coordinator at Hastings Contemporary, added: *"It's a privilege to work with our local schools and these talented young artists. Their work is filled with imagination, curiosity and a fresh look at our seaside location. We hope visitors will be inspired by their creativity."*

Pearls of the Sea: Landing Places is part of Hastings Contemporary's spring/summer season, which celebrates life above and below the waves. It appears alongside a site-specific installation, *The Sun Feeds the Wind*, created in collaboration with the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society, and *Undersea* which brings together paintings, prints, drawings and objects from across cultures and continents.

Pearls of the Sea 2024/25 is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Chalk Cliff Trust and The Magdalen and Lasher Charity.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[High resolution images can be downloaded here](#)

Image: *The Stade Giant* by Sandown Primary School, Year 4 and Dagmara Rudkin, 2025. Clare Hughes Photography

Participating primary schools 2024-25

- Baird Primary Academy, Year 5
- Dudley Infant Academy, Year 2
- Ark Blacklands Primary Academy, Year 4 and 5
- Sandown Primary School, Year 4

- Ark Castledown Primary Academy, Year 5
- Ore Village Primary Academy, Year 4
- Ark Little Ridge, Year 3 and Chester class
- Churchwood Primary Academy, Year 4 and 5

About Hastings Contemporary

[Hastings Contemporary](#) brings world-class modern and contemporary art to a spectacular coastal setting. With an ambitious programme of exhibitions, events and activities, the gallery aims to enrich lives, support creativity and help Hastings to thrive.

Showcasing internationally celebrated artists and emerging practitioners, the gallery has developed a reputation for its focus on painting and drawing, supported by Artist Patron Sir Quentin Blake.

The award-winning building is located on the town's historic fishing beach among the net huts and working structures of the fishing fleet. Hastings Contemporary is a registered charity.

Under 18s can visit for free. Hastings and Rother residents can visit for half price, from just £5. For unlimited free visits, discounts, and more, annual membership starts at £32.

www.hastingscontemporary.org / Instagram @hastings.contemporary

Pearls of the Sea 2024-25 is part of *Time and Tide: the intangible cultural heritage of the Hastings fishing fleet*, a major project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Hastings Contemporary and Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society to document, celebrate and raise awareness of one of Europe's largest and oldest beach-launched fishing fleets.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#). Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

heritagefund.org.uk

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter/X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLottery #HeritageFund

For more information, interviews and images:

sophia@hastingscontemporary.org / 01424 728377