

HASTINGS CONTEMPORARY

Press release: March 2026

Pearls of the Sea: Our Future World 28 March – 31 May 2026



This spring, Hastings Contemporary presents *Pearls of the Sea: Our Future World*, a vibrant exhibition celebrating the imagination and creativity of 500 local primary school children.

Opening on Saturday 28 March 2026, the exhibition invites visitors to step into a future shaped by young people's ideas.

What do local children imagine our planet will look like in the future? Who will inhabit it, what resources will remain, and how will creativity be expressed? These questions sit at the heart of the exhibition, which features interactive caves, a greenhouse of ideas, a cabinet of curiosities, contrasting visions of a Good World/Bad World, junk puppets and more.

The exhibition is the culmination of a year-long collaboration between the gallery and nine local primary schools. Through the *Pearls of the Sea* programme, pupils take part in gallery visits and hands-on artist-led workshops before presenting their own work in a celebratory public exhibition.

Working with local artists Hannah Collison, Rebecca Fifield, Usva Inei, Pip Johnson, Janey Moffatt, Dagmara Rudkin, Ian Shillito, Laura Ribbons and Toya Walker, students explored processes such as using natural dyes and inks, clay, embroidery, printmaking and performance, producing playful, thoughtful and ambitious responses to the theme.

Now in its most ambitious year to date, the programme has expanded to include collaborations with the White Rock Theatre and KIN choir, with notable contributions from the multi-school Ark

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Ignite choir, and the first ever offsite pop-up gallery experience at Robsack Wood Primary Academy using the Hastings Contemporary Mobile Studio.

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, nurturing creativity through artist-led workshops, and giving students the rare opportunity to exhibition their work 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: *"As a gallery beside the sea, our work is deeply connected to the natural world and to the future of our oceans. Pearls of the Sea gives local children the chance to imagine what that future might look like - from hopeful visions of thriving communities, to warnings about what could be lost. Their creativity encourages all of us to think more carefully about the world we are shaping together."*

Louisa Sealand, Learning Coordinator at Hastings Contemporary, added: *"The art that our local primary school children produce on this programme never fails to surprise and delight. Their enthusiastic, thoughtful responses to both our exhibitions and the concepts we have asked them to consider is inspiring. I'm so proud of each and every one of the 500 children that have taken part this year."*

Pearls of the Sea: Our Future World forms part of Hastings Contemporary's spring season and is presented alongside *The Open: Odyssey*, a major celebration of Sussex's creative community, featuring work by more than 150 artists connected to the region.

Pearls of the Sea 2025/26 is supported by the Chalk Cliff Trust, The Magdalen and Lasher Charity, Isabel Blackman Foundation and Amanda Burton.

NOTES TO EDITORS

[IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Participating primary schools 2025/26:

- Ark Blacklands Primary Academy, Year 4 and Year 5 with artist Pip Johnson
- Ark Castledown Primary Academy, Year 4 with artist Usva Inei
- Ark Little Ridge Primary Academy, Year 2 and Chester Class with artist Dagmara Rudkin
- Dudley Infant Academy, Year 2 with artist Hannah Collisson
- Ore Village Primary Academy, Year 3 with artist Rebecca Fifield
- Robsack Wood Primary Academy, Year 4 with artist Toya Walker
- Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Year 1 and Year 4 with artist Laura Ribbons
- Sandown Primary School, Year 4 with artist Janey Moffatt
- Mulberry Baird Academy, Year 3 and Year 4 with artist Ian Shillito

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FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES For images, interviews, and requests, please contact Sophia McNab, sophia@hastingscontemporary.org, 01424 728 374.

Hastings Contemporary is an independent arts charity in the heart of Hastings Old Town. Through bold exhibitions, partnerships and events, the gallery brings world-class art to Hastings for the benefit of everyone. With a programme anchored in marine ecology, ocean futures and sustainable cultures, Hastings Contemporary brings together artists, scientists, fishing communities, and the public to explore new creative frontiers – all within an award-winning building on the town’s historic fishing beach.

Visiting the gallery

Open Wednesday to Sunday and bank holidays, 11am to 5pm. Under 18s visit for free. Hastings and Rother residents can visit for half price, from just £5. Become a member for unlimited free visits, special invitations, discounts, and more, from just £32 a year.

Hastings Contemporary

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