

# HASTINGS CONTEMPORARY

Press release: March 2026

## **The Open: Odyssey** 28 March – 31 May 2026



Jennifer Binnie, *Door to Another World*, 2025,  
oil paint on wooden door, 78.5 x 46 x 4cm

Hastings Contemporary and Sussex Contemporary are delighted to announce the 152 selected artists for *The Open: Odyssey*, a major new biennial open exhibition launching in March 2026. The selected artists represent the incredible quality, breadth and diversity of contemporary art being made in the region, with works by both established names and emerging voices - created in every conceivable medium, from painting and printmaking to installation and film.

The final selection includes artists of international renown; Jennifer Binnie, Rachel Howard, Gary Hume, Martin Maloney, Alessandro Raho, Anne Ryan, Andrew Sabin and presents an exciting snapshot of artistic excellence in Sussex in 2026, including a remarkable diversity of working practice and materials. The complete list of artists can be viewed on the Hastings Contemporary website.

This milestone, gallery-wide exhibition at Hastings Contemporary is an opportunity to experience some of the bold, distinctive and diverse artistic voices to be found working and

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living in Sussex; exploring themes from the environment and the threat of coastal deprivation to migration and the lived experience of coastal communities.

Works featuring and responding to the coastal landscape of Sussex include *THE SUN CAME DRIPPING A BUCKET FULL OF GOLD*, an evocative film collaboration by father and daughter Andrew and Eden Kötting – the latter, a member of Hastings Project Art Works.

Several works reference the delicate coastal ecology of the region, even including materials harvested from the shoreline. Kevin J J Warren's abstract sculpture *Patterns of Transformation #4*, created from salvaged rope and twine found on local beaches directly confronts the viewer with the effects of manmade pollution. Tabatha Andrews' *Isle* conjures up the working maritime history of the region with a sculptural work created from ship's biscuits made with seawater.

Works exploring the importance of connection and inclusivity include Gil Muallem-Doron's *The New Union Flag Project*, a vibrant collaborative work in textiles created to represent and celebrate the cultural richness and diversity of contemporary Sussex.

The final selection was chosen from more than 2,500 entries by an expert panel, bringing together leading voices from the worlds of art, culture, broadcasting and environmental advocacy: Chris Packham, Elena Crippa, Eva Langret, Fiona Banner, Isabel Rock, Kathleen Soriano and Zoe Lyons.

Wildlife broadcaster and conservationist Chris Packham said, *"I was astounded by the breadth of media and standard of entries for Odyssey, and it's been a real pleasure to play a small role in judging the final selection."*

Elena Crippa, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Courtauld Gallery said, *"For me, one of the most striking things has been the extraordinary range and richness of entries, both in media and subject matter. This has included many striking works addressing the beauty and complexity of our location; from the sea and ecological issues to themes including migrations and crossing."*

Kathleen Soriano, Director of Hastings Contemporary, said *"There was never any question about the level of creativity in this part of the world, but the overwhelming response from artists to our first ever Open exhibition, and the way in which they embraced the idea of 'Odyssey', has been inspirational. Not only the quality, but the range of materials used, the variety of styles and approaches, and the sheer bravery and ambition in the works presented has allowed us to make a stunning exhibition that will truly celebrate the creative talent associated with the region."*

Jo Myles, Director of Sussex Contemporary, said *"The artists' entries demonstrated an extraordinary willingness to fully inhabit the theme, resulting in work that is ambitious, thoughtful, and resonant. There's a strong sense of journey across the submissions, individual voices contributing to a much larger narrative. I'm excited by the potential of what promises to be a truly groundbreaking exhibition of Sussex-linked art, one that speaks both to place and to possibility."*

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Artist, Isabel Rock, said “*Being an artist can be quite a lonely life, so there is a special value in having an open call exhibition like this to bring artists together – as well as the incredible opportunity of exhibiting in an amazing space like Hastings Contemporary.*”

*The Open: Odyssey* is also an opportunity for visitors to support and collect the work of artists from the region, with all works available to purchase.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

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

**FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES** For images, interviews, and requests, please contact Celia Bailey, Arts PR & Development at [bailey\\_celia@hotmail.com](mailto:bailey_celia@hotmail.com) 07930 442 411

**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**

Rock-a-Nore Road, Hastings, TN34 3DW  
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**Sussex Contemporary** celebrates, supports, and promotes contemporary artists, makers and craftspeople providing them with innovative ways of showcasing their work. With a vibrant annual programme of national and regional exhibitions and a series of workshops and talks called ‘The Business of Art’ we actively support living creatives towards greater commercial success.

## **The Open: Odyssey**

At Hastings Contemporary

Exhibition dates: 28 March 2026 – 31 May 2026

**Chris Packham** is a conservationist and broadcaster known for his environmental and animal welfare activism. His TV credits include *Springwatch* and *Earth for the BBC* and *Is it Time to Break the Law* for Channel 4. Alongside his ambassadorial roles for numerous NGOs, he runs independent campaigns aimed at nature recovery and ending animal cruelty. Chris is also a vocal advocate for neurodiversity with a special focus on autism.

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**Elena Crippa** is Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Courtauld Gallery, where she recently launched a new commission with the artist Rachel Jones and is curating a forthcoming exhibition of drawings and paintings by Salman Toor, opening in the autumn of 2026. She was previously Head of Exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery and Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Tate Britain, where her projects included retrospective exhibitions of Frank Bowling (2019) and Paula Rego (2021) and the 2022 commission *Hew Locke: The Procession*. She was a judge of the 60th Venice Biennale (2024). Recent publications include a monograph on Sonia Boyce for Tate Publishing's Artists Series (2024).

**Eva Langret** is Director, EMEA for Frieze, where she leads on Frieze London and oversees all Frieze initiatives in the region. Passionate about championing emerging artistic talent, she is the Vice Chair of the board of the Camden Art Centre, a place for world-class contemporary art exhibitions and education, a trustee of Fluxus Arts Project, a not-for-profit organisation created by the Institut français du Royaume-Uni, and a trustee of Forma, a London-based non-profit organisation supporting emerging and mid-career British and international artists.

Artist **Fiona Banner** often works under the moniker of The Vanity Press. She established the imprint in 1997, with her seminal book *The Nam*. Since then she has published many works, some in the form of books, some sculptural, some performance based. In 2009 she issued herself an ISBN number and registered herself as a publication under her own name. Humour, conflict and language are at the core of her work. Banner works in London and on the south coast, she exhibits internationally.

**Isabel Rock** is an artist and activist. Working in all mediums, she crafts surreal narratives with fantastical beings and hidden morals that blend humour with the darker side of human nature. She has exhibited internationally, including at the inaugural India Art Summit and the Royal Academy. Active in non-violent civil disobedience groups, most recently Citizens Arrest Network, Rock's activism and art examine and rebel against the systems we live in. Her drawing made during a month in HMP Bronzefield after a Just Stop Oil protest won the Evelyn Williams Drawing Award (2023) resulting in a solo exhibition, *Things Fall Apart, The Centre Cannot Hold*, at Hastings Contemporary in 2025-26.

**Jo Myles** is the Director of Sussex Contemporary, and Chair of the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft. Under her leadership, SC runs high-profile open-call exhibitions, public shows, and paid opportunities that connect emerging and established makers with collectors, venues, and the public, all with an emphasis on accessibility, fair artist pay, and practical career support. Jo built a substantive career in the creative and fashion industries, working for Alexander McQueen, Laura Ashley, and Warehouse, and then founded an award-winning design-led gifting business, repeatedly praised for innovative leadership and commercial strategy.

**Kathleen Soriano** is an independent curator, art historian, and broadcaster. With over 35 years' experience in the art world she has been responsible for collections, contemporary and historical exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and the Royal Academy of Arts, where she was Artistic Director (2009–2014), as well as at Compton Verney Art Gallery, where

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she was Director (2005–2009). Her book *Madam and Eve*, on women artists, was published in April 2018. Her broadcast activities include twelve series of *Portrait* and *Landscape Artist of the Year* for Sky Arts. Kathleen is currently Director at Hastings Contemporary.

**Zoe Lyons** has worked as a stand up comic for over 20 years. She has appeared on many TV shows including QI, Have I Got News For You and hosted the quiz show Lightning. She is one of the most recognisable voices on BBC Radio 4 and is regularly heard on Just a Minute, News Quiz and The Unbelievable Truth. She lives in Hove with her partner and terrier. She is a keen scuba diver and is an Ocean Ambassador for the Marine Conservation Society.