



Media information
For immediate use

The Enlightenments

Juliana Engberg curator

- Presented in partnership with the Dean Gallery - National Galleries of Scotland, Collective Gallery, and Talbot Rice Gallery - The University of Edinburgh.
- *The Enlightenments* is sponsored by Bank of Scotland, and supported by Homecoming Scotland and the Government of Victoria, Australia through Arts Victoria.

The Edinburgh International Festival 2009 visual arts exhibition *The Enlightenments* is a series of new commissions and work new to Scotland. It takes a contemporary view of ideas and questions which first arose in Edinburgh during the 18th century Enlightenment.

The Enlightenments is integral to the Festival's exploration of the Enlightenment and its great minds and innovations. It is presented in partnership with the Dean Gallery – National Galleries of Scotland, Talbot Rice Gallery – The University of Edinburgh and Collective Gallery which are hosting the project, in addition to a Bluetooth delivered work.

The Enlightenments runs from Friday 7 August to Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 September. Entry is free.

Juliana Engberg, Artistic Director of Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne and curator of *The Enlightenments* said:

'Edinburgh epitomizes the ideals of the 18th-century Scottish Enlightenment with its neo-classical beauty and places of learning, law and finance. The city also exists as a series of warrens and darker places. Its Enlightenment edifice is built upon a maze of intriguing geological fissures, labyrinthine architecture and iniquitous underworlds.

Against this backdrop of the city and its philosophical history the artworks that make up *The Enlightenments* offer contemporary observations on subjects including religion, philosophy, superstition, architecture, literature, natural history, the cosmos, scepticism, stoicism and social manners.'

The artists and works that make up *The Enlightenments* are as follows:

Presented in partnership with the Dean Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland:

Nathan Coley (UK)

BELOVED (New commission)

Questioning belief systems and investigating architectural structures inhabited by and invested with faith form Turner Prize nominee Coley's three-dimensional practice.

His work for *The Enlightenments*, takes as its starting point three gnarled tree trunks that support the extraordinary undulating roof of a remote 19th century stone cottage in Perthshire.

Coley has isolated and re-presented this existing element of the built environment – architecturally remixing spruce and pine trunks through a process that included drying out the trunks in kilns over the course of three months, applying coats of eggshell and a final layer of meticulously chosen paint. Text is also being added through a highly involved process which will result in textual references being slightly visible through a series of small holes drilled into the trunks using a steel template made with a computer guided laser cutter.

Lee Mingwei (USA/Taiwan)

Letter Writing Project

Lee Mingwei makes projects that help people connect to themselves, their memories and emotions.

His *Letter Writing Project* – which will take place for the first time in the UK as part of *The Enlightenments* - invites viewers to write the letters they always meant to, but have never had the opportunity or time to do.

Lee's three-sided booth, constructed of wood and translucent glass, contains a desk and writing materials. In this project, visitors enter the booths to write their letter. The letters are then sealed and addressed (for posting by the gallery), or left unsealed in one of many slots on the wall of the booth, where later visitors can read them. Many of the visitors come to realise, through reading the letters of others that they too carry unexpressed feelings that they would feel relieved to write down and perhaps share. A chain of feelings is created, reminding visitors of the larger world of emotions in which we all participate.

Tacita Dean (UK)

Presentation Sisters

Acclaimed British artist Tacita Dean films the daily routines and rituals of the last remaining members of this small ecclesiastical community. With a patient and gentle regard for the rhythm of the day, plotted through the ethereal light that travels through the lives and rooms of this order, Dean emphasizes the aspects of quiet devotion, internal contemplation and external dedication that define the Sisters' spiritual and earthly existence. (Running time 60 minutes.)

Greg Creek (Australian)

Edinburgh Drawing: Chatter Shapes (New commission)

Edinburgh, city of the Enlightenment, is combined with its darker underbelly in Greg Creek's epic drawings and water colours, a form of city panorama. Detailed drawings of Edinburgh's architecture and notable landmarks are interspersed with more scatological notations, doodles, scenes, dreams and invented prose that build a delicate filigree of place. Creek's drawing encourages a visual journey that maps both place and time, with references to historical, contemporary and fictional events, people and subjects.

Joshua Mosley (USA)

dread

Joshua Mosley's digital film of animated clay figures presents a fictional encounter between two of history's most important philosophical and theological thinkers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Blaise Pascal. Rousseau and Pascal meet whilst on a journey through woodland as they contemplate creation, question the nature of truth and pose central philosophical questions. Is God divined or secularly evolved? Is man inherently good, contradicting the accepted doctrine of original sin?

Gabrielle de Vietri (Australian)

Hark!

The I Don't Know Show: Philosophy for Kids (New commission)

Gabrielle de Vietri engages the public in acts of communication. *Hark!*, greets you as you arrive at the portico of the Dean Gallery. Singers relate the news, horoscopes, stock exchange information and other current affairs of the day, recalling the way information was delivered to people prior to the Enlightenment and mass literacy.

For *The I Don't Know Show: Philosophy for Kids*, children have been asked to answer some of the fundamental philosophical questions concerning art and aesthetics. These interrogations offer humorous and engagingly honest responses in a video record.

Presented in partnership with Talbot Rice Gallery, The University of Edinburgh:

Joseph Kosuth (USA)

'An Interpretation of This Title': Nietzsche, Darwin and the Paradox of Content

(New commission)

In this 150th anniversary year celebrating the work of Charles Darwin, conceptualist Joseph Kosuth creates a new commission in the library where Darwin was inspired to pursue his revolutionary, evolutionary theory.

Kosuth has consistently explored the production and role of language and meaning within art. This new work is a series of debates between Darwin and Joseph's long time collaborators, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.

These Kosuthian sentences and dialogues probe the paradox of content that occurs between philosophy, science and art. Presented as a set of neon diagrams and words we find Darwin's own immediate, intuitive and creative doodles and drawings introducing the ideas that we later take as the blue prints for scientific truths. Joseph uses Nietzsche's thoughts with a Wittgensteinian approach to interrogate the creative and philosophical slippages that occur in the convergent descriptions of philosophy in relation to art.

Presented in partnership with Collective Gallery:

Susan Norrie (Australian)

Enola

SHOT (New commission)

Susan Norrie's practice is concerned with the future of our planet. Her key interest, examined through fictional film and video combined with real events, is the environment and various catastrophes that are a consequence of humankind's push for military supremacy and industrial power. Norrie's acclaimed video project *Enola* pictures a world that has become mummified as a result of nuclear trauma.

Norrie's new project *SHOT* explores aspects of outer space and our quest for enlightenment beyond our fragile, precarious world – a quest necessary not just for the sake of knowledge, but possibly for survival.

Bluetooth delivered stories:

Juan Cruz (Spain)

Mensch (New commission)

Juan Cruz is known for his projects involving story telling, translation and fictional navigations of urban space. In *Mensch* he evolves a number of interconnected narratives that circulate around the old city of Edinburgh. Using the definition of Mensch as 'someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character, with rectitude, dignity and a sense of what is right', Cruz examines the shifting status of professional men such as the shepherd, priest and artist in stories that amble through social change.

Ten individual stories will be available at the following locations:

- The Hub, Edinburgh Festival Centre, Royal Mile
- Edinburgh Festival Theatre, Nicolson Street
- King's Theatre, Leven Street
- Queen's Hall, Clerk Street
- Usher Hall, Lothian Road
- Royal Lyceum Theatre, Grindlay Street
- The Edinburgh Playhouse, Greenside Place
- Collective Gallery, Cockburn Street
- Talbot Rice Gallery, Old College, South Bridge
- Dean Gallery, Belford Road

Bluetooth will need to be enabled on mobile phones to receive *Mensch*

Archie Kane, Group Executive Director, Lloyds Banking Group said: 'The Enlightenments promises to be an extremely important part of this year's Edinburgh International Festival, providing the opportunity for everyone to enjoy a new and innovative visual art programme for free. Bank of Scotland is delighted to be supporting this project, demonstrating our continued commitment to the development of arts and culture in Scotland.'

Marie Christie, Project Director, Homecoming Scotland said: 'The Edinburgh International Festival is a stellar event in the arts calendar and is an important part of the Homecoming celebrations. The Enlightenments is a powerful contemporary interpretation of a major theme for Homecoming – Great Minds & Innovations.'

Lynne Kosky, Victorian Minister for the Arts, said: 'The Victorian Government is pleased to continue to build on its strong historic and contemporary links with Scotland. In 2009, we are pleased to support The Enlightenments as a key element of a three year cultural exchange project with the Edinburgh Festival. Look out for other Melbourne and Victorian works including Malthouse Theatre's wonderful *Optimism*, also featured in this year's festival.'

John Leighton, Director-General, National Galleries of Scotland, said: 'Audiences in Edinburgh expect to encounter the very best of international practice across all areas of culture including the visual arts. This important project exploits various settings and associations across the city as the framework for a challenging, imaginative and internationally fluid set of responses to Enlightenment themes. The NGS is delighted to be a partner in this ground-breaking venture and we look forward to extending and developing this collaboration with EIF in future years.'

Pat Fisher, Director, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh said: 'Historically and now in the 21st century The University of Edinburgh characterises the achievement of the Enlightenment. We are delighted therefore that the University's Talbot Rice gallery is part of this project hosting one of the world's great intellectual artists, Joseph Kosuth.'

Kate Gray, Collective Gallery, said: 'Edinburgh's coffee houses were a hub of invention and debate during the Scottish Enlightenment. It seems particularly poignant at this time to re-examine Enlightenment ideas and ideals. Visual arts can provide experiences that change the way we look at the world and understand ourselves within it, and with this in mind Collective is proud to host Susan Norrie's contribution to *The Enlightenments*. The Scottish Enlightenment had effects far beyond Scotland itself and to reflect this we invite audiences both new and old to join us in contemporary revelations.'

eif.co.uk/theenlightenments

ENDS

For further information on *The Enlightenments* please contact the **Edinburgh International Festival press office on +44 (0) 131 473 2020 or press@eif.co.uk**

The Enlightenments

Juliana Engberg Curator

Anna MacDonald Project Coordinator

Access to all *The Enlightenments* works is free and unticketed.

Tacita Dean, Greg Creek, Joshua Mosley, Lee Mingwei, Gabrielle de Vietri and Nathan Coley

Free

Friday 7 August-Sunday 27 September

Open daily 10.00am-5.00pm

Dean Gallery, Belford Road

Joseph Kosuth

Free

Friday 7 August-Saturday 26 September

Opening hours

August Monday- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm, Sunday 2.00pm-5.00pm, Not Monday 31 August. September Tuesday-Sunday 10.00am- 5.00pm

Georgian Gallery, Talbot Rice Gallery

The University of Edinburgh, Old College, South Bridge

Susan Norrie

Free

Friday 7 August-Sunday 27 September

Opening hours August Tuesday-Sunday 11.00am-6.00pm;

September Tuesday-Sunday 12 noon-5.00pm

Collective Gallery, 22-28 Cockburn Street

Juan Cruz

Free

Friday 7 August-Saturday 26 September

Locations:

***The Enlightenments* is sponsored by Bank of Scotland and supported by Homecoming Scotland and the Government of Victoria, Australia through Arts Victoria.**

Homecoming Scotland 2009 is a Scottish Government initiative managed by EventScotland in partnership with VisitScotland.

Homecoming Scotland 2009 seeks to motivate people of Scottish descent, as well as those who simply love Scotland, to come home and join us in a national celebration of our culture, heritage and the many great contributions Scotland has given the world: www.homecomingscotland2009.com If you would like more information on Homecoming Scotland please contact Leon Thompson, EventScotland Communications Manager, 0131 472 2312 leon.thompson@eventscotland.org