

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

Date: Tuesday 28 March 2023, 10:00am.

Updated: Friday 14 April 2023.

Contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Images: [HERE](#)

Listings: [HERE](#)

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Southbank Centre announces climate-focused season *Planet Summer*, featuring Greta Thunberg, Mark Carney and Tori Tsui



L-R: Greta Thunberg © Kim Jakobsen To / Visualisation Pocket Forest © Image courtesy of SUGi / Mikaela Loach © Emma Hardy

***Planet Summer* highlights include:**

- Live events with **Greta Thunberg, Tori Tsui, Vanessa Nakate, Daphne Frias, Mya-Rose Craig, Mark Carney** and **Ati Viviam Villafaña**
- New **Hayward Gallery** exhibition to explore the climate crisis, featuring 14 international artists including **Cornelia Parker, Richard Mosse** and **Hito Steyerl**
- **Poetry International** festival returns for the first time since 2019 with ecopoetry, new commissions and collaborations
- A **pocket forest** developed with urban rewilding organisation **SUGi** will become a new, permanent feature at the Southbank Centre
- **The SpongeBob Musical** (26 Jul-27 Aug) tells the story of saving the undersea world, with original music by the world's most iconic rock and pop artists, while theatre pioneers **Ontroerend Goed** bring the London premiere of climate show **Are we not drawn onward to new erA**
- Free events include interpretive dance **Bird Rave** and the showcase of **REFRAME**, a programme for secondary schools and emerging artists across London, Birmingham and Manchester, supported by Apple

From 21 June to 3 September, the **Southbank Centre** presents *Planet Summer*, a landmark multi-artform season that explores themes of care, hope, connection and activism in response to the climate emergency. From its origins in the Festival of Britain in 1951 to today, the Southbank Centre has a history of producing pioneering artistic programmes, and *Planet Summer* is no exception, exploring one of the most urgent issues of our time.

Performances, exhibitions, music, new artistic commissions and free programming will connect audiences with a range of environmental issues and highlight the need for active care of the environment and nature.

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, says: *“Our Planet Summer season, which launches ahead of London Climate Action Week, brings together an astonishing range of artists and activists with an invitation for us all to make change together. It centres on the ideas of Care, Hope and Action: how we can build an empathetic relationship with nature that sees us as an intrinsic part of the natural world, and not separate from it; how can that instil hope and a belief that we can all make a difference, that all of our daily actions working together can push us in the right direction, because the world begins to change when individuals decide it can. It’s also a call to action for the Southbank Centre too as we head towards our own net-zero targets, permanently transforming our site and operations and building new relationships with ecologists, activists, artists and communities.”*

Planet Summer presents key voices inspiring hope and change in a series of headline talks and discussions with **Greta Thunberg, Mikaela Loach, Mark Carney, Dominique Palmer** and more. The **Hayward Gallery** presents a pioneering group exhibition ***Dear Earth: Art and Hope in a Time of Crisis*** featuring artists committed to reframing and deepening our psychological and spiritual responses to the climate crisis. **Poetry International** festival, returning for the first time since 2019, gathers ecopoets from around the world with new commissions and collaborations, in spirit with their universal goals to preserve, protect and activate change.

The *Planet Summer* programme reflects the Southbank Centre’s commitment to sustainability, with our continued work to be a Net Zero carbon site by 2035 (Scope 1 and 2). Our interim targets to meet these milestones include reducing carbon emissions by 50% from our buildings by 2025, for which we have already achieved 42% of this target in 2022. Our activities include lowering temperatures across the site, appointing a Sustainability Advisor and installing a 130 square metre pocket forest of 390 trees which will be planted as a new, permanent feature in partnership with rewilding organisation SUGi. We are also aiming to install solar technology by the end of 2023.

More information on our sustainability work is included in the Notes to Editors section.

Event listings are available [here](#). Tickets go on sale to Southbank Centre Members on Wednesday 29 March and to the general public on Thursday 30 March. The SpongeBob Musical tickets are on sale.

Literature, Talks & Debates

Audiences can witness leading international climate activists, including **Greta Thunberg, Tori Tsui** and **Vanessa Nakate**, discussing intersectional approaches to the climate crisis. **Dominique Palmer** brings a talk about appreciating the beauty and joy to be found in the natural world, a respite from

climate doom, and climate justice activist **Mikaela Loach** discusses her debut book *It's Not That Radical*. Economic perspectives are brought by **Mark Carney** on **Climate Action and Finance** while the vitality of hope over climate despair is argued by **Rebecca Solnit, Thelma Young-Lutunataua & Guests**. The Southbank Centre's partnership with debates programme Intelligence Squared offers audiences balanced perspectives from experts in **Is Climate Activism Working?**, exploring the impact of activist groups using increasingly disruptive measures. All talks and debates will be BSL-interpreted and Speech-to-Text Transcribed.

Poetry International

Founded by Ted Hughes in 1967, the major biannual poetry festival returns for the first time since 2019. Poetry International 2023 examines the environment, celebrating poets as activists and those using their craft to preserve languages and environments.

The line-up includes major ecopoets; **CAConrad, John Kinsella, Jorie Graham, Olive Senior** and **Yang Lian** presenting new work and leading workshops for the public. The next generation of climate activist poetry is celebrated with the **Ginkgo Prize** ceremony, a major international award for ecopoetry. **Cerys Matthews** revisits the beloved fictional world of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. Poetry International 2023 also celebrates the **National Poetry Library's 70th Birthday**, the largest public collection of poetry in the world, marking 35 years at the Southbank Centre.

Visual Arts

The Hayward Gallery presents ***Dear Earth: Art and Hope in a Time of Crisis (21 Jun – 3 Sept)***, a thematically pioneering, group exhibition with over fourteen international artists helping to reframe our responses to the climate crisis. With featured artist **Otobong Nkanga's** suggestion that "*caring is a form of resistance*" at its core, *Dear Earth* will be a hopeful and compassionate show drawing on themes of resilience, care and tending, and invite audiences to consider the unique and evolving role art has to play in today's climate debate and activism.

The exhibition will also include a multitude of new commissions from artists and community groups including **Hito Steyerl, Cornelia Parker, Richard Mosse, Jenny Kendler, Grounded Ecotherapy** and **Ackroyd & Harvey**. *Dear Earth* will also mark the first time artists **Daiara Tukano** and **Aluaiy Kaumakan** have shown their work in a major UK art institution.

As with all shows at the Hayward Gallery, *Dear Earth* will have relaxed hours for all to feel welcome in the gallery space and experience the exhibition.

The **SUGi Pocket Forest** covering 130 square metres with 390 trees will be planted as a new, permanent feature of the Southbank Centre, in partnership with SUGi, the premier rewilding organisation dedicated to building biodiversity, restoring ecosystems and reconnecting people with nature. Created using the *Miyawaki* method, a technique that allows for quick growth and an almost maintenance free upkeep, this dense urban forest is designed to encourage wildlife and nature to thrive amongst the brutalist architecture of the site, restoring the sights and sounds of the natural world. The project will be realised with the support of Moët & Chandon.

It is estimated that the forest will become self-sustaining in 2-3 years, providing a carbon sequestration average rate of 3 kilos per square metre per annum, totalling 405 kilos per annum over

the first 20 years of growth. Carbon sequestration is the capturing, removal and storage of carbon dioxide.

For children, **REPLAY** offers an endless world of play in a space built entirely out of waste materials repurposed for fun and play. Part installation, part adventure playground, **REPLAY** is a brand new interactive experience from The Herd Theatre. All sessions have Relaxed principles and are Sensory Adapted. Early Years sessions are also available.

Performance & Music

Artists are exploring the climate crisis in diverse ways. A five-week run of **The SpongeBob Musical**, follows the citizens of Bikini Bottom protecting their home and saving the undersea world. Starring *Ru-Paul's Drag Race* legend **Divina De Campo** and original songs by the world's most iconic rock and pop artists, this entertaining family show proves the power of optimism really can save the world! Poignant instrumental and vocal work **MELTWATER** focuses on the melting polar ice-cap, using the surprisingly diverse sounds created by ice sheets with video by Richard Sidey. **Earth Makes No Sound** is a collaborative choral work inspired by the elements and the environmental changes happening to our planet. Originally created for the Chorus Festival at the Southbank Centre in 2015, the piece combines a core professional company with a large ensemble of community singers. Meanwhile boundary-pushing theatre collective **Ontroerend Goed** brings the London premiere of **Are we not drawn onward to new erA**, a show that traces the process of human movement and imagines how we can work backwards from apocalypse.

Creative Learning

With climate anxiety cited as one of the top three concerns of young people, *Planet Summer's* creative learning programme has invited participants to creatively respond to the climate emergency and to the challenges it poses for theirs and future generations, including its impact on young people's mental health.

Through **REFRAME: Inspire Schools**, 21 secondary schools in London, Greater Manchester and Birmingham, will work with artists, graphic designers, illustrators and climate experts to design their own class zines, voicing their responses to the climate emergency and its effect on them and their communities. **REFRAME: The Residency** will support 80 talented Black and Black Mixed heritage creatives (18-30-year-olds) in London, Birmingham and Manchester as part of the pioneering new talent development programme launched last year, supported by Apple. The ambitious programme is in partnership with Factory International, Manchester, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham and Birmingham City University's STEAMhouse.

The 80 participants on The Residency programme, which features hands-on creative sessions as well as sessions led by Apple creative experts, will present their work in film, audio and photography in an exhibition during *Planet Summer*.

On 10 July, the 21 schools participating in the Inspire Schools programme will showcase their digital zines, hear from inspirational climate experts and meet students at a national launch party during *Planet Summer*. The digital zines will be showcased in an online exhibition at the Southbank Centre, Factory International and Midlands Arts Centre.

The Southbank Centre's flagship creative writing programme for primary schools, ***Imagine A Story***, is inviting over 2,000 children in London, Newcastle, Sunderland, Kendal and Norwich to produce two books and performances which will tour nationwide. The children will work with award-winning children's author Sita Brahmachari to create *Rewilding Dream*, a story about how children's ideas are making the biggest changes for the future of our planet. Performances will be led by climate activists Dominique Palmer and Love Ssega, Artist in Residence at the Philharmonia Orchestra.

In addition, poetry created by older participants all over the country engaging with the new series of ***Art by Post: Poems For Our Planet*** activity booklets, designed by artists and activists, will also be presented in an installation during *Planet Summer*. The scheme, in partnership with the National Academy for Social Prescribing, provides free poetry and art activities to support anyone with long-term physical and mental health needs, and was first launched during Covid-19.

Free Events

Ensuring that the Southbank Centre's cultural experiences are accessible to everyone, *Planet Summer* audiences can enjoy a range of free events including ***Plot 17: A hip-hop garden block party***, a mobile DJ and spoken word party travelling the world spreading the message of "making things green", while ***Bird Rave*** sees a team of artists in extraordinary costumes interpreting bird movements in an interactive "dancefloor ornithology" performance to classic "rave" music. Free art installations include ***The Forum***, a pop-up town square formed by inspirational words from young people across the UK, providing a space to hang out and be heard. Quotes from under 19-year-olds are displayed on rotation, collating voices and offering the chance to interact.

The popular fountain ***Jeppe Hein's Appearing Rooms***, which uses recycled water, will be open for families.

More free-to-attend events will be announced soon.

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Listings [HERE](#)

Images [HERE](#)

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Twitter: [@southbankcentre](https://twitter.com/southbankcentre)

Instagram: [@southbankcentre](https://www.instagram.com/southbankcentre)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/southbankcentre/

The Hayward Gallery opening times:

11am – 9pm, Wednesday

11am – 7pm, Thursday – Saturday 10am – 6pm, Sunday

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Twitter: [@haywardgallery](https://twitter.com/haywardgallery)

Instagram: [@Hayward.Gallery](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/haywardgallery/

NOTES TO EDITORS

Sustainability Commitment

The Southbank Centre is actively working to be more sustainable. We aim to be a Net Zero carbon site by 2035 (Scope 1 and 2, which refers to measures controlled by the Southbank Centre such as energy used on-site) and fully Net Zero by 2040 (Scope 3, which refers to indirect emissions that are released as a result of the Southbank Centre's activity).

We were one of the first organisations in the arts sector to be certified as energy efficient under the internationally recognised standard in 2017, but have set further targets across our buildings and estate, programming and operations, employees, visitors and commercial activity. We are aiming to install solar technology by the end of 2023 and have recently appointed a Sustainability Advisor to implement more environmentally conscious measures across the organisation and launch a sustainability e-learning module for all staff to complete.

Current and upcoming environmental measures include using the Gallery Climate Coalition's carbon calculator to track emissions, installing energy efficient LED lighting and relaxing humidity controls. Further measures include lowering temperatures by 1°C, trialling PropelAir toilets that reduce water per flush by 66% using compressed air in office spaces, with a view to upgrading across the site, installing a Wastemaster which composts food in 24 hours to reduce food waste collections by 80%. Over the past six years, we've reduced our CO2 emissions by 48%. With sustainability targets in place, the support of dedicated internal resources and external expertise, we are actively making changes to further minimise our environmental impact and measure our progress regularly.

Please find the Southbank Centre's environmental sustainability webpage [here](#).

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to six Resident Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. Opened by Queen Elizabeth II in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

The Hayward Gallery is actively working to be more sustainable. Current and upcoming environmental measures include using the Gallery Climate Coalition's carbon calculator to track emissions, installing energy

efficient LED lighting and relaxing humidity controls, when artwork requirements allow. By 2025, the Hayward Gallery aims to reduce emissions from curator travel by 50%.

About SUGi

In May 2019, SUGi launched as a global platform fully dedicated to biodiversity building, ecosystem restoration and reconnecting people to nature through the creation of ultra-dense, biodiverse forests of native species in urban areas. Our signature strategy entails engineering soil, microbes and biomass to kickstart natural growth processes, according to the proven Miyawaki method, which in only 20 years yields growth comparable to a 100-year-old forest.

We are among the few rewilding organisations to offer this simple way of making visible change with radical transparency to anyone, anywhere as an antidote to current climate threats and monoculture tree-planting dangers.



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