



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

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### **Perceptive portraits of celebrated group captures how to age well**

An exhibition of vibrant portraits is set to honour a remarkable group of older people credited with fundamentally altering our understanding of ageing.

The portraits – painted by renowned artist Fionna Carlisle – capture the personalities behind the Lothian Birth Cohorts (LBCs), some of the most-intensively studied research participants in the world.

The LBCs are a unique group of people – now in their 80s and 90s – who sat intelligence tests as 11-year olds. Since 1999 they have taken part in thinking tests, brain scans, and health and lifestyle assessments, transforming our understanding of how early life influences healthy ageing.

Included in the exhibition is her new portrait of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor Peter Higgs – who took part in a previous study of healthy ageing at the University of Edinburgh.

More than one billion data points have been collected for each of the LBCs' members. These have revealed that both genetics and lifestyle factors contribute to healthy ageing.

Ms Carlisle depicts the LBC members with graphic, bold brushstrokes. She has painted prominent figures in Scotland, including former First Minister Alex Salmond – which hangs in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery – and the late former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, which is part of the House of Commons Art Collection.

The paintings will be shown alongside scientific treasures from the study participants, including a 3D-printed brain and a highly-detailed crystal etching of the brain's wiring from one of the participants.

*The Art of Intelligent Ageing: Portraits of the Lothian Birth Cohorts* has been curated by former Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Dr Duncan Thomson. It is free to attend and will run at Edinburgh College of Art from Saturday 27 October until 24 November.

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*Ranked among the top universities in the world*

Professor Ian Deary, Director of the Lothian Birth Cohorts and the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, said, "The Lothian Birth Cohorts have encouraged my scientific team to scour their minds, bodies, and histories to build rich and valuable accounts of their negotiating the 'whips and scorns of time'. Fionna's beautiful portraits weave the life story of each individual into the painting."

Fionna Carlisle, said: "These portraits were painted over seven years and reflect the relationship that I built up with the sitters over this time. With these paintings I wanted to filter age and show the youth and spirit of the older sitters as people who have real bodies and limbs, spirit and life."

Wick-born artist Fionna Carlisle studied at Edinburgh College of Art and has exhibited her work across the world, including New York, Chicago, Moscow and Paris.

Further information on the artist and previous exhibitions can be found here:

[www.fionnacarlisle.com/](http://www.fionnacarlisle.com/)

A podcast on the exhibition can be found here:

<https://forwardthinking.ppls.ed.ac.uk/2018/08/31/portraits-of-the-lothian-birth-cohort/>

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