



Hold Hands Among the Atoms

The Edwin Morgan Trust launches online centenary celebrations and artist grant scheme

For immediate release April 15,2020

The Edwin Morgan Centenary programme was created to celebrate **Edwin Morgan's** work and disseminate it as widely as possible. While the impact of the Covid19 pandemic has changed so much about the world in the last month, it hasn't altered the Edwin Morgan Trust's intention to pay a fitting tribute to Scotland's much-loved, much-missed Makar in his centenary year.

In response to the current situation, the Trust is re-imagining and expanding on their physical programme to generate new spaces to celebrate and share Edwin Morgan's work online. A new online video channel, **Hold Hands Among the Atoms** (the title taken from the cycle of seventy 'social poems' Morgan wrote for his 70th birthday in 1990), will feature elements of the programme originally planned for the public programme of #EdwinMorgan100, alongside new material created especially for this medium. Launching on **Monday 27th April**, which would have been Morgan's 100th birthday, the channel will bring together diverse voices and perspectives from across the globe to celebrate the work and life of Edwin Morgan.

The channel (and centenary) will launch with a short film, '**Open the Doors!**' (title taken from Morgan's poem 'For the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, 9 October 2004'), which features contributions from Morgan's friends, collaborators and celebrity fans including **Liz Lochhead, Alan Cumming, Jackie Kay, Eddi Reader, Kate Dickie, Damian Barr, Elaine C Smith, Andy Arnold, Ron Butlin, Carol Ann Duffy, Gerry Mulgrew, Tommy Smith and Imtiaz Dharker**, sharing their memories of Morgan and reading his work.

Readers from around the world are invited to share their favourite Morgan poems on social media on Monday 27th April, across video, text or any other medium they find appropriate, using the hashtags #edwinmorgan100 and #holdhandsamongtheatoms. A series of "birthday cards" designed for social media and featuring some of his best-loved works will be available to download [at this link](#).

The Trust is also delighted to announce an artist grant scheme, **The Second Life** (the title taken from Morgan's breakthrough 1968 collection), supported by **Creative Scotland** and the **Saltire Society**. This will provide funding for creative practitioners from a variety of art forms to respond to Morgan's work, giving it a 'second life'. (Further information about both in Notes for Editors.)

COMMENT

Robyn Marsack, a friend of Morgan's and the Trustee leading the Centenary celebrations, said: "When Edwin turned eighty, he wrote a poem about pushing the boat out into the unknown, 'Unknown is best!' he declared. I can't guess what he would have thought about the pandemic, but I can be sure that his restless, dauntless imagination would have engaged with it. What a great example of inquiring creativity, of energy, humour and belief in human capacity he remains to us, and how important it is to be reminded of an imagination and linguistic vitality that soars from his beloved Glasgow to Saturn and back. We wanted to encourage artists to respond to his work in a virtual space while social distancing is in place, to reach audiences through all the various media at their disposal in the way that Edwin, with his wide interests and curiosity, would have wished. The Trust is delighted that Creative Scotland and the Saltire Society are enabling us to offer these opportunities to artists at a time when 'unknown' feels frightening; we hope we can all take courage from Edwin's words."



NOTES FOR EDITORS CONTINUED OVER

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Robyn Marsack and project manager Siân McIntyre are available for interview and further comment. Some of the video and audio created for the first video may also be available for broadcast; the Trust also has archive images and footage available. Please contact Kirstin Innes (kirstin@kirstininnes.com) to arrange feature coverage.

Web: edwinmorgantrust.com, Twitter: [@EdMorganTrust](https://twitter.com/EdMorganTrust), Instagram [@the_edwin_morgan_trust](https://www.instagram.com/the_edwin_morgan_trust), Facebook [@edwinmorgantrust](https://www.facebook.com/edwinmorgantrust)

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Edwin Morgan (1920–2010) led a remarkable creative life. He published 25 collections of poetry, translated hundreds of poems and wrote plays. Glasgow was at the heart of Morgan's life and work and Scotland was his vital context; but his outlook was always international, even intergalactic. His poetry is extremely accessible, engaging, and often humorous, ranging from social realism to Dadaist experimentation. Throughout his life Morgan pushed the boundaries of poetry, for example collaborating with musicians like the indie rock band Idlewild and jazz composer Tommy Smith, and visual artists John Furnival and Ron O'Donnell. Significantly, Morgan lived during a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence (it was de-criminalised on 1 February 1981, when Morgan was 61) - many of his love poems before this time are genderless, and capture the spectrum of experience of love and lust. In 2004 he was appointed Scotland's first Makar (poet laureate), a role he held until his death.

Edwin Morgan (1920–2010) led a remarkable creative life. He published 25 collections of poetry, translated hundreds of poems and wrote plays. Glasgow was at the heart of Morgan's life and work and Scotland was his vital context; but his outlook was always international, even intergalactic. His poetry is extremely accessible, engaging, and often humorous, ranging from social realism ('In the Snack Bar') to Dadaist experimentation ('The Loch Ness Monster's Song'). Throughout his life Morgan pushed the boundaries of poetry, for example collaborating with musicians like the indie rock band Idlewild and jazz composer Tommy Smith, and visual artists John Furnival and Ron O'Donnell. Significantly, Morgan lived during a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence (it was de-criminalised on 1 February 1981, when Morgan was 61) - many of his love poems before this time are genderless, and capture the spectrum of experience of love and lust. In 2004 he was appointed Scotland's first Makar (poet laureate), a role he held until his death.

Hold Hands Among the Atoms, the video channel of Edwin Morgan's Centenary year, will launch on 27 April 2020, with videos shared on Vimeo and embedded on the Edwin Morgan Trust website. A new video will be released on the 27th of every month from April to December this year. With the intention of providing paid opportunities for artists, and generating unique and visually compelling material, the Trust has invited a number of **Scottish-based video artists** to edit the films, creating unique video collages which reflect Morgan's polyglot approach to artforms. Video, audio and static images will be collected from archives and accompanied with self-recorded responses from Edwin Morgan's peers, collaborators and Centenary partners who will be invited to consider a range of thematic intentions such as 'identity', 'collaboration' and 'queerness'. Artist will then use this material to generate a suite of 12 unique videos, providing personal insight into Edwin Morgan's life and work. The first video of the series will be edited by Glasgow based artist **Aideen Doran**, whose visual arts practice spans across moving image, sound, installation and writing.

The Second Life grant scheme furthers the centenary's crucial support of creative practitioners. The scheme provides 8 x £1,500 and 8 x £750 grants, funded by Creative Scotland, and 1 x £2,500 grant funded by the Saltire Society's 'Inspiring Scotland' scheme, to Scottish community groups, writing collectives, artists, curators, writers, actors, playwrights,



musicians and collaborators who propose to give Morgan's work a 'second life'. This will create opportunities to generate new responses, which will then be showcased during the centenary year, both physically and digitally.

At the heart of this programme is a desire to reach people from a range of creative backgrounds and diverse working lives who may not otherwise be aware of Edwin Morgan's work or see its relevance to themselves/ their communities. To encourage this engagement, the Trust has created a cultural advisory panel, who will draw from their own communities, lived experiences and geographical locations to nominate 8 recipients to receive a £1,500 grant each. This panel includes **Hannah Lavery** (Scottish Poetry Library and BAME Writers Group), **Ian Morrison** (poet, Fruitmarket Gallery), **Robert Softley Gale** and **Mairi Taylor** (Birds of Paradise Theatre), **Eoin Dara** (DCA), and **Seona McClintock** (Producer, Gaelic and Traditional Arts Eden Court). An additional 8 x £750 grants will be given out in response to an open call, reviewed by the cultural advisory panel and administered by the Trust.

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery.
www.creativescotland.com

ENDS