

SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

## Katie Paterson: Requiem at Ingleby Gallery — the birth, life and death of our planet

Plus: Johannes Radebe; Easter Eggstravaganza; Bat Out of Hell



Katie Paterson with her piece *Ending*, part of *Requiem* at Ingleby Gallery. The 100 pigments used are made from rock samples from all of history, some older than the sun  
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Ashley Davies | Saturday April 16 2022, 12:01am, The Times

Over the next two months a glass urn in an Edinburgh art gallery will slowly be filled with layers of ground-down matter, some of it older than our sun, telling the story of the birth and life of our planet.

It's a typically ambitious project by the Glasgow-born Katie Paterson, who contemplates space (as in the vastness of the universe and beyond) and time like no other artist.

The idea came to her when she was thinking about the cellar in her old Berlin flat, which contained offcuts of fossils she had used for an artwork (*Fossil Necklace*). "I visualised a cellar full of time and eternity, and I imagined it all turning to dust," the Edinburgh College of Art alumna says. "The thoughts I had were originally of geological and earthly time, then I expanded the time frame to before the Earth, before even the sun, and then to where we are now," she says. "It was an epic task, to collect significant objects and materials, trying to think about how that fits into the major extinctions and evolution of life."

Powder will be poured from about 370 small glass vials, which are placed in the gallery space around the urn, chosen for its funerary symbolism. Each vial contains 21g — the weight of a human soul posited by one 1901 experiment. The contents have been donated by geologists, environmental activists, palaeontologists and other experts.

"Bit by bit I sketched out this history of Earth that isn't exactly linear but works in geological eras through time," Paterson explains. "It was a huge undertaking trying to represent major civilisations that have come and gone."

The oldest matter ground down to dust dates back to pre-solar meteorites, and also includes a 4.5 billion-year-old Precambrian rock formation, one of Earth's oldest. More recent components include fragments of trinitite from the first atomic bomb detonation, landmines from Angola, dead coral, Niger Delta oil spills and plastic regurgitated by an albatross in Antarctica.

Members of the public can get involved. "I'd really like children to come and pour layers and learn about the evolutionary path of life," Paterson says. "It is a sad object. It's definitely melancholy, but it's also wondrous. It's like a cabinet of curiosities, telling the majesty of life."



Paterson has also been commissioned by Apple to create a sculpture  
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The exhibition features several other works by Paterson, resulting from collaborations with botanists, naturalists and herbariums around the world. They include *Evergreen*, an image archive of extinct flowering plants represented in lines of tapestry, and *The Moment*, an hourglass filled with ancient stardust.

In June she will unveil *Mirage*, a public sculpture commissioned by Apple for its California headquarters. And the latest ceremony of her Future Library project in Oslo, where trees have been planted that once matured will be used to print anthologies in 2114, takes place this spring. The latest authors to contribute works that will be held in trust and remain unread until then are Tsitsi Dangarembga, Karl Ove Knausgard and Ocean Vuong.

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What about the final layer in the *Requiem* urn? That will be made of the shell of a partula snail, which is an "ending species", one that is at risk of extinction. "It's both mildly hopeful, because people are trying to protect it, and tragic because it's just one example of so many species on the brink of extinction," Paterson says. "I wanted to end with a question mark."

Until June 11, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh; [inglebygallery.com](http://inglebygallery.com)