

Norwich Climate Mural For Our Time



A Free Event Arranged Especially for Members of u3a Norwich

14.15 on 17th September 2024, in the Council Chamber, City Hall Norwich

Interested in art, science, planetary history, social history, the character of Norwich and Norfolk, and most other things? Then take advantage of this unique opportunity for a conversation with artist, scientists, and a politician in front of the most effective conversation piece possible – the giant **Norwich Climate Mural For Our Time** which is the largest-known piece of public art on climate change, and now a permanent installation in the City Hall Council Chamber

The Mural is the outcome of a ground-breaking collaboration between an internationally renowned artist, Norwich-based Gennadiy Ivanov, leading climate scientists from UEA's Climatic Research Unit, and the former Leader of Norwich City Council.



Like the best visual art, the Mural tells a complex story in a way which makes it instantly accessible to non-specialists. The Mural team will outline the rich story told by the Mural, and also describe the excitements – and tribulations! – of extended collaboration between artist, scientists and politician. One such multi-disciplinary meeting is shown here in the corridor outside Gennadiy Ivanov's studio in Anglia Square.

Following the introduction to the Mural, and how it was produced, will be the key part of the afternoon: a conversation with, and between, u3a members. It is hoped that this session will be followed, at a later date, by another where the “u3a generation” will be joined by the “grandchildren generation” in a conversation between those who might have done more to fight climate change and those who will be most impacted. We believe this will be unique.

The reason for the Mural

The overwhelming majority of scientists knows that climate change is an existential threat – to human society and to the global ecosystem. Hence, the “everything” in the title.

Much of the science of climate change which led to this knowledge was pioneered in Norwich, by the Climatic Research Unit, which celebrated 50 years of outstanding research in 2022.

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Future projections, which have built on the work of the UEA Climatic Research Unit, shows that our current path through the climate emergency leads us high temperatures and extreme weather patterns which have not been seen on Earth since before the time of humans. The main reason is global warming gases - especially carbon dioxide - resulting from human activity.

The planet's climate and its weather patterns have changed through the thousands of millions of years of its history. Explaining why the recent, human-induced changes are so different, and so important, can be immensely challenging. Enter the giant (10m x 1.5m) Climate Mural For Our Time!

The collaboration - between artist, scientists, and politician - which culminated in this amazing Mural is unprecedented. The impact of the Mural has been greatly enriched by it being commissioned by Norwich City Council (and presented as a gift to the City by artist and scientists) for permanent installation in the City Hall Council Chamber. Because the Leader of the Council wanted the Mural to be a constant reminder of the importance of accounting for climate change impacts in the City's policy- and decision-making, he became an important member of the Mural team. The artist-science- politician collaboration makes the Mural "even more" unique. Gennadiy Ivanov and his fellow collaborators, shown below at the Mural's installation in the City Hall, will all be present at the u3a session.



But the Mural is not intended to just be a spur to politicians. It is also intended to stimulate public discussion and engagement in the climate crisis. This is enhanced by the accompanying free-standing "Elements" paintings (prints of which are mounted in the City Hall) which home in, and expand, on the rich stories illustrated in each of the six time-periods, or panels, of the Mural.

The Mural

The Climate Mural For Our Time starts with the asteroid impact, 66 million years ago, which led to the demise of most dinosaurs. It travels from there through the present and ends at 2200 AD (using projections of future climate). The backdrop to the Mural is the Norfolk coastline, and the skyline represents the global temperature record. As the Mural progresses through 66 million years, the time scale changes in steps from the geological to the human. In this way, the influence of climate change

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on our local landscape and on human social history is cleverly shown. The climate story is global but it is the local impact, on Norwich and Norfolk and on local people, which the Mural highlights.

Both the Mural and the associated Elements painting contain many “cues” to stimulate interest, provoke conversation, and encourage the viewer to find out more. An (intended) bonus is if viewers are motivated to engage with the enormous challenge of climate change.

The Mural is serving its purpose in a number of ways. For example, the Elements painting for the present-to-2200 AD period is presently a blank canvas. The Mural team is in the process of co-producing – with schools, and other organisations (perhaps also with u3a?) - several versions of this painting for the future where people portray their preferences and ideas for the future.

More widely, paintings from the collaboration between Gennadiy Ivanov and climate scientists have been exhibited around the world, including at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where they played an important role in the UN’s decision to declare 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation. A UN book of Ivanov’s art, with complementary science, will be published by the UN to mark this event.

Zooming-In

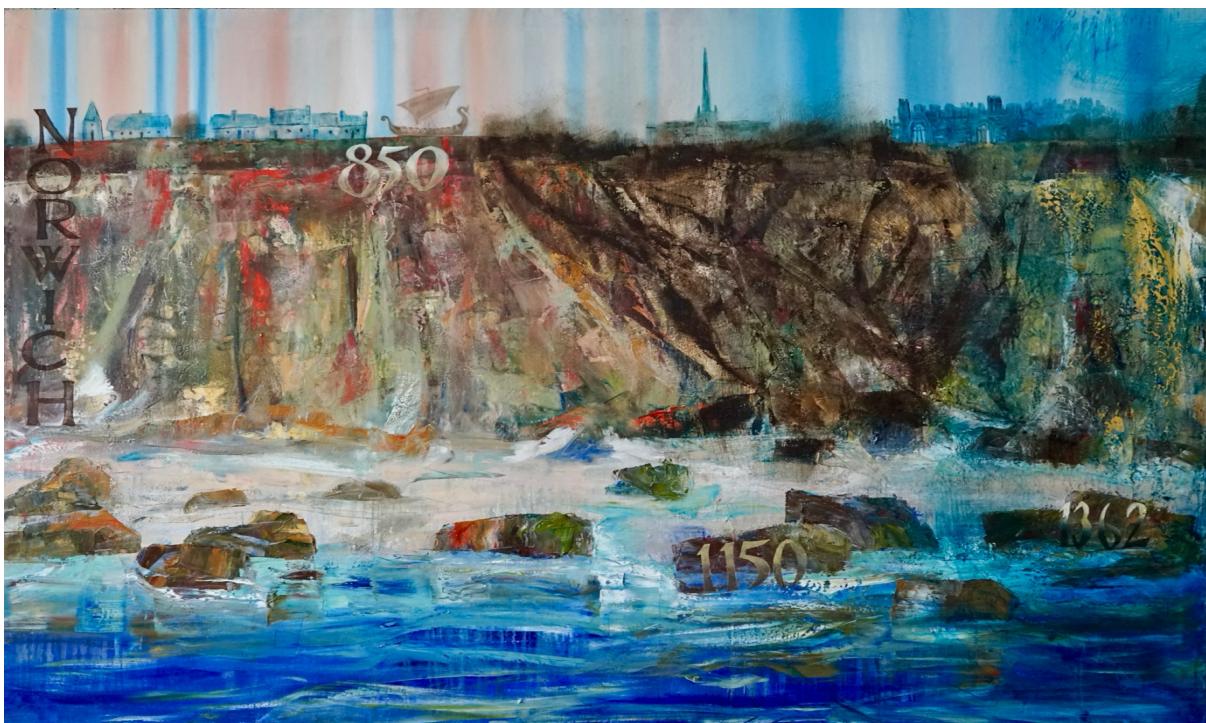
3 million years ago to 500 AD



This period was dominated by the cycle of Ice Ages, during which sea levels fluctuated by around 120m, and Norfolk was periodically covered by ice. The last 12,000 years were characterised by a more stable climate which allowed the early development of human civilisations.

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501 AD to 1400 AD



Norwich was founded at the beginning of this section of the Mural – when the climate was mild. However, by the 1100s the climate worsened, bringing storms, flooding, famine, social unrest, and encouraged the spread of disease.

Present to 2200 AD



The final section of the Mural shows two possible climate futures. The first assumes humanity has taken the action needed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to a level where increased temperatures are more manageable. The other future is the path we are currently on. It will lead to

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temperatures similar to those seen right at the beginning of the Mural. The lifebuoys represent our choices. Which one will we grasp?

The Mural expanded – 1401 AD to 1850 AD



The story in each section of the Mural is expanded upon in free-standing Elements paintings, like this one for 1401 AD to 1850 AD. The climate worsened into "The Little Ice Age". Norfolk villages were abandoned and shipwrecks were abundant. Bad weather set the preconditions for Kett's Rebellion in 1549. Scapegoats were sought and "witches", accused of causing bad weather were persecuted. The political instability of the 1600s, set off a long train of events eventually leading to Norwich gaining its reputation as the Revolutionary City. The Agricultural Revolution, spearheaded by Turnip Townshend, provided greater resilience. But adverse climate impacts continued, contributing to a wave of emigration from Norfolk in the 1830s. While skating became fashionable on the frozen Broads, the chimneys of the Industrial Revolution began spewing out carbon dioxide. The cataclysmic volcanic eruption of Tambora caused the "year with no summer" in 1816, forever linked with Mary Shelley's creation – Frankenstein, who is portrayed in the Mural.

The Climate Mural For Our Time was a collaboration between Gennadiy Ivanov, the UEA Climatic Research Unit (Trevor Davies, Michael Taylor, Tim Osborn), Norwich City Council (Alan Waters), and Global Water Futures (John Pomeroy, University of Saskatchewan). Global Water Futures provided financial support to the Transitions Art Science Programme which initiated this project.

Much detail on the Mural and the stories it tells is available at:

-<https://crudata.uea.ac.uk/cru/climate-mural/>