KEN TURNER
PRESS RELEASE
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KEN TURNER AT 100: A Century of Crashing Culture

Ken Turner at 100: A Century of Crashing Culture is an exhibition that incorporates painting, performance art, and film, and seeks to answer the question - how does an artist stay contemporary for a century? For Ken Turner - the UK's oldest performance artist and painter, born in 1926 and now celebrating his 100th birthday - the answer lies in ongoing rebellion.

In 2025, Turner made headlines globally. Then 98-years-old, Turner, a WWII veteran, was filmed driving a 15-tonne tank over and subsequently annihilating a Tesla car. Organized with *Led By Donkeys*, a political guerrilla campaign group, the stunt wasn't just a viral moment - it was a definitive statement on the rise of fascism and the need to resist it with both determination and humour. For Turner this act of defiance was simply the latest chapter in artistic life dedicated to "crashing culture."

This exhibition spans Turner's movement from modernism, through the birth of environmental art, performance art, postmodernism, to his most recent, urgent responses to global conflict and environmental collapse. From his early years conscripted as a "Bevin Boy" in the coal mines of WWII to co-founding the radical 1960s collective Action Space and creating "instant cities" in the 1970s through his massive inflatable sculptures, Turner has spent his artistic life creating work radically engaged in contemporary issues.

In the 1990s Turner moved to St Ives, Cornwall where he continues to live. Here he began to further combine his live art performances, 3D work, and experiments on canvas. Over the past 30 years he has become known for his contemporary abstract painting and his disruptive actions, often mixing the two. For Turner, his approach to art is a way to intervene in the brutality of today's world.

Exhibition Dates:
23 July - 4 August 2026
Tues - Sun 11am – 7pm
Free entry

Special Opening Event:
Private View, Live Performance & Art Auction
7pm - late, Sat 25 July 2026

Location:
Wharfside Arts Hub Wharfside Shopping Centre, Wharf Road, Penzance, TR18 2GB

Open Studio:
23 July – 4 August 2026
Anjou Barn, Trevalgan, St. Ives, TR26 3BJ
Tues - Sun 11am – 4pm
Free entry

World Film Premiere:
Expiry (2026, dir. Huw Wahl)
Followed by a Q&A with Ken Turner and Director, Huw Wahl
Sun 26 July, 2pm, ticketed
Newlyn Filmhouse
newlynfilmhouse.com

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hctwahl.com/ken.html

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Press Material & Images:
Press/Ken Turner

Captions (left to right):
Still from *My Ride Over a Tesla*, 2026 (dir. Huw Wahl); and Ken Turner, *My Ride Over a Tesla Car* (4ft x 4ft painting) © Ken Turner

Captions (left to right):
Ken Turner, *Beyond the Grave*, 2026 (5ftx5ft gypsum and acrylic on canvas) © Ken Turner ; and Still from *Expiry*, 2026 (dir. Huw Wahl)

The exhibition includes Turner's latest paintings such as *My Ride Over a Tesla Car,* made about his Tesla crushing experience, as well as a performance art video archive, and film footage from the Action Space years. Huw Wahl's 16mm film *My Ride Over a Tesla* (2026), documenting the Tesla event and subsequent painting, will play on loop. A live art performance by Ken Turner will kick off the opening event on the evening of Saturday 25 July 2026. His current *Weeping World* series utilises gypsum and acrylic to create a physical, tactile surface that reflects the texture of over eight decades of an artistic life. As Turner explains, *"My work attempts to create potent and positive images that bypass the notion of being purely political... I am deeply concerned about the 'touchiness' in paint, revealing hidden but positive meanings through innovative aesthetics and techniques."*

Accompanying the exhibition, *Ken Turner at 100: A Century of Crashing Culture,* will be a film screening and a unique chance to visit Turner's studios nearby. As a focal point of this centenary celebration, the world premiere of *Expiry* will take place at Newlyn Filmhouse. Shot entirely on expired 16mm film stock, this 2026 collaboration between Turner and his son - the filmmaker Huw Wahl - is not a retrospective piece, but a "*love letter to aging playfully*," asking what creative action looks like at the edge of a century.

Throughout the exhibition, Turner's working studio in St. Ives will be open on a free drop-in basis. While the exhibition at Wharfside Arts Hub showcases his newest interventions, the Open Studio provides the historical context - spanning Turner's entire collection, from early sketches to current work.

At 100 years old, Turner remains a vital bridge between the historical avant-garde and the urgent political and climatic precarity of 2026: a rebel who continues to prove that art is most powerful when it is crashing culture. For eight decades Turner's work has asked: *How can art embody radicality?* This is an opportunity not just to observe a legacy, but to participate in a rebellion in forward motion.

For further information, images and interview requests please contact Sam Trenerry:
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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Ken Turner

Caption:
Still from *My Ride Over a Tesla* (2026, dir. Huw Wahl)

Ken Turner (b. 1926) has been a pioneering force in visual arts for over eight decades, with his artistic journey marked by his commitment to merging artistic expression with education and social action. His lifelong commitment to education saw him set up an Environmental Design course at Barnet College in 1961, teach experimentally at the Architectural Association, and from 1960 until 1990 teach foundation at the Central Saint Martins, London.

Early exhibitions prior to Action Space include the ICA, London (1963); Heal's Mansard Gallery, London (1965); Beaux Arts, London (1965); and Lord's Gallery, London (1966) in an exhibition titled *Art as Something Public*. Turner then worked with playwright Arnold Wesker on Resolution 42, a movement concerning the Trade Union legislation for the arts; its publication of the same name involved the group of artists founding 'The First Group' in 1967, touring modern art to twelve municipal galleries in the UK, to include conversations with union members. In 1968, he co-founded Action Space with artist Mary Turner, a charitable trust promoting interdisciplinary art performances and installations through giant inflatable structures, touring the UK and Europe for ten years. Action Space began with a structure called *Paradise Gardens* as part of 'Bubble City': an experimental festival in 1968 set up by English theatre director, Joan Littlewood in the city of London to examine ways of developing better cities.

His continuing commitment to performance art as social interaction is evident in works like *Get in The Ring* at Newlyn Society of Artists; as *Art & Sport* at The Exchange, Penzance in 2009; *Lineage/Shifts in Perception* at Newlyn Art Gallery in 2007; Plymouth City Art Gallery in 2012; *Van Gogh's Boot*s at Brighton's Sallis Benney Theatre in 2003; and *Eight Times Four Sides* at Newlyn Art Gallery in 1997.

Turner's live art continues to impact audiences, including in street performances in St. Ives, where he has lived and worked for over 30 years. His work has been featured in notable books and journals, including *Studio International* by Edward Lucie-Smith and *Face to Face: British Self-portraits in the 20th Century* by Phillip Vann. He continues to exhibit his paintings locally, in solo shows such as *Climate Change* at Fish Factory in Penryn, Cornwall (2021), and Borlase Smart Gallery, Porthmeor Studios, St, Ives (2024).

Recent books by Turner, such as *Crashing Culture* (2016) and *A Life Being Ken Turner* (2020), provide a comprehensive look at his prolific career. Ken Turner's dedication to art as a medium for social and political discourse continues to inspire new generations of artists and audiences. His works are housed in the Arts Council Collection and numerous

private collections, ensuring his legacy endures.
imaginativeeye.co.uk | instagram.com/ken2sqallp

About Huw Wahl

Huw Wahl's work has been screened internationally at film festivals such as Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival; Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Montreal; and Open City Documentary Festival, London; in art galleries and museums like Centre Pompidou-Metz, France; Royal Museums Greenwich, London; and the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; as well as in universities like New York University, documentary art centres like UnionDocs, New York, and by sea, onboard an engineless Thames sailing barge touring the South East coast of England.

He has won several international awards with his films, and has been featured in publications like *The Guardian*, *Sight and Sound*, and *The Wire*, and received funding from organisations such as Arts Council England, The Henry Moore Foundation, and the Royal Photographic Society.

His writing has been published in magazines, academic journals and books. He has also curated film programmes, been part of international film festival juries, taught film & photography courses in university and community settings in the UK and abroad, and worked as an AHRC funded research associate for the University of Manchester.

Wind, Tide & Oar - a film about the art of engineless sailing - is distributed by Tull Stories, and is currently streaming online in the UK and Ireland. He is currently a Visiting Research Associate at the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester.
hctwahl.com