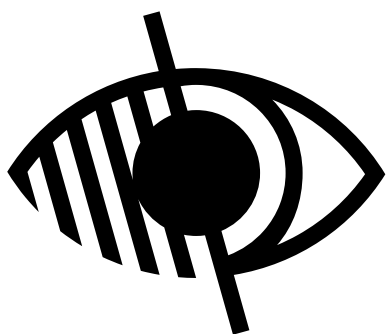


Es Devlin: Other Worlds

2 October 2026 – 4 April 2027

Large Print Guide



the
**DESIGN
MUSEUM**

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Introduction

When audiences gather in a museum gallery, theatre or stadium, something brief and collective comes into being. Artist and stage designer Es Devlin describes this as a ‘temporary society’: a group of strangers brought together by a shared experience. By entering this exhibition, you have joined one.

For over three decades, Devlin has worked across art, performance, music and architecture. From intimate public art installations to theatre and opera, Olympic ceremonies and stadium-scale collaborations with some of the world’s most celebrated musicians, her projects shape how people come together. Each is a transformative visual and sensorial world of its own.

This exhibition – the first in the UK dedicated to Devlin’s practice – offers a series of encounters with her thinking, process and imagination. Through installations, models, sketches and photographs, you are invited into the unfolding ideas that shape the worlds she creates.

Bloomberg Connects exhibition guide to Es Devlin: Other Worlds

With our free audio guide, you'll get an insight to the objects on display in this exhibition. Here Johanna Agerman Ross, Director of Curatorial and Collection, introduces the exhibition.

Scan the QR code to access
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Your journey into Es Devlin: Other Worlds starts here. Please wait for a member of staff to guide you into the exhibition.

Studio

Es Devlin invites you to step into a replica of her South London studio. She has transported her books, desk, paints, pencils, notebooks, sketches, models and sculptural studies from Peckham to the Design Museum.

The studio is a place of imagination, invention and collaboration, where Devlin and her team develop ideas through dialogue, using both analogue and digital tools. With backgrounds in art, architecture, design and theatre, each of Devlin's associates leaves their trace on the practice.

The models shown here include a large hand. It is a 1 to 8 scale study for the 22-metre-tall stage sculpture Devlin conceived for Georges Bizet's opera Carmen, performed at the 2017/18 Bregenz Festival in Austria.

2026

Mixed media, AV projection

Film duration: approximately 5 minutes

Walk through the doors into the next room.

Come Home Again, Mirrored

When Es Devlin received an invitation to create a portrait of Londoners in 2022, she researched the 15,000 species that live in London, and made pencil drawings of 243 insects, birds, plants and mammals identified as endangered or at-risk by the London Wildlife Trust.

Come Home Again is a hymn to the interconnectedness of all beings. The first step towards species conservation is to preserve a habitat for our endangered neighbours within our imaginations: to learn their forms and names. The title reflects the words of late environmental activist Joanna Macy:

‘As we relinquish our isolation, we come home again...we come home to our mutual belonging.’

In the original dome-shaped edition outside Tate Modern in 2022, a choir sang every day at dusk. In this new iteration, a continuous soundscape features diasporic choirs from across London singing in Swahili, Zulu, Xhosa, Latin and four dialects of Bulgarian.

2026

Graphite, printed ink and paint
on laser cut plywood, mirror, soundscape
Originally commissioned by Cartier

Come Home Again, Mirrored

Here Es Devlin introduces some of the endangered species she sketched for this installation.

Scan the QR code to access Bloomberg Connects.



Enter the main room on your left and turn towards the left-hand wall.

A 50-Year Archive – Part I

Devlin retrieved much of this kaleidoscopic archive of sketches, collages, paintings and notebooks from bin bags in an ex-boyfriend's attic two decades ago. It traces her evolution as an artist from teenage diaries and art student scrapbooks to the swift and confident drawings and paintings of the accomplished practitioner.

Starting with family photographs and a crossword which inspired her name, many of the pieces in the archive can be linked to her current practice. There are carefully copied phrases from novels; drawings and paintings of the musical instruments she played at school; hands, maps, birds and insects; human figures in relation to boxes, space and architecture; and portraits of friends, strangers and herself.

The sequence concludes with a series of paintings that feel continuous with this body of archival work. Painted collages for a 2003 production of Ernest Bloch's opera Macbeth and ink paintings prepared during Devlin's first collaboration with U2 in 2014 hang near fluorescent artworks made for the inauguration of the Las Vegas Sphere in 2023 and her Congregation installation in 2024.

2026

Mixed media

A 50-Year Archive Part I

Join Es Devlin on a journey through her archive.

Scan the QR code to access
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Walk to the wall on the left-hand side.

A 30-Year Desk

Es Devlin's practice is rooted in relationships: with light, music, performers, audiences, choreographers, directors, musicians and spaces.

Born in 1971 and raised in Sussex and Kent, she studied violin, clarinet and piano as a child, then English literature at the University of Bristol, art at Central Saint Martins and theatre at the Motley Theatre Design Course in London. She won the Linbury Prize for Stage Design upon graduating in 1995, and began designing performances, first in theatre, then dance, opera, fashion and pop music. Over the past decade she has focused on her sculptural practice, creating large-scale public installations and small-scale paper cut artworks.

A 30-Year Desk maps her journey, from her first sketched costume designs for Christopher Marlowe's Edward II at the Octagon Theatre, Bolton, in 1996 to a scale model of her 2025 Library of Us installation in Miami. Devlin's process has remained consistent: she starts with deep research and rapid sketching, then, with her studio team, builds physical and digital models. Across this collection there are recurring motifs which Devlin has explored throughout her career, including lines of light, mazes, maps, spheres and revolving cubes.

2026

Mixed media

All quotes in A 30-Year Desk are taken from A Concise Atlas of Es Devlin (2026).

Turn to face the desks, and move to the leftmost edge of the table closest to you.

A 30-Year Desk Desk 1

Explore the content of this desk with Es Devlin, starting with the sketchbook for Edward II.

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1996

Edward II

Octagon Theatre, Bolton

Written by Christopher Marlowe

Directed by Lawrence Till

The 1996 Linbury Prize for Stage Design gave Es Devlin her first opportunity to collaborate on a professional production. To prepare, she stuck fold-out pages of black ink costume sketches into this pocket-sized notebook, trying to read all the characters in the play as a combined alphabet

‘I had spent years drawing the human form but was unprepared for the complexity of the encounter with actors in a costume fitting. Ink and charcoal needed to become garments, which would operate as both an extension of character and a voice of the performer.’

— Es Devlin

Sketchbook

Ink on paper

1998

Betrayal

Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre, London

Written by Harold Pinter

Directed by Trevor Nunn

Having seen Devlin's work on *Love and Understanding* at the Bush Theatre, Trevor Nunn – then Artistic Director at the National Theatre – invited her to design Harold Pinter's play *Betrayal*.

With the artist Rachel Whiteread's permission, Devlin echoed *House* (1993), a sculpture Whiteread had made by casting the interior of a house scheduled for demolition in Bethnal Green in concrete. In a similar vein, Devlin cast impressions of the play's five locations onto a single plaster façade, as if the wall itself were remembering each time and place.

Scale model

Wood, perspex, LED

Process material (right)

Pen on paper, tracing paper
and photographic prints

1

1997

Love and Understanding

Bush Theatre, London

Written by Joe Penhall

Directed by Mike Bradwell

Process material

Ink and graphite on card, printed paper

2

1998

Fidelio

English Touring Opera

Written by Ludwig van Beethoven

Directed by Robert Chevara

Process material

Graphite, ink and pastels on paper

3

1998

Four Scenes

Rambert Dance Company

Sadler's Wells, London

Choreographed by Christopher Bruce

Process material

Paint on printed photographs

4

1999

God's Plenty

Rambert Dance Company

Sadler's Wells, London

Choreographed by Christopher Bruce

Drawings

Oil pastel, graphite and pen on paper

1998

Howie the Rookie

Bush Theatre, London

Written by Mark O'Rowe

Directed by Mike Bradwell

For this play Devlin split the stage with a line of light to evoke a highroad in Tallaght, Dublin, within the small Bush Theatre, then located above a pub in West London. The line of light is a recurring motif within Devlin's practice, perhaps originating in an early memory of falling into the River Thames when she was two or three-years old.

'The Bush Theatre was about the size of a matchbox. It was close-up magic. We created worlds in a very, very tiny space... we were spending about four quid doing it out of junk and Es was working out how to do it, every single step of the way. She'd make the stuff, she'd weld.'

— Mike Bradwell

Scale model

Wood, perspex, LED

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed tracing paper

1999

Hamlet

The Young Vic, London

Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by Laurence Boswell

‘At the Young Vic Theatre in 1999, Shakespeare’s text conjured the expansion and contraction of space. The costumes were carved from the dark in white canvas. A series of sliding black floor planes formed precipices from which Hamlet shared his soliloquies in the theatrical equivalent of a filmic close-up.’ – Es Devlin

Process material

Chalk, ink and pen on paper

2003

Macbeth

Theater an der Wien, Vienna

Music by Ernest Bloch,

libretto by Edmond Fleg based

on the play by William Shakespeare

Directed by Keith Warner

Devlin created a 10-metre-wide rotating perspective box diagonally divided by a pair of mirrors for this opera. The reflections completed a half bed on one side and a half dining table on the other. The design was inspired by a 17th-century optical viewing cabinet or peep show, that uses forced perspective to create the optical illusion of a fully three-dimensional space. It marked one of Devlin's earliest uses of the revolving perspective cube motif and mirroring, themes she has returned to ever since.

Scale model

Wood, acrylic mirror, paint, resin, LED

Process material (left)

Graphite and pen on lined paper, ink
and paper on glossy paper

2003

Flag: Burning

Wire concert

Barbican Hall, London

British post-punk band Wire commissioned Devlin to stage their final show. This became her first collaboration with pop musicians and added a new dimension to her practice.

The stage design consisted of four large cubes – one for each band member to perform in. The cubes were covered with sharkstooth gauze, which flickered between being transparent and opaque. Devlin projected elements of each man's face and heartbeat onto it to create a combined portrait of the band.

'I hadn't considered how the band would leave their boxes at the end of the show. Velcro was beyond the scope of the very tight budget so I had stapled the gauze covers onto the cubes once the four men were inside.' — Es Devlin

Process material

Graphite, pen and ink on paper and acetate, resin

1

2005–16

Touch the Sky, Glow in the Dark and Yeezus

Kanye West world arena tours

Studies, drawings and prints

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2

2011

Watch the Throne

Jay Z and Kanye West tour

Drawings and prints

Graphite on paper and printed paper

3

2005–16

Unrealised projects

Kanye West

Drawings

Graphite on paper

1

2009

Lady Gaga and Kanye West joint arena tour
(unrealised)

Drawings and prints

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2

2009

Monster Ball 1.0

Lady Gaga theatre tour

Scale model

Board, wood, paper

2006–13

Fundamental, Pandemonium, Electric and Super
Pet Shop Boys world arena tours

Fundamental was the first show Devlin directed and designed with Pet Shop Boys' Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe. An unfolding origami cube framed a projected MRI scan: two halves of one brain representing the creative symbiosis between the two members of the band. She went on to design their tours for the following decade and they continue to collaborate today.

‘I learned from Neil Tennant that the structural arc of a pop show is like a great Saturday night out, with tears in the toilet in the middle and a redemptive finale.’ — Es Devlin

Scale model (Fundamental)

Wood, perspex, printed acetate, LED

Process material (right)

Graphite and ink on paper, printed paper,
CD, cardboard

2009
BRIT Awards performance

Process material (far right)
Graphite on paper, card

2008

Songs for Sorrow EP

Mika

For singer-songwriter Mika's Songs for Sorrow EP, Devlin crafted this layered paper-cut sculpture of the performer's fictional character Billy Brown. A photograph of it was included in the release alongside illustrations by Peter Blake, Walter van Beirendonck and Paul Smith.

Mika's concert at the Parc des Princes in Paris the same year was Devlin's first stadium-scale project. She recalled the entrance to Luna Park, which she had seen in Sydney during her stay there in 1988, to conceive a 68-metre-wide, vividly coloured clown mask whose mouth framed the musicians.

Sculptural study

Graphite on printed card, LED

Sketch

Graphite on paper

2008

Mika Live at Parc des Princes

Mika concert

Parc des Princes stadium, Paris

Process material (right)

Graphite on paper, printed paper

2001

A Streetcar Named Desire

Northern Ballet Theatre UK tour

Written by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Patricia Doyle

Choreographed by Didy Veldman

Score by Philip Feeney

Devlin collaborated on a ballet of Tennessee Williams' play A Streetcar Named Desire with Dutch choreographer Didy Veldman who had danced within Devlin's designs at Rambert Dance Company. They expanded the play's offstage amusement park scene and Devlin's vividly coloured costume designs were realised by Pet Shop Boys costume creator, Jeffrey Bryant.

Process material

Paper, ink, paint and acetate

2009–11

Circus and Progress

Take That world stadium tours

Directed and choreographed by Kim Gavin

The Progress tour in 2011 reunited Take That's original five members, including Robbie Williams, for the first time in 16 years. Devlin conceived a monumental kinetic sculpture of a figure that rose from the stage and travelled across the stadium. In preparation, engineers had to ensure the sculpture would be low enough to pass under a specific bridge in Hamburg, the lowest point on the touring route.

Devlin also designed the band's 2009 Circus tour featuring a five-metre-tall kinetic elephant.

Scale model (Progress)

Resin

Process material (left)

Graphite on paper, printed paper, card, acetate

2012

The Neverending Story (unrealised)

Written by Michael Ende

Directed by Andre Heller

Within Es Devlin's extensive archives, there are many ideas that remain unrealised, starting points of conversations that didn't conclude. Displayed here are sketches for a stage adaptation of German author Michael Ende's book *The Neverending Story* (1979), one such project that Devlin might one day revisit.

Drawings

Graphite on paper

Walk toward the next closest desk, starting from its left side.

A 30-Year Desk Desk 2

Explore the content of this desk with Es Devlin, starting with a scale model of the London 2012 Olympic Games Closing Ceremony.

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2012
Closing Ceremony,
London 2012 Olympic Games

London Olympic Stadium
Directed and choreographed by Kim Gavin

London's iconic monuments, including Big Ben, became acrobatic apparatus for the 2012 London Olympics Closing Ceremony. Each monument was wrapped in newspapers printed with quotes from celebrated British poetry and prose.

Asked to incorporate the Union Jack in the design, Devlin invited artist Damien Hirst to contribute a spin painting in red, white and blue. The artwork covered the entire stadium and celebrated the unity that the Olympic Games represent.

Devlin also designed the opening ceremony for the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Scale model

Resin

Drawings and prints

Graphite, paint on paper and printed paper

2012

Parsifal

Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen

Composed by Richard Wagner

Directed by Keith Warner

For this production of German composer Richard Wagner's last opera, Devlin developed a stage sculpture in the shape of a revolving chess rook, inside of which the performance took place. Its tiled interior referenced the spa town of Marienbad in Bohemia (Mariánské Lázně, Czechia) where the German composer first read the medieval source poem 'Parzifal'.

'I was late to rehearsals while working in London on the Olympics, Keith rang to say that the sculpture looked great and there were only two problems: no one could stand on its slippery angled floor, nor sing within its deafening tiled megaphone interior. Mercifully, the Danish team found solutions to both problems: a non-slip boat-deck soap and ear plugs.' – Es Devlin

Scale model

Wood, resin, LED

Process material (right)

Graphite on paper, printed paper, card, wire

2012

Les Troyens

Royal Opera House, London

Composed by Hector Berlioz

Directed by David McVicar

This model is Devlin's initial sculptural study for a Trojan horse for the opera *Les Troyens*. It was eventually realised as a seven-metre-tall horse's head formed from weapons, designed to invoke the deceptive nature of the peace offering from the Greeks to the Trojans.

Les Troyens is based on Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid*. It presents war and peace as two sides of civilisation, constantly chasing one another in repeated cycles. For the set, Devlin created a revolving cylindrical structure inspired by the Victorian gas storage cylinders outside her studio. Its exterior was Troy's defensive barricade in steel, while the interior represented Virgil's vision of humanity at peace, inspired by the mud brick city of Carthage (now in Tunisia).

Scale model

Painted wood

Process material

Printed paper, card

Facing the projected film, walk toward the next closest desk (past the circular one at the centre), and start from its left side.

A 30-Year Desk Desk 3

Explore the content of this desk with Es Devlin, starting with the drawings for Chimerica.

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2013

Chimerica

Almeida Theatre, London

Written by Lucy Kirkwood

Directed by Lyndsey Turner

Over 39 scenes spanning China and America, Lucy Kirkwood's play imagines what might have been inside the plastic bag held by the defiant protestor who was photographed standing in front of a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Another central character in the play is the fictional American war photographer who took the photo. Devlin's revolving cube set drew on the framing and shuttering mechanics of a photojournalist's camera to propel the action through multiple locations and perspectives.

Scale model

Acrylic, painted perforated metal

Drawings (left)

Graphite on paper

2014

Bangerz

Miley Cyrus world arena tour

Directed by Diane Martel

Devlin, Cyrus and the late director

Diane Martel wanted to stage Miley's show entirely on her tongue, to defy the critics of her tongue-protruding 'twerking' dance.

This initial concept was deemed impractical, so they reduced the tongue to a slide down which Cyrus made her entrance – a sculptural portrait of a young woman emerging from her Hannah Montana Disney persona to rewrite her own character and script.

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper, card

2014

Don Giovanni

Royal Opera House, London

Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,

libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

Directed by Kasper Holten

Es Devlin has returned to the opera

Don Giovanni several times: first in a student production in 1997, then in Vienna 2006 and at London's Royal Opera House in 2014. There, Devlin and director Kasper Holten overlaid the many names of Don Giovanni's lovers onto a multi-storey structure of stairs and corridors.

As the opera advanced, doors closed behind Don Giovanni one after another, leaving him alone on a bare stage at the end of the performance.

'The set is now stored in a warehouse in Aberdare in Wales. It's trucked out every few years for revivals or tours. The recipe for recreating the show is recorded in the precise annotations to the score [...] so that the entire three-hour sequence can be recreated with new performers.' – Es Devlin

Process material
Metal, graphite on paper

2017

Carmen

Bregenz Festival, Bregenz, Austria

Composed by Georges Bizet,

libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

Directed by Kasper Holten

For this production Devlin referenced a scene in Act III of the opera, in which the fiery protagonist, Carmen, reads her fortune in a deck of cards.

A monumental pair of hands, rising 22 metres above Lake Constance, appeared to throw the cards up in the air with projection animating the cards. The sculpture remained in place through high winds and snowstorms, cards suspended between sky and sea by concealed steel trusses, for two consecutive years of performances.

‘I was watching bullfights, and thinking about a giant bull emerging from the lake, but the director, Kasper Holten, was more interested in a giant flower. So we went back to the text and were looking at the scene when Carmen throws the cards into the air. As I imitated that action, Kasper said, “That’s it!”’ – Es Devlin

Scale model

Resin

Process material (right)

Graphite on paper, print on paper

A 30-Year Desk Collaborators

Actor Benedict Cumberbatch, singer The Weeknd and directors Kasper Holten and Sam Mendes reflect on working with Es Devlin.

These extracts are taken from interviews originally recorded by Es Devlin and Andrea Lipps for *An Atlas of Es Devlin* (2023).

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2017

Starboy: Legend of the Fall

The Weeknd world arena tour

Abel 'The Weeknd' Tesfaye proposed an intergalactic craft that would transport him and his audience into worlds beyond the arena. To demonstrate how a stylised origami aircraft could trace a flight path through the show, Devlin folded a paper aeroplane in a New York hotel lobby while Tesfaye's creative director, La Mar C Taylor, and the TAIT Towers engineering team watched. The arena tour included a blinding take-off, mid-flight complications, a crash landing and luminous encore relaunch.

Scale model

Wood and perspex

Process material

Card, graphite on paper, printed paper

2018

Abel's mask

The Weeknd performance at
Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival,
Indio, California

Abel Tesfaye's parents emigrated from Ethiopia to Toronto before he was born. For his Coachella performance, Devlin researched the linear, scarred inscriptions on Ethiopian masks and incorporated them into a 3D scan of Tesfaye's face. Devlin worked closely with engineers to construct an eight-metre-high sculptural mask that could withstand the frequently windy conditions of California's Coachella Valley.

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper, plaster of Paris
cast of Abel 'The Weeknd' Tesfaye's face

2016

Adele Live

Adele world arena and stadium tour

When Adele visited Devlin's Peckham studio in 2015 to discuss her tour, she played her new single 'Hello'. Together they imagined a projection of Adele's closed eyes filling one end of the arena. As the lights lowered to the opening chords of 'Hello', Adele would rise slowly into view, the enormous eyes opening as she sang the first line. Spanning seven years, Devlin's collaborations with Adele were ongoing studies in close-up portraiture delivered at a monumental scale.

Drawings and annotated setlists

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2016–21

Adele Live in New York City

An Audience with Adele

Adele concerts

Drawings and annotated setlists

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2018

The Lehman Trilogy

Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre, London

Written by Stefano Massini

and adapted by Ben Power

Directed by Sam Mendes

The Lehman Trilogy is a three-hour parable charting the relentless rise and periodic crashes of American capitalism, told across three generations of the Lehman family by three actors, a pianist and a revolving glass box.

Like the unstoppable 'magical music box called America' invoked by the playwright, Devlin created a skeletal glass-and-steel structure that propelled the action from the cotton fields of Alabama to the rising towers of New York City, conjured by projections on a cyclorama (a curved screen).

Scale model

Wood, perspex, resin, LED

Process material (top row, right)

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2015

Innocence + Experience

U2 world arena tour

Directed by Willie Williams

Designed in collaboration
with Ric Lipson at Stufish

This sketchbook is full of drawings and collages that Devlin and her collaborators created while working with U2 on their Innocence + Experience tour. A kinetic transparent LED block enveloped the band within animations of Dublin streets and a tsunami echoing Hokusai's woodblock print 'The Great Wave off Kanagawa.'

'U2 sought a sculpture that could operate as a temporal highway between U2's origins in Larry Mullen Jnr's kitchen and their contemporary practice as effective global activists. Dividing the crowd when lowered and unifying them when lifted, a block of transparent LED emerged through ink paintings during our meetings.' – Es Devlin

Process material

Mixed media on paper

2017–19
Joshua Tree

U2 tour

Drawings
Paper

2019

Atlas

Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles

Composed by Meredith Monk

Directed by Yuval Sharon

For this mostly wordless opera, Devlin placed a 12-twelve-metre sphere in the middle of the stage. It became both a surface for projections charting the journey of a fictional 19th-century explorer named Alexandra Daniels, and a portal through which performers could appear.

Scale model

Resin, LED

Drawings

Graphite on paper

2016

Formation

Beyoncé world stadium tour

Beyoncé and American poet Forrest Gander wrote a poem that recalled the electric current of prayer felt through a TV screen. Drawing on this text, Devlin designed a revolving six-storey-high illuminated monolith. It behaved like Beyoncé's prayer-transmitting TV, conducting energy between artist and audience. During the show, the monolith developed its own character and became, at times a dancing partner, at times an alter-ego for the protagonist. Devlin had previously worked on Beyoncé's Made in America Festival performance (2015) and went on to collaborate on the artist's Renaissance tour (2023).

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper

2019

The Hunt

Almeida Theatre, London

Adapted by David Farr from Thomas Vinterberg

Directed by Rupert Goold

Devlin and Goold staged this adaptation of Thomas Vinterberg's psychological drama centred on a teacher falsely accused of paedophilia within a simple house-shaped structure. The turning structure was made of 'smart glass' that could shift from transparent to opaque to reveal and conceal characters and action.

Scale model

Perspex, wood, LED

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper

2014–2025

Louis Vuitton

Autumn/Winter 2016

Womenswear runway shows, various locations

Artistic Director Nicolas Ghesquière

Devlin collaborated with Nicolas Ghesquière, the artistic director of womenswear at Louis Vuitton, on twenty catwalk shows and exhibitions. From the Louvre in Paris, to Oscar Niemeyer's Contemporary Art Museum in Niterói in Brazil, she explored the walkways as labyrinths.

'It's really about utopia. We need that utopia for the 15-minute duration of the show to establish the character who's going to evolve in the season. When we build these landscapes together, these atmospheres, including the music, it's like a short movie with not much dialogue but a lot of messages.'

– Nicolas Ghesquière

Process material

Pen on tracing paper, printed paper

2022

Super Bowl LVI Halftime Show

Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem,
Mary J. Blige, Kendrick Lamar
SoFi Stadium, Inglewood, California

Es Devlin proposed that the city of Compton, south of downtown Los Angeles, could become another protagonist in the 2022 Superbowl Halftime Show, along with hip-hop artists Dr. Dre, Kendrick Lamar, Eminem, Mary J. Blige and Snoop Dogg. A luminous map of Compton covered the field with scaled-down buildings serving as stages for the artists and performers during the 15-minute performance.

‘Dr. Dre played the stadium as he played his recording desk: catalysing lived experience from a very specific place into powerful poetry and music touching a global audience.’

– Es Devlin

Scale model

Resin, acrylic, wood, LED

Process material

Graphite on paper, pen on printed paper

Facing the projected film, walk toward the last desk, and start from its left side.

A 30-Year Desk Desk 4

Explore the content of this desk with Es Devlin, starting with drawings for Mirror Maze.

Scan the QR code to access Bloomberg Connects.



2016

Mirror Maze

Copeland Park, Peckham, London

Commissioned by The Fifth Sense (Chanel, i-D)

Devlin's interest in the maze motif can be traced back to her early practice, with mazes appearing in several stage designs, such as the model for Don Giovanni (far left). For her first solo art installation she approached the maze anew. Mirror Maze began as a film with an oval hole at its centre. The audience then walked through the face-shaped aperture to find a mirrored maze with faceted geometry that echoed the stairs of Coco Chanel's Paris studio. It allowed them to see their own reflection spliced with those of other visitors.

The work culminated in a field of vivid red-orange haze, a colour that Devlin uses repeatedly to invoke emergency and action. Here the colour was infused with a new Chanel scent that existed for only five days.

Scale model

Paper, cardboard, mirror

Process material

Mirror, card, printed paper, graphite on paper

2018

Forest of Us

Superblue Miami, Miami

Devlin's installation Forest of Us draws on her reading of James Gleick's 1987 book Chaos: Making a New Science. The work begins with a film that considers the visual symmetries between lungs and trees. The film breaks apart to reveal a mirrored maze whose form echoes bronchial structures. The work is still being exhibited at Superblue Miami.

'From certain vantage points the mirrored ceiling reflects the organic bifurcating lines of the labyrinth, a reminder that the hidden music of lungs and trees flows through our breath even as we walk the maze oblivious to all but our own fragmented reflections.' – Es Devlin

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper, card

2022

Five Echoes

Jungle Plaza, Miami

Commissioned by Chanel

This illuminated 15-metre-wide maze echoed the 13th-century stone prayer path paved into the floor of Chartres Cathedral, in France.

It was surrounded by a temporary forest of over 1000 plants and trees, and immersed visitors within the sound of each species' name.

The trees and plants were replanted and are still growing in Miami today.

‘The word labyrinth originally referred to a dance. If our behaviour can define our architecture, then perhaps art and architecture can alter our behaviour.’ – Es Devlin

Scale model

Resin, etched perspex, card, LED

Drawings and prints

Graphite on paper and printed paper

2019

Memory Palace

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, London

The 'memory palace' is an ancient mnemonic technique which locates memories within an imagined physical space. Devlin's Memory Palace installation was a vast model atlas where she condensed 73 major shifts in human perspective over 73 millennia. It included the tower where Copernicus redrew the map of the solar system and the street where Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, shifting views on civil rights. The work reminds us that we have achieved major cognitive shifts in the past and can do so again.

Scale model

Resin, card, LED

Process material

Card, graphite on paper and printed paper,
laser-cut paper book

1

1997

An Atlas of Es Devlin

Published by Thames & Hudson

Book

Printed paper

Process material

Printed paper

2

2016

Post-It Origami Note

Pen on paper

Process material

Graphite, ink and pastels on paper

3

2020

Iris experiments

Sculptural studies

Card, graphite on paper

4

2012

The Neverending Story

Sketch

Graphite on paper

2020

The Seed

Jubail Mangrove Park, Abu Dhabi

The Seed was a 15-metre-high sculpture set on the waters within Jubail Mangrove Park. The sides of the cube were inscribed with illuminated openings with forms based on the life cycle of the mangrove plant. The sculpture was commissioned for the United Arab Emirate's 49th Union Day and formed the canvas for a performance including projected interviews with Bangladeshi, Filipino, Sri Lankan and Indian doctors, nurses, teachers, builders, scientists and drivers who had contributed to the country's frontline defence during the coronavirus pandemic.

Scale model

Wood, perspex, LED

Process material (left)

Graphite on paper, printed paper

2021

Poem Pavilion

UK Pavilion, World Expo, Dubai

In 2020, Es Devlin became the first woman to design the UK pavilion at a World Expo. Her Poem Pavilion was made of cross-laminated timber, designed to resemble a conical, woodwind instrument. It gathered words collected from visitors and beamed a cumulative collective poem from its 20-metre-diameter, LED-laced facade. The poems were AI-generated by GPT 2 technology, trained by a board of poets from a broad range of backgrounds. The interior of the pavilion was filled with recordings of choirs drawn from the UK's vast number of cultural traditions and languages.

‘The pavilion is at once an expression of the ideal of a culturally diverse Britain that I grew up with, tempered with our growing awareness of the part algorithms play in shaping the future of our culture.’ – Es Devlin

Drawings

Graphite on paper and printed paper

1

2005

Essence

Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House, London

Composed by Ben Park

Choreographed by Finn Walker

Process material

Printed paper, graphite on paper

2

2016

Poem Portraits

Serpentine Gallery, London

Scale model

Card, foamboard and printed paper

Process material

Printed photographs

3

2023

Nevada Ark

Installation for U2's inaugural concert
at the Sphere, Las Vegas

Process material

Card, graphite and watercolour
on tracing paper, printed paper

4

2026

A National Portrait

National Portrait Gallery, London
Commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery

Process material

Printed paper

5

2025

Library of Light

Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Commissioned by Salone del Mobile

Process material

Printed paper

6

2025

Library of Us

Miami Beach, Miami

Commissioned by Faena Art

Process material

Graphite on paper, printed paper

2022

Your Voices

Lincoln Center Plaza, New York City
Commissioned by Moët & Chandon in
partnership with the Endangered Language
Alliance

We are losing languages as fast as we are losing species. To highlight this fact Devlin created Your Voices, an installation in Lincoln Center Plaza. It was an illuminated rotating sculpture formed of 637 cords, tensioned between a series of structural arcs: one cord for each of the languages spoken in New York, the most linguistically diverse city on the planet. Local choirs sang in multiple languages within the sculpture.

Scale model

Wood, dental floss, perspex, LED

Process material

Printed paper

2022

Come Home Again

Tate Modern lawn, London

The first iteration of Devlin's choral work *Come Home Again* was installed outside Tate Modern. Her drawings of London species were set within a cross-section model of St. Paul's Cathedral, visible across the Thames. Devlin reflected on the shared etymology of 'dome' and 'home' (the Latin *domus*). London's diasporic choirs sang at dusk each day in multiple languages, inviting audiences to learn the names of 243 of the 15,000 species who call London home.

A new iteration of the installation is displayed in the second room of this exhibition.

Scale model

Resin, wood and card

Process material (left and right)

Graphite on paper, laser-cut paper, printed paper

2024

Congregation

St Mary le Strand, London

Devlin conceived an eight-metre-tall, tiered portrait installation at the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. She witnessed the UK's compassion for Ukrainian refugees and wanted to understand why it didn't extend to those seeking asylum from other conflicts. Devlin drew portraits of 50 Londoners who had come to the city seeking refuge from 28 different conflict regions. She carried out the first part of the drawing knowing nothing about each sitter, without talking, meeting her own unconscious biases.

‘One by one, these strangers arrived in my studio. And I made portraits of each of them. Each of the drawings was made in silence and it was only after the portrait was finished that they told me their story.’ – Es Devlin

Scale model

Printed paper and card, foamboard

Book and prints

Printed paper

Portrait of Kyiv Mayor

Vitali Klitschko (right)

Chalk on paper

Move back towards the circular table at the centre of the room.

2025

Library of Us

The triangular form of Library of Us echoes Italian philosopher Umberto Eco's description of a library as a 'compass of the mind'. This illuminated, 15-metre-wide rotating bookshelf was filled with 4000 books that shaped Devlin's life and practice. Strangers encountered one another through shared texts as they were seated around a revolving reading table, listening to extracts from the texts. A new iteration of this work is presented in the final room of this show.

'Like the American author James Baldwin, I thought my pain and my heartbreak were unique to me, and then I read. Books taught me that my suffering connected me with all beings, past and present.' – Es Devlin

Miami Beach, Miami
Commissioned by Faena Art

Scale model
Cardboard, paper, wood, glass mirror, LED

Walk towards the film projected on the wall.

2026

A 30-Year Desk film

In this film, commissioned especially for Es Devlin: Other Stories, the artist and designer revisits her archive of sketches, models and notebooks, contextualising the many projects on display in A 30-Year Desk. Filmed in her South London studio by her long-term collaborator Luke Halls, it offers a rare insight into Devlin's creative process and reveals stories she has never shared before.

AV projection

Film duration: approximately 40 minutes

Move to the adjacent wall to your right.

A 50-Year Archive – Part II

The themes Devlin explored in her drawings as a student still resonate within her practice today.

In these sketches and sculptures made between 2006 and 2026, she continues to experiment with maps, mazes, arteries, hands and the nature of home. She studies the human form pressing against and breaking free from architectural structures. The sequence of five wooden boxes is named after poet and author JJ Bola's phrase 'Home is the other we carry inside us.'

In the final work, Redraw the Edges of Yourself, Devlin expresses the sensation of continuity she felt between the edges of her skin and the animals she was drawing.

2026

Mixed media

A 50-Year Archive Part II

Join Es Devlin on a journey through her archive.

Scan the QR code to access
Bloomberg Connects.



Continue walking ahead.

Line of Light

Hear Es Devlin reflect on her childhood memory of a line of light.

Scan the QR code to access Bloomberg Connects.



An Infinite Library

Consult a curated selection of the books featured in this installation alongside a concluding note to the exhibition.

Scan the QR code to access Bloomberg Connects.



An Infinite Library

For Es Devlin, a visit to the library is like a visit to the optician: an opportunity to view the world through a series of new lenses, to practise seeing through the eyes of others.

Devlin began making works centred around collective reading after observing the sustained focus of an audience reading subtitles during a six-hour-long opera performance. An Infinite Library invites you to sit, read and listen in shared silence, allowing the boundaries between one imagination and another to begin to blur.

Here she reads and projects extracts from the more than 2000 books that have shaped her, including the words of Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges:

‘I am not sure I exist actually, I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all the women that I have loved, all the cities I have visited.’

2026

Steel, books, mirror, AV projection

All books were kindly provided by Penguin Random House UK in support of the National Year of Reading and will be donated to local schools and charities when the exhibition ends.

Exhibition Acknowledgements

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Luke Halls Studio

Music Composition and Sound Design

Polyphonia

Audio-Visual Integration

ADi Audiovisual

Graphics Production

Omni Colour

Fine Art Installation

Patina Art Collection Care Ltd.

Legal support

K&L Gates LLP

The Design Museum would like to thank colleagues who supported the production of this exhibition, including Sophie Tönsberg (AV & IT Analyst), Brian Leonard (Gallery Manager) and Marc Cowan (Technician).

This exhibition was produced in close collaboration with Es Devlin and her studio.

Es Devlin Studio:

Vicky Bosch, Lorelei Cairns, Charlie Chen, Zoe Diakaki, Katarina Dragoslavic, Claudia Fragoso, Anna Niamh Gorman, Alice Hallifax, Raphaé Memon, Temitayo Shonibare

The Museum would also like to acknowledge Andrea Lipps, Julie Pastor and the team at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, for their time and expertise.

The Design Museum would like
to give thanks to the:

Lead Supporter

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

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Associate Sponsor

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With thanks also to
Penguin Random House UK



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With additional support from
the Es Devlin: Other Worlds Supporters Circle:

Homo Faber / Michelangelo Foundation for
Creativity and Craftsmanship,
Davina Mallinckrodt, Mark and Sophie Lewisohn,
Elizabeth and Chris Steele

Events

Wednesday 28 October

Design Camp for ages 11 to 14: Stage Design Lab

Thursday 29 October

Design Camp for ages 7 to 10: Stage Design Lab

Tuesday 8 December

An Evening with Es Devlin

Share your experience:

#EsDevlin

@designmuseum

The Design Museum is committed to reducing the environmental impact of exhibitions and displays. For more information on the Design Museum's approach, and to download a guide to reducing the environmental impact of exhibitions, follow the QR code.

