

Turner Contemporary Margate Sky Live Feed

The view from Turner Contemporary's windows looks out over the horizon and often frames mesmerizing sunsets. Whilst the Covid 19 crisis closed the gallery, they installed a live camera so that audiences around the world could be inspired by the sea and sky, wherever they are. The live feed ran 24 hours a day for one week.



Dan Thompson - Webcam Poet In Residence

Dan Thompson was a virtual poet-in-residence, writing short sketch poems across the week with a final poem produced in response to the Live Feed.

Dan Thompson is a Kent writer. He was Poet-in-Residence for Lincoln's digital arts festival Frequency in 2019, and has previously been Poet-in-Residence for the Worthing Herald. He believes this is the first time a webcam has had its own Poet-in-Residence. Last year, he published *Your England*, a collection of poems about people and places in England which tell a history of the country. For ten years he ran the Roundabout poetry events in Worthing, and for three years hosted Landing Place at Turner Contemporary.



The Poet's Logbook *Dan Thompson*

Tuesday, 17:00

Visibility good. Wind south west, moderate.
In the foreground, graphite smudges
against clean chalk cloud, which
darkens to a grey horizon, and
an undistinguished, unseen sea.

Tuesday, 20:00

Visibility very good. Light rain, moderate breeze.
A slab of cloud, unreal sky –
neon blue, glowing. Above a
ribbon of deep indigo denim sea.

Wednesday, 06:00

Visibility poor to moderate. Rain, gentle breeze.
The sky is a blank sheet
of watercolour paper,
wetted and waiting,
the sea sketched in, lightly.

Wednesday, 18:00

Visibility very good. Light cloud, gentle breeze.
Everything comes together
at one point in the composition,
one dark brushstroke of cobalt green
in swirls of titanium white.

Thursday, 10:00

Visibility good. Wind south west, moderate.
Enough blue
to make
a sailor's trousers.

Thursday, 21:30

Visibility good. Thick cloud and a gentle breeze.
In the slow hour that the sky fades
and the sea blackens, it is easy
to believe in mermaids and monsters.

Friday, 08:00

Visibility good. Sunny intervals. Wind north west, moderate.

The sea is looking crumpled
and the clouds are looking tattered.
The cover cracks to let light through.
Turner thought that mattered.

The tidal gauge is reading low
and the ships are waiting orders,
moored where Thames meets North Sea,
these empty spaces, really borders.

There's no light on the horizon
as wind pushes sea to land.
I've watched all week, I know this sky,
I hold this view in my hands.

#margatesky



Drawing The Landscape

Dedicated to Willard S. Boyle and George E. Smith, Bell Laboratories

i.

This is not the landscape.

This camera assumes the sky
is the focus, forces the sea to be
a ribbon at the bottom of the frame
but stand here and you'll know:

outside, when
the sand in the wind
stings your skin,
and the air
punches your lungs, there

the dull greengrey sea
is as wide and deep
as the cloudstacked sky.

ii.

This is not the landscape.

What we are seeing is passing
light falling through a small lens,
held momentarily on a wafer
of sand grown in a laboratory,
the tiniest spark made into
pixels a tenth as fine as hair,
converted to zeros and ones,

this is safe
and clean
and dry.

We're watching not the
real world through glass,
but a landscape,
deconstructed and redrawn
like a sketch, no more real
than a drawing by Turner.



A History of a View, 1720-2020

10 July, 2020

This view is too wide and deep for pixels. You need to come, be still here, where Turner and Vaughan Williams and TS Eliot stopped. Here, this exact geographical point is where they found the borders, lines, delineation to frame England. This view.

8 October, 2017, 02:42

The Officer of the Watch
lets the Master sleep,
forgetting a rising tide lifts all ships,
and if your anchor chain isn't long enough,
with a north west wind, you drift ashore.

11 January, 1978

The King Tide is predictable,
and so is the fact that an old pier,
unloved, will always fall into the sea.

30 May, 1940

Margate is pretty dead.
Ten tin hats, and
a box of cigarettes,
and the Lifeboat crew
launch down the slip,
to see if Dunkirk
is any different.

4 August, 1914

It felt odd, to stop,
on the way to the Pole,
to walk along
a Pleasure-Pier
as war broke out,
past Palmist and
camera obscura,
to find out if we
would have to fight -
but 'proceed',
Winston said,
so we sailed
south, away from war.

29 November, 1897

Gone, all gone -
the Palace is out to sea,
the sprung ballroom floor,
Switchback Railway,
a thousand shell trinkets
and porcelain novelties -
the mer-folk have them.

1 January, 1877

The wind brings a ship
through the deck, neatly
separating pierhead
from land.
Fifty people spend a day
picnicking unexpectedly
at sea.

1853

Eugenius has a plan, paces
the foreshore at low tide.
Will screw iron monoliths
into chalk. This is No.1 in
a chain, England's stop line,
keeping faerie folk away.

March, 1834

Come back to bed, I say,
and draw me:
but downstairs,
he has his easel,
and he loves
the sea and sky
more than me.
Or, at least as much.

1824

We raised a petition,
wrote letters to the
Isle of Thanet Times,
objected to the
Pier Co's plans
but they won,
and ruined our view.

Well, for
the next 150 years.

14 January, 1808

The sea is in the kitchens
of Cold Harbour houses,
crabs in the cooking-pots,
seaweed broth for supper.

1785

A boy, from the School up Love Lane,
sits here, draws clouds. Again and again.

10 July, 1720

There is not one gentleman
who still lives on this island.
The harbour has silted up.
The Masters of Ships left,
their money gone to London.
All that's left is a view - and
there's no profit in that.