

Dundee will be proud of the new V&A building

Expectations are rising for an architectural landmark, writes **Peter Nurick**



In 2018, Scotland will have a new landmark. Not a rugged castle, imposing tenement or brooding standing stone – landmarks often associated with this country – but a museum like no other.

Perched on the banks of the River Tay will stand two colossal upside-down pyramids, wrapped with bands of stone and deep shadow. This new structure is the V&A Museum of Design Dundee, an outstanding piece of architectural innovation and structural ingenuity. The 8,000sq m building is the result of an international design competition that returned over 140 entries from architects from all over the world who turned their eyes to the unique challenges that such a project in the city of Dundee provided.

It is Kengo Kuma's first building in the UK but his architectural practice is already responsible for some of the most beautiful, yet modest, buildings of this century.

Kuma's architecture is far removed from the traditional hi-tech architecture that characterised the latter years of the 20th century and still continues in some form today.

V&A Dundee hides its shell – a 300mm thick, curving concrete wall comprising 21 sections. Standing inside the building under construction, there is a similarity to the hull of a submarine out of water; the vast curves of dark concrete sinuously stretching and twisting behind the more regular elements of the building's two central cores.

The building has a massive scale that belies its remarkably humble purpose – to enrich people's lives through design. This is a building for individual people to come together in shared inspiration and wonder at the everyday transformative power of design.

The museum takes this monumental appearance not from a ship, as it is so commonly likened to, but from the native cliffs that extend along Scotland's north east coast. Kuma's geological inspiration roots the building in its setting, while referencing the aims of the waterfront project – a link between the land and sea.

The architect's vision of a "living room for the city" is reflected in the natural materials, from the fine exterior lines

of angular stone to a warming embrace of oak and rich limestone inside. This use of natural materials is characteristic of Kuma's work, with an emphasis on how a building can complement and reflect the landscape, rather than contrast with it.

His skill is such that even with the most rugged of materials, such as concrete and stone, he turns them to become almost weightless – the four-metre cast stone panels hanging from the outside of V&A Dundee's walls each weigh up to three tonnes, yet will lie delicately against the building's structure, almost floating.

Currently, the building's overall form remains a mystery to many, with those who see it from their car or walking past the site unable to make out the shape behind the temporary red and yellow support structure that envelops the external walls.

The site also magnifies the building's size – when complete, the removal of the hoardings and infrastructure necessary for a construction project of this scale will allow the building to shrink back and the city to reach towards it, through new public spaces, planting and reflecting water pools that further connect the building to its location.

This is all happening at a time when Scotland is engaged in some truly incredible engineering feats: the new Queensferry Crossing and, just a short distance to the north west, two huge steel hulks are gradually being transformed into the next generation of aircraft carriers – the largest ships ever built for the Royal Navy.

One feels an immense sense of pride that architecture of this calibre is coming to Dundee, excitement at the vision of the city's bright future.

V&A Dundee is an incredible building which will be home to inspiring collections and exhibitions, from its international touring shows to learning activities in our Michelin Design Gallery. We look forward to welcoming visitors to see it for themselves in 2018. *Peter Nurick is Communities Producer at V&A Dundee. Find out more at www.vandadundee.org*



Oh yes we can give



A free panto ticket can make a big difference to someone in need of cheer at Christmas, writes **Kathryn Welch**

For many of us, memories of Christmas are inextricably linked to the boos, cheers and laughter of a trip to the panto. At Macrobert Arts Centre this is one of our busiest times of year, with some 28,000 people expected to join us for 61 performances of *Weans in the Wood*. It's everything you'd wish for from a Christmas panto – glitzy, irreverent, packed to the rafters with pop songs and a classic battle between good and evil.

Many of our audience members who leave the auditorium each evening, full of ice cream and Christmas cheer, have chosen to help us spread the festive fun even more widely by donating to our Christmas Appeal. This is the fifth year we've run the appeal and thanks to generous people and organisations across Scotland, we'll be donating more than 1,000 panto tickets to children, families and older people who would otherwise be unable to join in the fun. Working with some 20 charities across the Forth Valley, these tickets are distributed to those most in need – people dealing with issues like disability, illness, domestic violence and poverty this Christmas. This year, our community has been more generous than ever, enabling us to donate a record number of tickets, and to work with new charities supporting refugees, single parents, and older people.

At Macrobert, the Christmas Appeal helps us to realise our mission of "making active connections" – using the power of creative experiences to enrich lives and enhance wellbeing. A trip to the panto is such a simple treat, but one that can have

an impact far greater than might be expected. A group of pensioners who joined us thanks to the appeal wrote to say that "it is kindness like this that makes one wonder why we hear so much about loneliness in the elderly, when people like yourselves do your best to eradicate some of it, by such a gesture". Children who've been recently bereaved have told us that the panto reminds them it's possible to feel happy again, and one child dictated a note to his mum saying he felt his disability "had flown away". Last year one mum wrote to us to say how much the family had loved spending "happy time" together, and that she'd "forgotten what that felt like". These sorts of stories remind us why creativity matters.

This year, in our quest to include as many people as possible, we've added new branches to our Christmas Appeal. We've made appeal tickets available not only to the panto, but also to *How to Be a Christmas Tree*, our show for younger children. And, supported by sponsorship from Stirling-based management consultancy Projects on Track, we've launched a Christmas Appeal Film Tour – taking festive films out and about to people who would be unable to join us at the Arts Centre in person. This inaugural year, we'll be hosting five screenings of *White Christmas* at Strathcarron Hospice, and a day of screenings of *Arthur Christmas* in the children's ward of Forth Valley Hospital. Daycare patients at Strathcarron Hospice have life-limiting conditions and many find it difficult to get out and about, particularly to the cinema. The Christmas Film Tour means all daycare and inpatients at the hospice

will get the opportunity to be part of a cinema experience, complete with popcorn and ice cream.

Each year, demand for the Christmas Appeal grows, and we're thrilled that donations this year have enabled us to meet more requests for tickets than ever before. Many donors have given loyally each year, and we've secured some donations from companies to continue to increase the numbers of people we can support.

When an 'inspirational' film sends out depressing, dangerous message

Me Before You's subtext needs to be challenged, writes **Emily Murtagh**

This year's film *Me Before You*, based on Jojo Moyes 2012 novel of the same name, was a big hit at the box office this summer. It is easy to see why, with two gorgeous leads, a mesmerising soundtrack and the promise of a devastating love story. But the movie, in its light and fluffy packaging, presents a troubling representation of assisted suicide and disability (big spoilers ahead).

The film tells the story of Will (Sam Claflin), a successful young businessman. When he is left paralysed by a road accident, his parents hire Louisa (Emilia Taylor), a girl with lots of potential but not many career prospects. She soon realises her task is not simply to assist with his care, but to help this beautiful, brooding man, who happens to be in a wheelchair,

fall in love with life again, the life he has decided that he wants to end.

Representations in literature and film are hugely important. Human beings process the world through stories and gain resources to live more effectively through the lessons and experiences of others. Through real or fictional stories persons can become acutely aware of the joys and challenges of those with very different life events from their own.

Stories also help individuals recognise that they are not alone in the world. Through characters and their experiences a person can sometimes see a reflection of himself or herself and say "it is OK to be me".

But what if the only representation of an individual's identity, seen on the big screen, loudly proclaims that "it is not OK to be you"? What if one of the

extra joy this year



Mackie's of Scotland have been long-standing supporters of the appeal – donating a free ice cream to go along with each appeal ticket.

Each year, though, we're also reliant on finding new donors to help us to meet the incredible demand for tickets from families and charities, and to develop new plans like the Christmas Appeal Film Tour. That's why we've set up an annual giving plan, which asks donors to support the Christ-

mas Appeal on a regular basis each year. Each donation of £15 means we can give a ticket to someone who wouldn't otherwise be able to share in the fun of Christmas, and spread festive cheer to children and families across Scotland.

Kathryn Welch is Development Manager, Macrobert Arts Centre. Donations to Macrobert Arts Centre's Christmas Appeal can be made at www.macrobertartscentre.org

↑ This year's festive spectacular at the Macrobert Arts Centre is *Weans in the Wood*



Through the media, distorted value beliefs may become part of the way society thinks, without people even realising.

Thus, one cannot let those beliefs go unchallenged. To live boldly can mean many different things to many different people, and to limit what a meaningful life looks like in this way makes for unsettling viewing.

Emily Murtagh, Research Associate with the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics



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