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London Design Festival 2012

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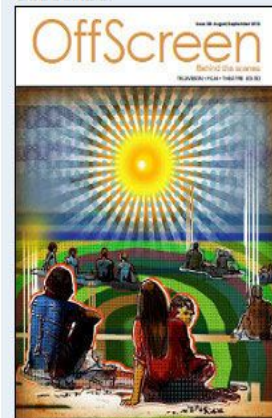


Installation by Rolf Sachs

Words by **Lynda Beckett**

The London Design Festival is back in town. From 14-23 September the streets of London will be filled with events and curious pieces of design, as the London Design Festival celebrates its 10th year.

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BE OPEN Sound Portal - ARUP

Right across London, from the V&A to Shoreditch, you will be able to see and experience innovative design from all over the world. There will be over 300 events taking place throughout the city, far too many for any single person to see, so OffScreen has taken a look at the various events and locations, and picked out our favourites.

One of the big 'must sees', or should we say, 'must hears', is the Landmark Project BE OPEN Sound Portal, designed by ARUP, which will be in Trafalgar Square. BE OPEN will be an installation that focuses on sound and acoustics, rather than a visual spectacle. Having said that, it does look pretty cool. It's going to be a black alien rubberised structure, home to some finely tuned audio technology. The structure and the technology within it will aim to deliver a pure acoustic experience to its visitors. Each day, five leading sound artists and musicians, who have been specially commissioned for the London Design Festival, will create innovative soundscapes, from electronic music to sounds of glaciers breaking. The sound artists will include Jana Winderen, Ivan Pavlov, Nathaniel Robin Mann and Jo Thomas.

One of the challenges of making the BE OPEN Sound Portal was in its positioning – Trafalgar Square, one of the busiest and aurally chaotic environments in London. Could a structure be built that would make the listeners have a different aural experience to the urban sounds that engulf Trafalgar Square?

Pioneers in the area of acoustic engineering, ARUP have used their experience from designing airports, auditoriums, stadiums, and even roads, to design this sound portal. Cocooned from the normal bustle of Trafalgar Square and all its external noise, the BE OPEN Sound Portal will allow the sound artists and the listeners to enter a very different environment from the one outside.

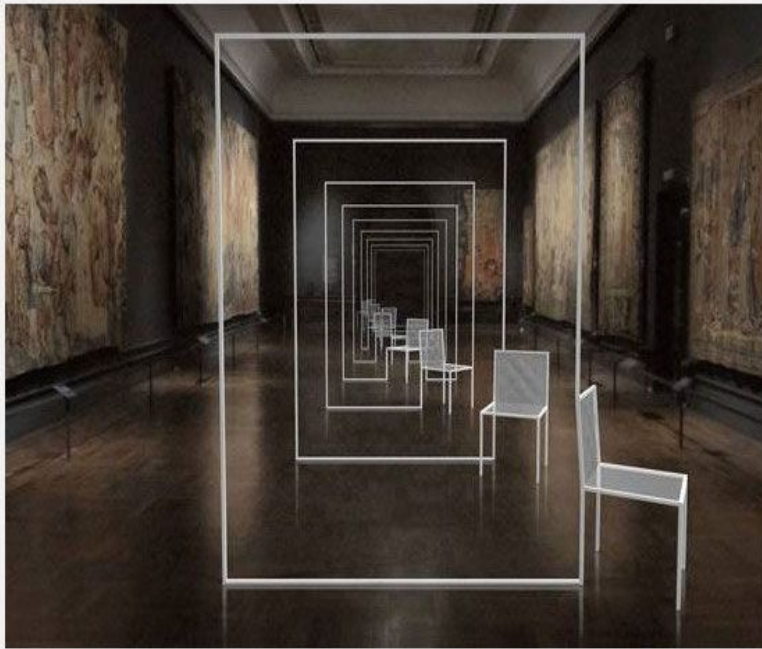


Flowing Glass - Carpenter/Lowings Architecture & Design and Eckersley O'Callaghan Structural Design

Just a little way up the road at Somerset House, Flowing Glass will be a completely different experience. A curving, sinuous, transparent sculpture made from ultra-thin twisting glass, Flowing Glass will stand like a frozen veil reflecting the architecture and the river that it overlooks. From one side, the surface tilts up reflecting the ever-changing daylight conditions of the London sky, while from the other side the wall reflects the darker surface of the ground.

Flowing Glass is a design collaboration (Carpenter/Lowings Architecture & Design and Eckersley O'Callaghan Structural Design). In Flowing Glass the designers seek to push the unique physical attributes of the material they are working with and invite the observers to question the way in which they see the properties of glass being used.

At the V&A there will be many exhibits, including a contemporary installation by Nendo. Nendo is an emerging Japanese studio with some very creative designers. Over the last decade they have been producing some really quirky designs, like the Rootote bag. At a first glance it looks like an ordinary bag. However, within it is an extended pocket that turns the bag into a puppet kangaroo. Another great example of their work is a rug with the pattern of the magnified veins within butterfly and dragonfly wings as the design.



Mimicry Chairs - Nendo

For the London Design Festival Nendo has produced a project titled Mimicry Chairs. It comprises a series of elegant chair installations that will appear in varying locations within the V&A. The designers at Nendo were inspired to work in contrast with the ornate museum surroundings to create a simple chair made from pressed and punched metal which has been finished in white to give it an almost ghost-like appearance. Often in museums you aren't able to touch the exhibits, but here you are openly encouraged to sit on the chair installations throughout the museum.

Rolf Sachs has also created an installation at the V&A. Sachs normally creates lighting and furniture, set design for ballet and opera, and also photography, architectural and interior design projects. Here he has created an evocative installation that will be on display in the Henry Cole Grand Staircase. Individual drops of brightly coloured pigment will be released from a height from a custom designed drip mechanism. You will be able to watch the drops of ink land in a vast tank of liquid, and see them exploding into organic colour clouds, each one beautiful and unique in form.

We've just picked out a few things to see and experience from the 10th London Design Festival. There are loads more events, pop up galleries and competitions to get involved in over the ten days of the London Design Festival 2012, 14 – 23, September.

To find out more go to www.londondesignfestival.com