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INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION LED BY US-BASED DESIGN PRACTICE WHY WINS COMPETITION TO REVITALISE NATIONALLY- IMPORTANT SITE IN EDINBURGH

Winning team's organic landscape-focused scheme respects the historic setting yet brings new energies, opens up views, transforms access and increases overall green space within West Princes Street Gardens



© wHY

The Ross Development Trust together with the City of Edinburgh Council today [1 August 2017] announced the winner of the Ross Pavilion International Design Competition to be the team led by US-based design practice wHY.

The five-month search for an outstanding team for the £25m Ross Pavilion and West Princes Street Gardens project attracted first-stage submissions from 125 teams (made up of 400 firms) from 22 different countries.

At the competition's second stage, shortlisted teams produced concept designs for a new landmark Pavilion; a visitor centre with café; and improvements to the surrounding Gardens. The new Pavilion will provide a flexible platform for the imaginative arts and cultural programming that Edinburgh excels in, and allow visitors and residents to engage with a variety of events all year round.

The competition jury met on 11 July to interview the seven teams shortlisted for this initiative, and unanimously selected WHY as the winner. Their team included Edinburgh-based design studio GRAS, Groves-Raines Architects, Arup, Studio Yann Kersalé, O Street, Stuco, Creative Concern, Noel Kingsbury, Atelier Ten and Lawrence Barth. Full details of the jury and winning team can be found in the *Notes* below.

The competition winners proposed an organic landscape-focused scheme that respects the historic setting but also animates the Gardens through the introduction of a new undulating promenade, transformed access from Princes Street, sculptural seating and dynamic open views.

Inspired by the Gardens' geology and history – from the volcanic forces to the man-made energy of the Victorian pleasure garden – the design subtly positions the new visitor centre and the 'butterfly' Pavilion into the folds of the landscape, enabling the Castle to remain the main visual event. The scheme increases the amount of green space relative to hard surfaces within the Gardens and is, in the team's words, 'human scale with moments of drama... activating four layers of meaning within the Gardens: botanical, civic, commemorative and cultural.'

The jury praised the team's concept design as 'a beautiful and intensely appealing proposal that complemented, but did not compete with, the skyline of the City and the Castle.' They liked the concept of the activated community space with a democratic spirit, potentially creating a new and welcoming focus for the City's festivals while appreciating that the team's design balanced this with a strong approach to the smaller, intimate spaces within the wider Gardens.

All the finalists' schemes went on show to the public at the City Art Centre in Edinburgh from 21 June until 30 July 2017 and remain available to view online through the websites of the [competition](#) and the [Ross Development Trust](#). The competition was organised by Malcolm Reading Consultants.

Norman Springford, Competition Jury Chair, was delighted with the whole process. He said:

“As is always the case with initiatives of this size and stature, the jury had a hard job! We are confident however that we have a winning concept that embodies an imaginative ensemble landscape approach, creating a wonderful stage for our iconic Edinburgh Castle. In addition, the design concept offers a creative energy and a series of unique elements which will all combine to create a new and contemporary landscape.

We thoroughly enjoyed meeting all the shortlisted teams and understanding each approach. However with WHY, they demonstrated an impressive collaboration which respects and enhances the historical context and backdrop of the Castle and the City, whilst creating new heritage and increasing the green space within the Gardens. All of which were key aspects for us all and respected the importance of the space within a World Heritage Site.

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Councillor Donald Wilson, Edinburgh's Culture and Communities Convener, said:

"We have seen some of the most influential architects and landscapers join forces to compete to design the new Ross Pavilion. The huge international interest in the competition is testament to Edinburgh's standing as one of the world's most beautiful and creative settings for live performance.

All of the shortlisted teams put forward fantastic ideas but wHY's Butterfly concept received the jury's collective support. The chosen design makes the most of the natural surroundings of Princes Street Gardens and focuses on connecting people to the city, the stage and the view of Edinburgh Castle.

It is hugely exciting to reach this stage of the project. Our thanks go to the Ross Development Trust for their vision and support and our congratulations to wHY on their winning design.

Andy Neal, Trustee, The Ross Development Trust, was delighted with the jury's decision. He said:

"It is always a tough job to select a winner when you have such a strong shortlist of entries. The Trust is grateful to the jury for their time and consideration in reaching a decision and selecting a winning design concept.

We are looking forward to working with wHY to develop our vision for West Princes Street Gardens. Over the next few months, we will work with the design team and people of Edinburgh to develop the brief for the Gardens. It's an exciting time for the City.

Malcolm Reading, Competition Director, said:

“wHY is a creative force that has the rare skill of being able to produce design that is exciting yet also sensitive and humane – it is a delight to see them win so exuberantly.

Their proposal is a landscape scheme that is really more like an energy-field: using animation and drama as well as open vistas, they transform the Gardens and create an experience that is much freer and organic. As is their style, they conscientiously sampled local opinion, and have come up with a design proposal that is engaging and refreshing.

We would like to thank all the finalists for their hard work and enthusiasm – we were in no doubt over their connection to this wonderful project, and they produced diverse and well-reasoned concept designs.”

wHY is a collective of architects, landscape designers, makers and strategic thinkers, established in 2004 and with offices in New York and Los Angeles; the studio’s competition-winning entry was led by Founder and Creative Director Kulapat Yantrasast and Landscape Design Director Mark Thomann.

According to the Los Angeles Times, Yantrasast, who is Thai-born and was educated in Japan, ‘is increasingly sought after in the cultural sphere for his ability to skilfully conjure environments that suit the needs of art’. wHY came to global attention this year with the opening of Los Angeles’ newest museum, the Marciano Art Foundation, which involved a sensitive and restrained redesign of the former Scottish Rite Masonic Temple. The practice’s Grand Rapids Art Museum was the first institution of its kind in the world to achieve a LEED Gold rating for environmental performance and sustainability.

A key local partner in the winning collaboration was Edinburgh-based design studio GRAS, known for its exploratory, interdisciplinary approach and an eclectic portfolio of arts, cultural and community-based projects.

Kulapat Yantrasast, Founder and Creative Director of wHY, said:

“wHY is built around an ecology of disciplines, the convergence of ideas, experience, nature and people. The Ross Pavilion and West Princes Street Gardens represent this convergence and this was the perfect ground to further our approach to design. To be selected from so many extraordinary thinkers is an honour. We felt a personal connection to the Gardens and believe our design embodies how important collaboration and people are to making a place remarkable.”



Mark Thomann, wHY's Landscape Design Director, added:

“This is a special opportunity for a special place, not just for Edinburgh but the world. The new Ross Pavilion and Gardens draw from the rich natural history, heritage and creative spirit of Scotland, embodying a model approach for integrating public architecture and urban space in a top global city. Our team looks forward to realising this vision with the Ross Development Trust and the people of Edinburgh.”

The jury praised all the finalists for their hard work and commitment and awarded a special commendation to the team led by William Matthews Associates and Sou Fujimoto Architects for ‘a memorable and delicate design that opened up unexpected views, particularly those to the Castle’.

The other five teams were led by Adjaye Associates; Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG); Flanagan Lawrence; Page \ Park Architects, West 8 Landscape Architects and BuroHappold Engineering; and Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter.

The Ross Development Trust is working closely with the City of Edinburgh Council on this initiative. Key project stakeholders include Historic Environment Scotland, the Cockburn Association, the Old Town Community Council and Edinburgh World Heritage.

wHY will now work with the Trust, the Council and other stakeholders, and consult with the public, to take forward the project to revitalise this space, positioned just below Edinburgh Castle and adjoining Princes' Street. Currently occupied by the Ross Bandstand, and described as a true ‘place for people’, it is both a refuge from daily city life and the focus for exhilarating celebrations, such as Hogmanay and the Edinburgh International Festival’s closing fireworks concert.

The competition was run according to EU procurement guidelines and the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015.

Construction is expected to begin in 2018.

Ends

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Competition jury

- **Norman Springford**, Jury Chair
- **Ada Yvars Bravo**, Director, MYAA Architects
- **Sir Mark Jones FSA, FRSE**, Former Director of the National Museums of Scotland and the V&A
- **Andrew Kerr**, CEO, City of Edinburgh Council
- **Riccardo Marini**, Director, Gehl Architects
- **Alexander McCall Smith CBE, FRSE**, Writer
- **Malcolm Reading (Hon) FRGS, FRSA**, Architect and Competition Director
- **Adam Wilkinson**, Director, Edinburgh World Heritage
- **Donald Wilson**, Convenor for Culture and Communities, City of Edinburgh Council

Winning team

wHY (USA) with GRAS, Groves-Raines Architects, Arup, O Street, Creative Concern, Noel Kingsbury, Studio Yann Kersalé, Lawrence Barth, Stuco, Alan Cumming, Aaron Hicklin, Alison Watson, Peter Ross, Adrian Turpin and Beatrice Colin.

wHY is an interdisciplinary design practice dedicated to serving the arts, communities, culture and the environment since 2004. Led by Founder and Creative Director Kulapat Yantrasast and Landscape Design Director Mark Thomann, wHY is a collective of architects, landscape designers, makers and strategic thinkers, who work as four independent yet interconnected workshops; ideas, buildings, grounds and objects. With offices in Los Angeles and New York, wHY's 30 team members and network of experts share a commitment to collaboration. wHY has assembled a team of thought leaders and creative influencers, including engineers, designers, plant-lovers, graphic designers, writers, journalists, actors, artists, and activists who are passionate about Scotland and participating in the conversation for the future of the Ross Pavilion. Recent projects include the widely published Speed Art Museum in Louisville, KY and Skylanding with Yoko Ono, in the historic Olmsted designed Jackson Park in Chicago, IL.

<http://www.why-site.com/>



Other Ross Pavilion Competition Finalists

Adjaye Associates with Morgan McDonnell, BuroHappold Engineering, Plan A Consultants, JLL, Turley, Arup, Sandy Brown, Charcoalblue, AOC Archaeology, Studio LR, FMDC, Interserve and Thomas & Adamson

Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) with JM Architects, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, GROSS.MAX., Charcoalblue, Speirs + Major, JLL, Alan Baxter and People Friendly

Flanagan Lawrence with Gillespies, Expedition Engineering, JLL, Arup and Alan Baxter

Page \ Park Architects, West 8 Landscape Architects and BuroHappold Engineering with Charcoalblue and Muir Smith Evans

Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter with GROSS.MAX., AECOM, Charcoalblue, Groves-Raines Architects and Forbes Massie Studio

William Matthews Associates and Sou Fujimoto Architects with BuroHappold Engineering, GROSS.MAX., Purcell, Scott Hobbs Planning and Filippo Bolognese

Shortlisted designs are available to view in an online gallery on the competition website at <https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/rosspavilion/shortlist>

Ross Development Trust

Established in 2016, the Ross Development Trust is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose purpose is to advance the appreciation and promotion of the arts, culture and heritage within West Princes Street Gardens and, through this, encourage the rejuvenation of Edinburgh city centre. The Trust is tasked with finding the capital required to fund the various projects within the Gardens, for the benefit of the city.

The Board of Trustees consists of individuals with a broad range of experience, sharing a personal ambition to improve the offering of West Princes Street Gardens. There will also be representation on the Board from the City of Edinburgh Council to ensure that the City's interests are protected.

<http://www.rdtrust.org>



Project Background

The Ross Bandstand is located centrally within West Princes Street Gardens, and is framed by spectacular views of Edinburgh Castle. Records of live music performances on the site date back to 1853, with the first permanent structure, designed by architects Kinnear and Peddie, erected in 1877. This was replaced by the current structure – an open air theatre – built in 1935 and designed by city architect E J Macrae. The original building was gifted to the city by William Henry Ross, former chairman of the Distillers Company. The 1935 building has been upgraded and extended a number of times throughout the 20th century.

In recent times the Bandstand has fallen into disrepair: the facilities do not meet today's requirements and, as a result, this prominent site is not living up to its full potential. When not in use the site is closed to the public, restricting access through the Gardens and creating a void in one of the most visited green spaces in Scotland.

The ambition to replace the Bandstand dates back to 2004, when the current structure proved unable to withstand the intense storms experienced during the 2003 Hogmanay celebrations. The City of Edinburgh Council subsequently commissioned a feasibility study to explore options for the site, and make recommendations for overall improvements to the Gardens. A previous competition was launched in 2006, but the project was cancelled due to funding constraints.

Malcolm Reading Consultants

Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC) is a strategic consultancy specialising in the selection of contemporary designers. MRC believes in the power of design to create new perceptions and act as an inspiration – either at the local level, or internationally.

MRC is a leading specialist in global design competitions based in the UK. Recent work includes competitions for the Illuminated River Foundation, the Cambridge to Oxford Connection, the UK Holocaust Memorial, Science Island (Lithuania), Tintagel Castle Bridge, the Mumbai City Museum (India), the Art Mill (Qatar), Guggenheim Helsinki (Finland), and new buildings for New College, Oxford and Homerton College, Cambridge.

MRC is currently working with the British Library to establish the Design Brief for the major northern development of the St Pancras site.

<https://malcolmreading.co.uk>