

RIVER CONNECTIONS

Art & The River Ness

Inverness City Arts is developing a public art programme to enhance the riverside and complement the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme. Ideas from public consultation, local residents, river users, school pupils and students will assist commissioned artists in taking a creative approach to integrating high quality artwork into the flood scheme.

The press and public will be invited to meet some of the artists involved and to examine and comment on the proposals for the artworks as part of the extensive community consultation which the artists are undertaking prior to producing detailed designs for each of the projects.

The projects are:

River Connections : a series of interventions along the river, including seating areas and poetry set into the stones and copes which refer to the natural history and other river stories.

Sculptural Destination : an iconic landmark to visit and interact with on the riverside or to view from some distance away.

Rest Spaces : relaxation areas for individuals or small groups who might informally gather along the river's edge.

The Trail : mapping the river to create a trail from the Ness islands to the river mouth including local stories, environmental knowledge and other practical information accessed through a traditional paper map or digitally by mobile phone.

Gathering Place : a special place for people to come together to enjoy the River Ness.

Children's Riverside Feature : Five Secondary Schools in the Inverness area have the opportunity to be involved in the process to design an interactive play space.

The project is funded by City of Inverness Common Good Fund, Creative Scotland, The Highland Council & HIE.





RIVER CONNECTIONS

Mary Bourne



Brief: River Connections

This River Connections project is part of a wider public art programme that seeks to explore the River Ness' ecology and vibrant wildlife. The River Ness flows for seven miles from Loch Ness to the Moray Firth. It is an asset that contributes to the unique character of the city and is distinctive for the rich biodiversity along its length. The River Ness is one of the most significant features of the city and much of its biodiversity, history and cultural impact remain to be discovered.

Working in close partnership with representatives of the Flood Project Team, the Artist will provide specialist advice that can enhance aspects of the Scheme. This varies from areas of flexible public space to street furniture, panels and railings. There are many aspects of the works that may be improved and made more visually striking.

The River Connections Project will seek to reflect the river's significance historically, culturally and ecologically and enhance its continuing importance to city life in Inverness. This also includes the wider culture of the City of Inverness, Highlands and Scotland.



Artist: Mary Bourne

Mary Bourne is a visual artist whose work explores mankind's emotional, intellectual and physical relationships with the world we live in. Based in rural Moray she works principally in natural stone, using a variety of techniques (carving, sandblasting, heat and polishing) to find subtle physical forms for poetic ideas. The physicality of the objects she makes is very important and they are often highly tactile. She says, "For me art is a medium for reflection and communication. Given the durability of my medium this means communication not only between contemporaries but between generations: stone warmed and shaped by my hands will perhaps again be warmed by the hands of someone in some unknowable time to come."



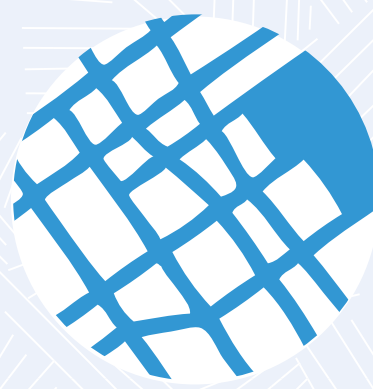
Approach

The title of the commission is a rich source of inspiration in itself and I spent the first part of 2014 talking to all sorts of people connected to the river, walking up and down it in all weathers, reading about where the water came from and where the ships that left the river mouth sailed out to. Rivers are geographical connectors between the inland high ground and the coast, between fresh and salt water, and can be both natural communication routes – for those with a boat, and barriers for those without one.

I armed myself with knowledge, about the hydrology of the river, the places it passes on its journey to the sea, about its history, for example the ford that probably gave rise to the first opportunistic businesses and religious institutions that developed into Inverness. I learned about the animals that fly or swim up and down the river's length, silent and unseen to most of us, and about the people whose lives have been and are entwined with its serpentine length.

In the end it was two very human reactions that sparked my designs. Firstly I noticed how every person I spoke to relaxed and smiled when we spoke about the animals they'd seen along the river, and I decided I would like to celebrate these precious and elusive creatures. Their streamlined forms will be incorporated into the wall along the West bank of the river.

Secondly the words of one riverside trader stayed with me: "when the river stands still and the moon shines, it is beautiful". He was talking about the moment when the up-stream pressure of the rising tide is in perfect balance with the down-stream pressure from the weight of inland water. Suddenly the river stands quite still and looks like a pool of mercury. This is what sparked the designs on the East bank of the river. Three sculptural stone seats will express firstly the inland waters that feed the river (Lochan Seating), then the moment of equilibrium when the river stands still (Equilibrium Seating) and, finally, the tide that runs in from the sea (Tidal Surge Seating). To enrich and deepen people's understanding and experience of the work, I invited poet Ken Cockburn to muse on some of the River Connections themes and his poetry will appear along the floodwall on both banks, along with images relating to the themes.



SCULPTURAL DESTINATION

Annie Cattrell

Brief: Sculptural Destination

The Sculptural Destination will result in the creation of an iconic and interactive artwork, sited to provide a 'destination' which will contribute to the regeneration of an underused or underdeveloped area and encourage people to explore the length of the river.

The artwork will create a focus for the city, incorporate permanent work of high quality and innovation to engender a distinctive sense of place, enhancing the riverscape and increasing footfall. The project will involve working in close partnership with the Flood Team and will enhance The Highland Council's River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The sculpture will relate to the river's significance historically, culturally and ecologically and enhance its continuing importance to city life in Inverness. This also includes the wider culture of the City of Inverness, the Highlands and Scotland.

Artist: Annie Cattrell

Cattrell was born in Glasgow, studied Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art, University of Ulster and at the Royal College of Art.

She has exhibited widely including at Pier Art Centre; Anne Faggionato Gallery and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery. Recent commissions include for the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, Bio-chemistry Department at Oxford University and at Oxford Brookes University.

Cattrell has completed residencies at Camden Arts Centre; The Royal Institution of Great Britain; The Royal Edinburgh Hospital; ACE Helen Chadwick Fellowship at Oxford University and at the British School at Rome.

She lectures at the Royal College of Art and is Reader in Fine Art at De Montfort University in Leicester.

Approach

Place:

The Great Glen Fault is of great geological significance; one of the reasons being that it is the location and meeting of two distinct land regions (North West Highlands and Grampian Mountains). The Loch Ness area is still seismically active, the most recent earthquake taking place in the early 20th century reaching 4 on the Richter scale.

History:

Edinburgh born James Hutton (1726-1797), the "father of modern geology," wrote the Theory of the Earth (published in 1788) it proposed the idea of a rock cycle in which weathered rocks form new sediments and that granites were of volcanic origin. At Glen Tilt in the Cairngorm Mountains he found granite penetrating metamorphic schists, this proved that granite formed from the cooling of molten rock. As a result of Hutton's discovery (regarding geological time scales) he famously said: "that we find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end."

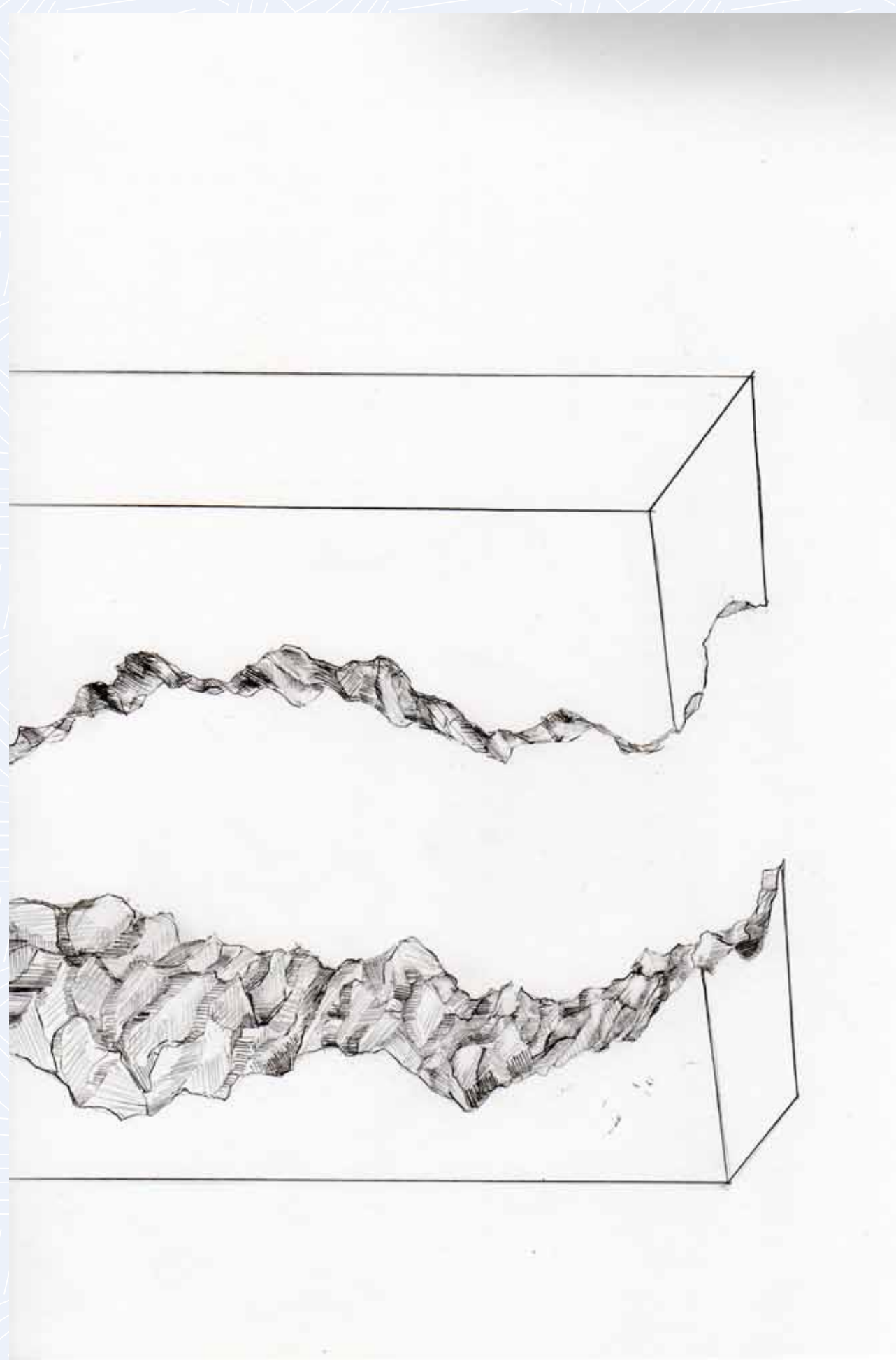
Historically the Adder stone (a circular natural stone with a hole in the middle of it) has been believed to have magical powers. The person looking into the hole or aperture of the stone might see a vision or forecast of the future.

Forecasting and Predictions:

Forecasting is the process of making statements about the future and events whose actual outcomes have not yet been observed and experienced, such as the weather. Prediction is similar and normally used for more general estimates, such as the number of floods that might occur over a long period. In the 17th century the Brahan Seer known in his native Scottish Gaelic as Coinneach Odhar (and Kenneth Mackenzie) was a predictor of the future.

Seer predicted many things both positive and negative; significantly (within this context) he said that when five bridges were completed over the River Ness (in Inverness) that there would be worldwide chaos. In August 1939 there were five bridges over the Ness and on September 1st of the same year, Hitler invaded Poland. Seer also predicted that when there was nine bridges that there would be fire, flood and calamity. The ninth bridge was built in 1987 and in 1988 the Piper Alpha disaster happened.

It is my intention to combine the scientific method, the understanding of the powerful nature of the folk law and the cultural need for predictions, forecasting and belief systems to attempt to determine and SHIFT/ SEOL the future. The sculpture Seer would draw upon these ideas and embed them into the physicality of the sculpture. Making an interactive place and space of two sections where people could stand between and envisage future positive dreams.





REST PLACES

Dress for the Weather

Brief: Rest Places

Rest Spaces will result in the creation of approximately five areas that could accommodate individuals or small groups who might informally gather along the river's edge to relax and enjoy the river. It is envisaged that the project could significantly enliven the riverside in various ways. There are a number of key locations around the river that potentially lend themselves to being seating areas or rest spaces.

Public consultation and targeted workshops with young residents have highlighted that there are limited places where people can relax and fully enjoy the river experience in Inverness. Through commissioning areas for people to linger, sit or relax, it is anticipated that more people would be able to pause at key places and have a positive experience whether this is from the perspective of a regular walker, local resident or an international visitor seeking to learn more about this significant part of the city. These areas will incorporate permanent work of high quality and engender a distinctive sense of place, enhancing the riverscape and increasing footfall.



Approach

Rest Spaces is one of a series of art initiatives to encourage people – locals & visitors alike – to experience and engage with the river as it flows through the city.

Dress for the Weather take an approach that focuses strongly on connecting people with the river by providing opportunities for individuals, couples and groups to stop and dwell along the banks of the River Ness. The concepts behind the different types of rest spaces are inspired, partly, by the wildlife local to the river by suggesting interventions that encourage people to stop and enjoy the river in a variety of ways: to perch, to explore, to bask, to gather.

Existing small scale architectural and urban forms that allow for specific sizes of small groups to come together or for an individual to rest were also explored in our development so far. 'The stoop' (or front stair) for example provides a seating area for a small number of close friends or family to dwell off the line of the street while taking in all that is going along it. It is interesting to us how these spaces can be used, abstracted and combined with site constraints and opportunities to provide a purpose on the River Ness.

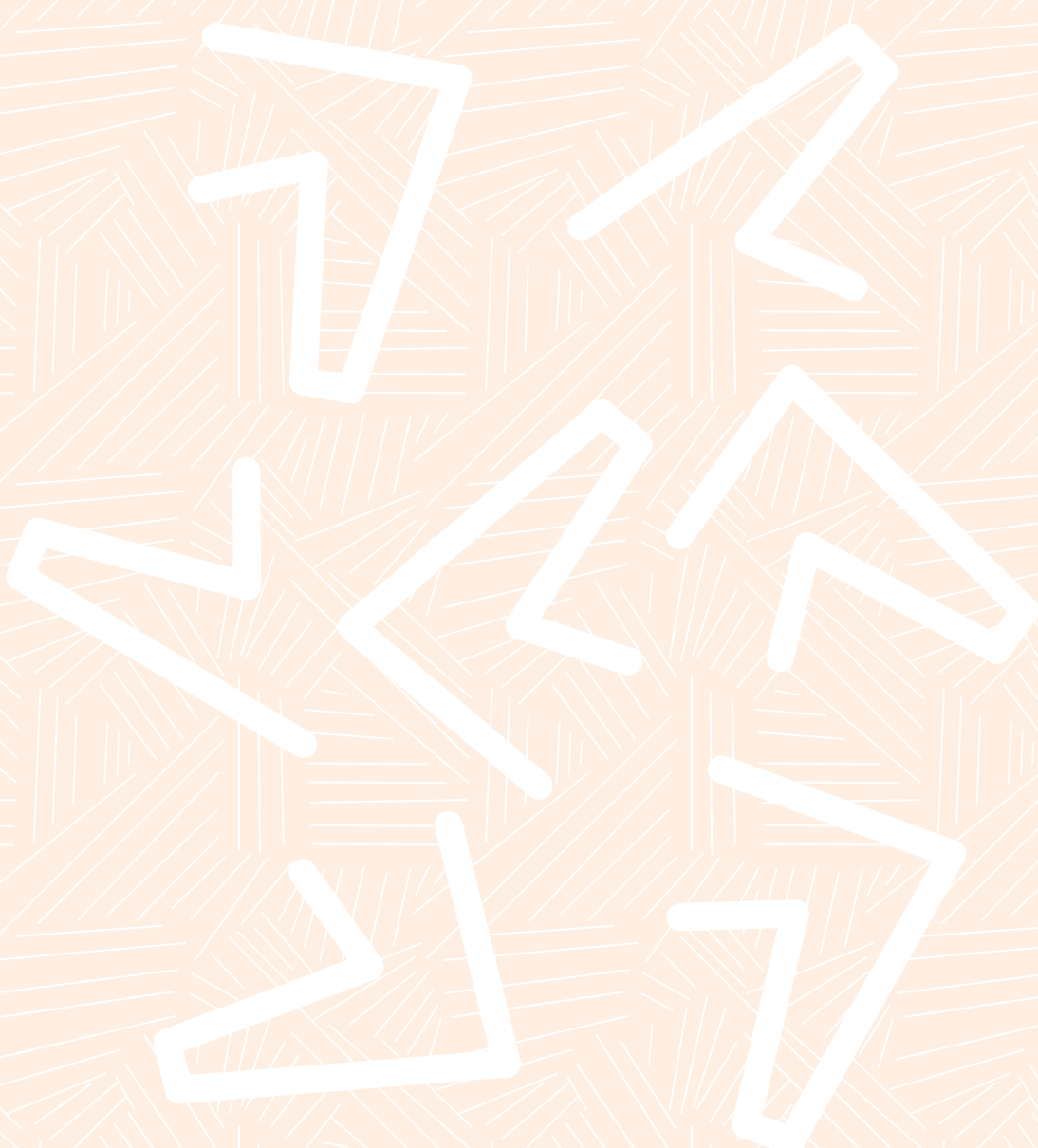
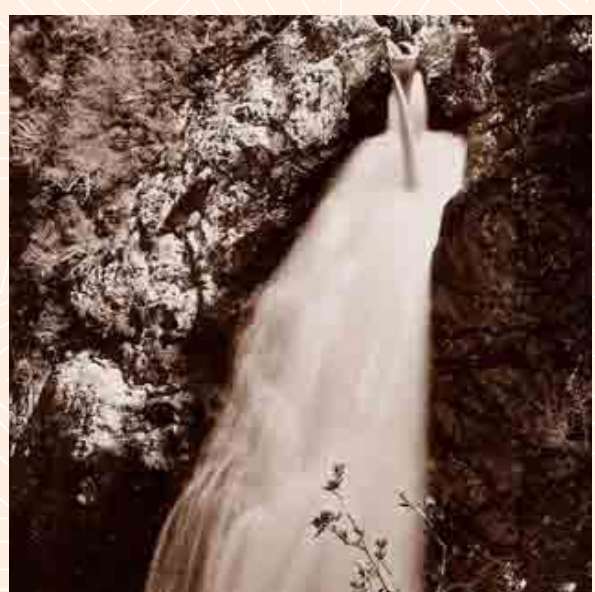
The material palette is proposed to be simple, comprising of local stone and formed metal for handrails and frames. The Great Glen Fault Line is a significant geological feature which is most visibly expressed by River and Loch Ness and separates two distinct geologies and rock types. To the North West of the River Ness we propose to form our rest spaces from stone produced from the corresponding Moine rock. To the South East of the river we propose stone produced from the Dalradian rock found to this side. We aim for metal handrails and finishes to be hand formed with careful attention given to the ergonomics of assisting our over all conceptual aim to create places to rest whether that be by perching, exploring, basking or gathering.

Artist: Dress for the Weather

Dress for the Weather work in the fields of architecture and public art to produce work which engages with and responds strongly to its context.

Our architectural work seeks to construct buildings which are beautifully equipped for their climate, culture, economy and place while our public art works experiment with spatial conditions and the existing fabric of places. All of our work follows a consistent ethos: to dress for the weather.

The practice is led by self-initiated and project specific research which focuses on mapping and building typology studies. These build an understanding of place and how people inhabit their surroundings. This research is integral to our built work and the two have a reciprocal relationship.





THE TRAIL

Dress for the Weather



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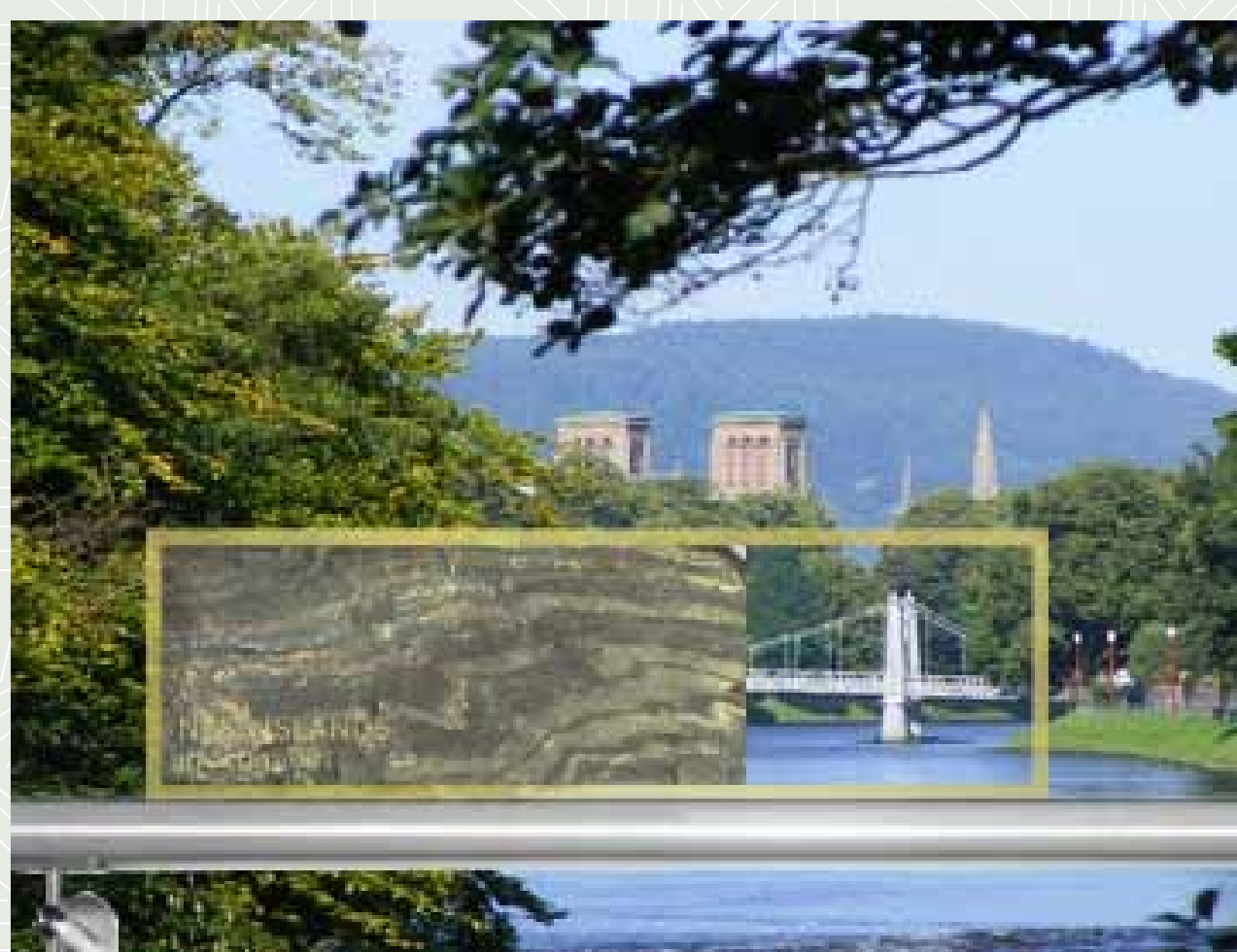


Brief: The Trail

The Trail is one of a series of art initiatives to encourage people - locals & visitors - to experience and engage with the river as it flows through the city.

The project shall reinforce Highland cultural identity and its resonance with the natural environment. It will encourage people to discover new places and purposes around the river by creating better linkages between key spaces and places. It shall increase awareness of the historical, social and natural history of the River Ness and Inverness, promoting a strong sense of place and foster a sense of pride in the city. Crucially it will highlight the river's biodiversity, something that is felt to be important and distinguishes Inverness from other cities.

The Trail project shall result in the creation of a series of interventions - a trail or route around the River Ness that links the full length of this stretch of river including Merkinch and up to the Ness Islands. Through the process the project shall develop links with secondary and tertiary educational establishments, riverside communities and other users.



Approach

The Trail will become a resource for the city of Inverness, it's inhabitants and it's visitors. The size and geography of the city make it ideal for exploring on foot, by bike or even on the River Ness. It is these explorations which we seek to encourage and enhance through our approach to The Trail.

Dress for the Weather are passionate about how people experience and understand our cities and seek to create this resource which will pull together many disparate strands of information and material that contribute to the telling of Inverness' 'story'. The trail will consist of many layers of interpretation through different mediums and allow people to chose their own way.

The Trail project will see the introduction of a number of beautifully designed and crafted way markers around Inverness as well as a physical, graphic map available from key locations. These physical artefacts will lead to a groundbreaking wealth of information and data held online. Here, The Trail aims to digitise a range of existing paper-based data, personal knowledge as well as new interpretations and insights into Inverness.

Part of this work will include connecting the new public artworks along the River Ness through providing interpretation and information. The Trail will also include walking / cycling routes, information on the art and architecture of the city, natural heritage as well more abstract features encouraging visitors to 'drift' through the city.

It is essential to our approach that a wide range of individuals and groups contribute to the forming of these trails. We seek the input from walkers, cyclists, anglers, heritage enthusiasts, architects, town planners, bird-watchers and many more. If you have a favourite spot in or route through the city then we'd love to hear about it.



THE GATHERING PLACE

The collaborative team of Sans façon and KHBT



Approach

The Ness is a cherished place in the city; it is actively used as a promenade, by wading salmon fishermen and for floating down during the yearly Great River Ness Raft Race. The Ness is not a Lido though, its seasonal fluctuations are too serious, however there is a place to expand its full social role in the fabric of the city.

The intention for the Ness Pier is to blend together the traditional expectations of public space with a completely new way for the people of Inverness to relate and experience the river, a permanent attraction and celebration of gathering.

The Ness Pier is a pier in the traditional sense, to promenade, to gather, an event in the social fabric of the city, a place to stop, to rest, to gather one's thoughts, to read a newspaper. It is a place to safely observe the changing nature of the river, its highs and lows, ebbs and flows, its life and activity, a stage for the river and its changing conditions. It is also an enticing unique structure that changes its position in accordance with the amount of people using it, slowly tipping to the water the more the gathering grows.

The mechanism tilts slowly as the crowd gathers on the Pier, and stops just above the water level. From an outlook onto the river and back to the city, it transforms into a platform just over the river when enough people come to use it.

The Ness Pier is an intentional balance of sculptural form and social space. For us the 'artwork' rests as much in its function, the making of this place and how people come to use it, as in its aesthetic qualities. Intentionally bold as a structure it really comes to life through the act of gathering, whilst all positions of the Pier have an enjoyable quality.

The tilting mechanism can be restrained to not come down further than a certain level during high water events or locked in a up position during extreme events.

Brief: The Gathering Place

The Gathering Place will be a structure which will bring people together to a special place, sited to provide a focal point and an overview of the River Ness. From here people will be able to experience the full scale of the river and the ancient landscape in which it sits in ways that explore the diverse and complex relations between its communities, the city and the landscape.

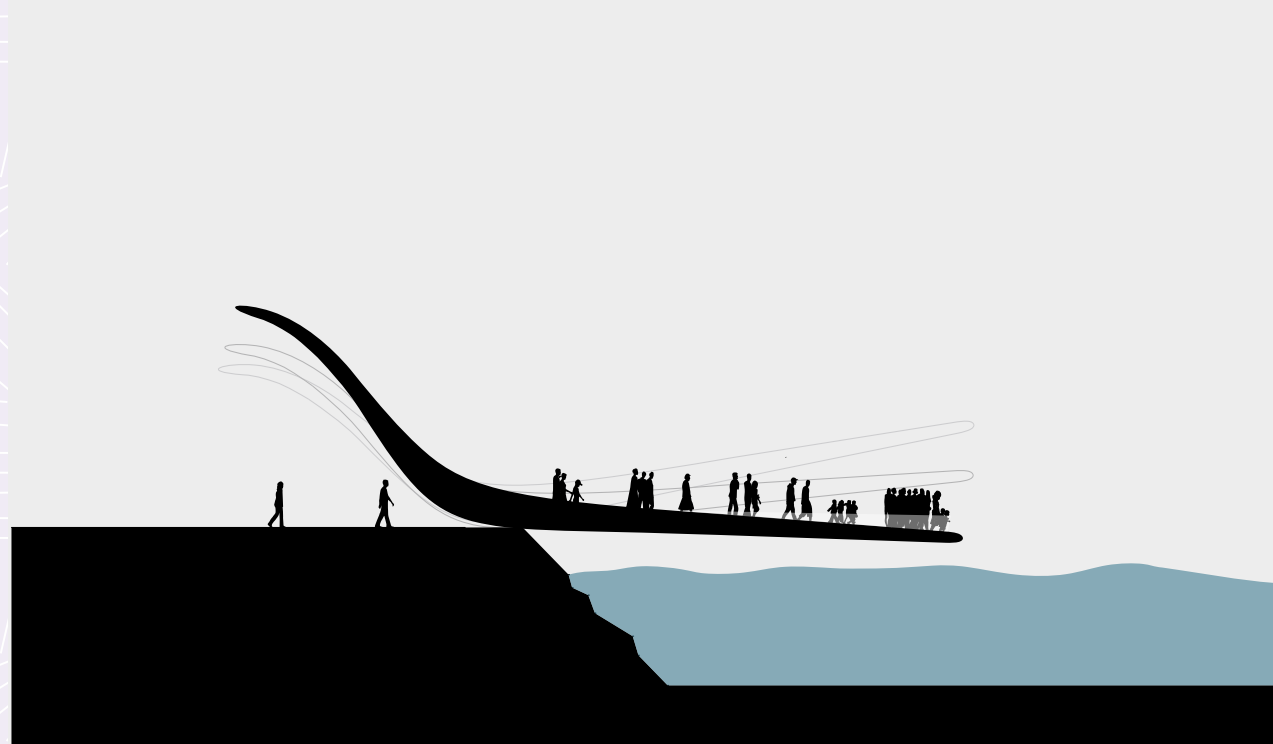
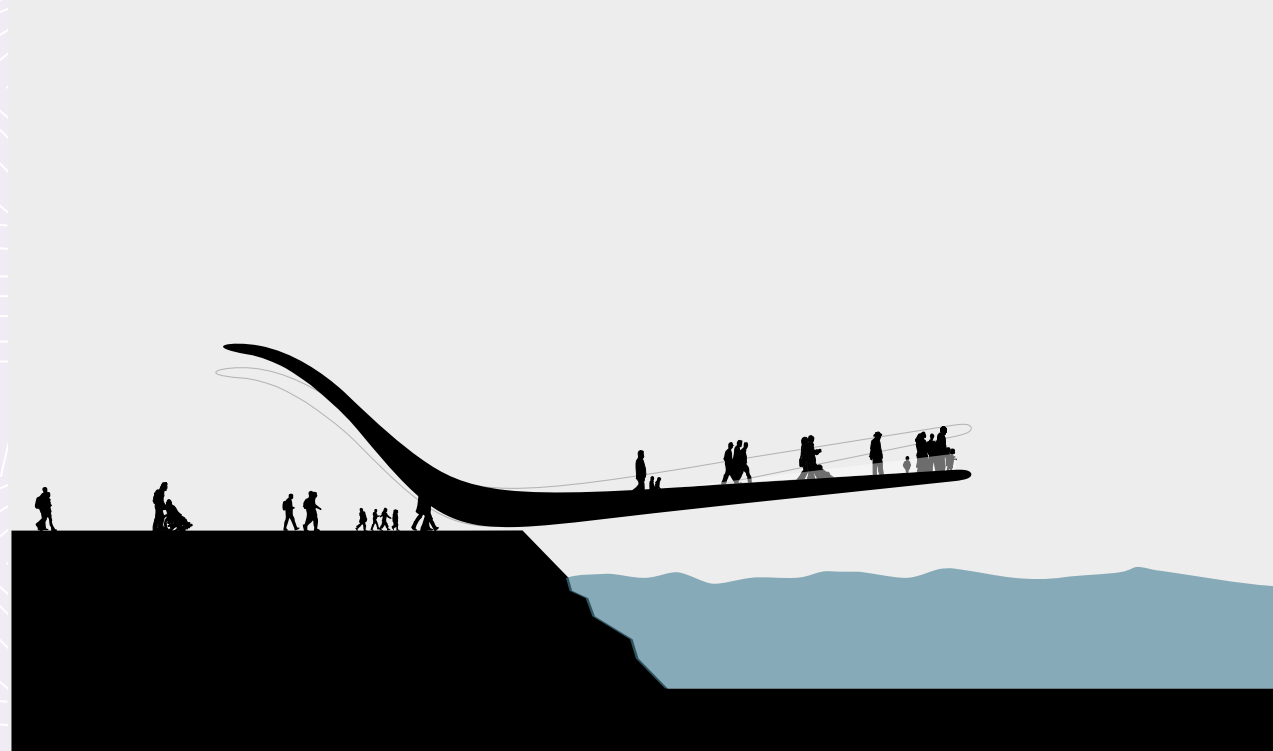
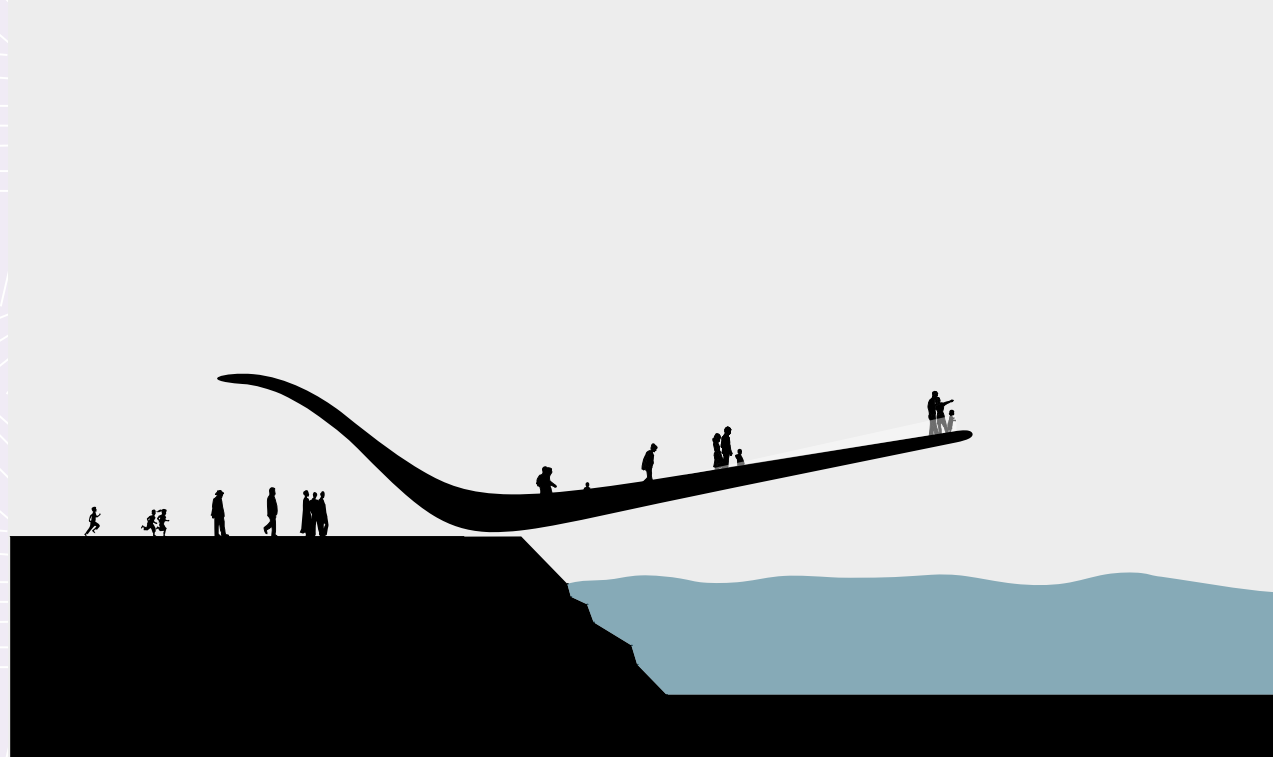
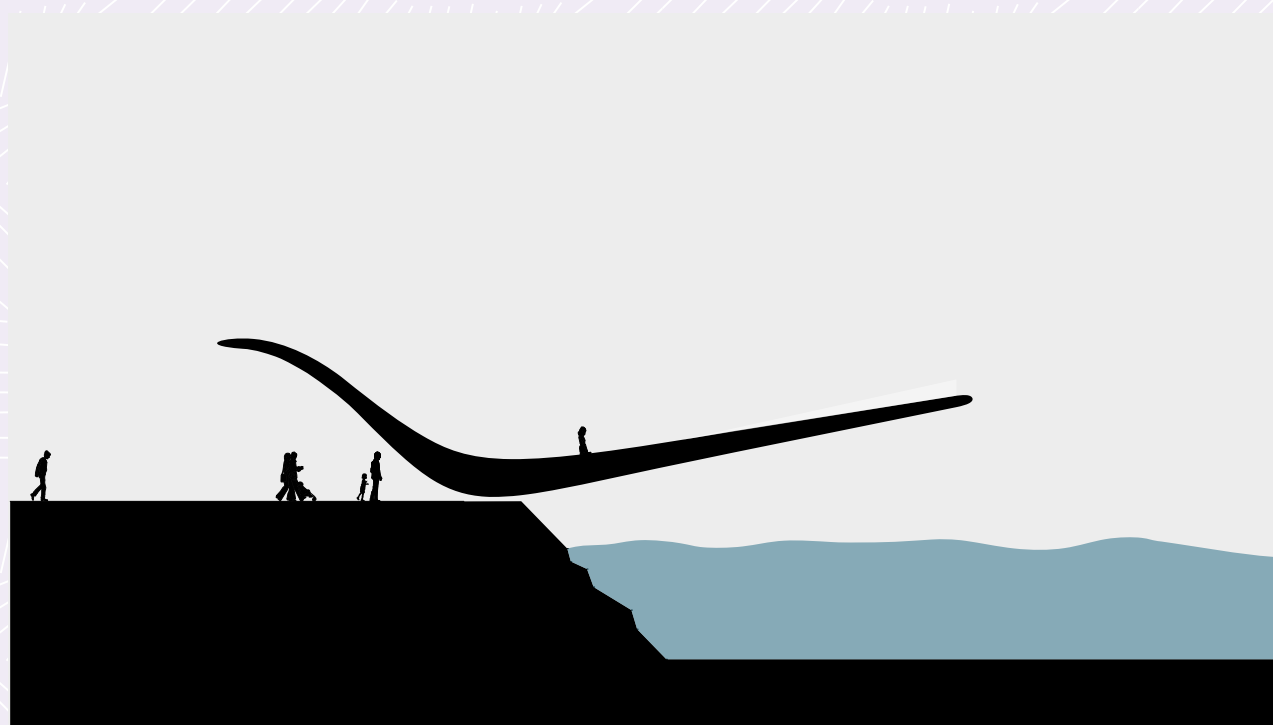
Acting as a portal for the city and for the Highlands in the distance, the Gathering Place will create a contemplative place where people can gather or be solitary; quietly experience a new way of interacting with nature; obtain a fresh view of the river from where it can be viewed in its many moods and to its best advantage; broaden their knowledge and understanding of its biodiversity or enjoy its situation at the heart of the city and city life. The structure will mark a transition point between one part of the city and another, between the physical urban world and the constant mutability of the city.

Team: Sans façon / KHBT

Sans façon and KHBT Sans façon is a collaborative art practice between Charles Blanc and Tristan Surtees. Set in 2001 in Glasgow, their work explores the relationship between people and places through projects ranging from ephemeral performances and permanent pieces in public spaces, to developing and implementing strategies involving artists in the rethinking and re-qualification of specific places.

KHBT is a creative studio set up by Karsten Huneck and Bernd Trümpler in London and Berlin, with an approach to push the boundaries of common practice in architecture, often collaborating with professionals from different disciplines such as music, film, art etc. KHBT are also partners of the experimental architectural network osa - office for subversive architecture.

Sans façon and KHBT have come together to ensure the Ness Pier benefits from their collective experience and expertise.





CHILDREN'S RIVERSIDE FEATURE



Brief: Children's Riverside Feature

Five Secondary Schools in the Inverness area have the opportunity to be involved in the process to design an interactive play space. The riverside feature will be educational, fun and informative and be designed for and by young people. School pupils will be involved throughout and they will document and evaluate their own process and participation.

The design will reflect the natural heritage and social culture of Inverness and the Highlands. The process and the resulting space will enable engagement with all children including those with physical and learning disabilities.

The project should provide a learning experience that demonstrates crossover between art and other subject areas - business, project management, technology, engineering etc - thus contributing to the Curriculum for Excellence.

PROJECT LAUNCHED
JUNE 2015