

Press release

23 November 2006

Folkestone Academy is topped out

Foster + Partners is delighted to support Save the Children and has designed a state-of-the-art Christmas tree for the charity's prestigious Festival of Trees. Capturing the spirit of Christmas, Tree of Reflections, will represent the sparkle of Christmas through contemporary means. It will magically light up its surroundings with kaleidoscopic reflections created by the complex structure of the tree, developed through parametric modelling and rapid prototyping production.

Foster + Partners has approached the design much like a building considering the structure, scale, envelope, light and shadow to create a striking and innovative Christmas tree. The concept is derived both from the archetypal conical form of a Christmas tree as it is instinctively drawn by children, as well as the structure of a natural tree with its many layers of leaves and its complex geometry. The team has collaborated closely to research the design and production of the tree, developing new technologies specifically for the project. Pushing the boundaries of parametric modelling - a three-dimensional computer modelling process that allows the designer to specify or capture the geometric relationships between design features - the full-size tree will be printed using rapid prototyping.

The surface of the cone is dissolved into a leaf-like envelope and the whole of the main body is encapsulated in nanocrystalline Copper prior to Nickel and Silver plating to reflect light from a strong light source at its base through triangulated openings. Breaking down the visual impact of the cone, and lending a sense of organic form and movement to the geometric construction, these layers of white-nylon leaves generate a dynamic play of light and shadow on the tree's surface which illuminates the surrounding space with shimmering patterns. The structure culminates in the brilliant crystal that forms the star at the top of the tree.

The tree will be presented to HRH Princess Anne at the Festival of Trees gala dinner at the Natural History Museum on the 5th of December. It will be auctioned to raise money for Save the Children's campaign to help children who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence, by working with them to find lifelong answers to these problems.

Norman Foster said: We feel privileged to be able to support a charity that gives children around the world a brighter future. We hope that the Tree of Reflections, with its explosion of light, will act as a symbol of hope and celebration.

Credits

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3T RPD Ltd <http://www.3trpd.co.uk/>

Morganic Metal Ltd. <http://morganicmetal.com/>

EOS Electro Optical Systems <http://www.eos.info/home/>

Metropolitan Works <http://www.metropolitanworks.org/>

PixelRange <http://www.pixelrange.co.uk>

DSM Somos http://www.dsm.com/en_US/html/dsms/home_dsmsomos.htm

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