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Home to roost?

Towering structures that could be used to house people and birds at Blyth's seafront are on view at Northumbria University's Architecture Show which opens to the public at 6pm on Thursday, 20 June.

Final year undergraduate Architecture students have proposed a range of ideas for a museum and hostel accommodation in rural Northumberland.

Thomas Savage, 24, from the Isle of Man, came up with his design for nine-storey steel structures, sited in the intertidal zone off the coast of Blyth which would house both water sports enthusiasts in the summer and wild birds in the winter.

He said: "Blyth has a distinctive seasonal appeal. This is highlighted by the project, which switches functions (for its human inhabitants) between bird-watching in winter and spring and water sports in summer and autumn. The scheme provides for both human and avian occupants to take temporary 'roost', each during their season."

His design, entitled *In Praise of Nests and Other Things*, features a series of nine-storey hostel towers along the beach incorporating concrete cabins which would form a campsite in the summer. Guests would be able to swim or jet ski to the towers to access their accommodation while cranes on the side of the building would allow guests' equipment to be taken to their room. In the winter, the cabins would then be closed up to create protected nesting areas for migrating birds. Bird watchers would be able to access the area by staircases and viewing platforms while a visitor centre would be located nearby above the promenade.

Thomas added: "I tried to mimic the way birds make their nests with various different materials so I used offcuts from other people's models to build the structure."

Another design on display is for a visitor centre on Holy Island. The design by Architecture student Robin Eadie sees the centre becoming the centrepiece in a move to bring the Lindisfarne Gospels home to the place where they were first written.

His design sees the visitors centre and hostel hunkered down within the inhospitable dunes on the remote north easterly point of the island, shielding their precious contents from the forces of nature. The thick stone walls enclosing both the hostel buildings and the visitors centre allow for the life of the community to continue in this exposed and isolated location, much like the original priory on the island over 1,000 years ago.

He said: "For those exploring the land outside the walls, these mysterious buildings will entice the curious and those seeking shelter to venture inside and discover the hidden oasis and treasure within. The Lindisfarne Gospels are housed within a tower of stone and brick rising above the surrounding land. This point in the landscape marks the final resting place of the Gospels and provides a focal point for those making the long pilgrimage to see them. In this flat countryside all who travel along the coast will be able to clearly see the resting place of one of the most important artefacts in British history."

The Architecture Degree Show, which will be held in the C block of Ellison Building on Northumbria University's city centre campus in Newcastle, will be open weekdays between 9am and 5pm until Friday, 5 July.

Elsewhere in the region the work produced by Master of Architecture students from Northumbria University and pupils from the Royal Grammar School will also be on display. A group of students led workshops which explored the themes of modernism, journey and abstraction, using photography, drawing and model making at BALTIC 39. The workshops were developed to complement the National Curriculum.

The work produced by the pupils and students during the Northumbria Architecture Workshops will be on show between midday and 6pm on Saturday, 22nd June in the first floor studio in BALTIC 39, High Bridge Street, Newcastle.

One of the students involved, Laura Brown, said: "I was initially interested in the workshops because of my own unconventional transition into architecture that resulted from there being no formal educational link to the subject when I was at school. With the Farrell Review considering how to introduce architecture in to education before university I saw the opportunity to provide these pupils with an insight into the field that I never had at their age. Whilst the main focus was for the pupils to gain something from this venture, I feel as though it has given me an insight into teaching and furthermore the chance to explore an area of research that I hope to carry through to my final year dissertation."

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