



PUBLICATION:

DESIGN WEEK

COUNTRY:

UK

DATE:

5 NOVEMBER 2009

DESCRIPTION:

LDN24, MUSEUM OF LONDON

**“WE WANT VISITORS TO THE MUSEUM
TO STOP AND EXPERIENCE THE
UNFLAGGING ENERGY OF LONDON IN
THE NOW”**

Iconic exhibits key for **Museum of London** galleries

By Angus Montgomery

'This is the culmination of four years of work. We're hoping to completely reposition the museum and make it more mainstream. This will allow us to have a bigger presence.'

Professor Jack Lohman, director of the Museum of London, is referring to the institute's planned £20m Galleries of Modern London, set to open in 2010. This work will increase the museum's space by 25 per cent, allow it to display more than 7000 objects, and open it up to the London Wall, where passers-by will be able to look through a window and see the glittering Lord Mayor's coach on display.

The project architect is Wilkinson Eyre, which has previously worked on other redevelopment projects at the 1970s Powell & Moya-designed building. But unusually – and with the exception of gallery elements designed by Furneaux Stewart – all internal and exhibition design has been carried out by the MoL's in-house design team.

The museum was in informal discussions with a number of consultancies, including Nigel Coates, before settling on an in-house team led by Lohman himself, with head of design and exhibitions Leigh Cain, formerly of Metaphor, and lead designer Gail Symington. 'We took this decision partly because I felt so comfortable about leading the design,' says Lohman, who studied architecture and is a professor of museum design and communication at Bergen National Academy of the Arts in Norway. 'I must be the only museum director in the world who is also running a design studio,' he adds.

Despite the presence of Wilkinson Eyre – twice winner of the Stirling Prize – Lohman is keen to stress that the museum's collection is the key element of the new development, rather than an attempt to create iconic architecture. 'We've spent the money on the exhibition design as opposed to the architecture,' he says.



1

Cain agrees, adding, 'In terms of the considerations of this project, the architecture was lower down, and it was really more about displaying the objects in the best way possible.'

The galleries will cover the history of London from the Great Fire of 1666 up until the present day. Highlights will include a wooden printing press projecting reams of paper on to the gallery ceiling, a reconstruction of the Pleasure Gardens from the 1851 Great Exhibition, and an Art Deco lift from Selfridges. 'It's pretty entertaining, popular stuff,' says Cain, who adds, 'We have a strong education programme as well – we currently have around 20 school visits a day, and we're hoping to double that when the new galleries open.'

Also launching with the new galleries will be a film commission, in collaboration with Film London, designed by The Light Surgeons. The consultancy was appointed after seeing off 12 other shortlisted groups in a competition in June. The aim is for the film to run for two years as the first in a series of biennial commissions.

The film – called LDN24 – will play on an array of nine plasma screens and a suspended elliptical LED curtain in the Sackler Hall. Using bespoke software developed with consultancy Field, The Light Surgeons' installation will present 24 hours of contemporary London in a 24-minute looped film, using photography, film and statistics updated in real time, such as FTSE index figures.

Christopher Allen, creative director of The Light Surgeons, says, 'The concept of time passing is an integral part of our response. We want visitors to the museum to stop and experience the unflagging energy of London in the "now".'



2

1 Foyer area of the Museum of London, with a promotional sign for the new galleries

2 A still from LDN24, a film installation, designed by The Light Surgeons, to be displayed in the museum's Sackler Hall

3 A detail from Charles Booth's Poverty Map of London, an exhibit at the museum



3

THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

- Housed at three separate locations, Museum of London, at London Wall; Museum of London Docklands; and Museum of London Archaeology, in Hackney
- The original London Wall building was designed by Powell & Moya and opened in 1976
- Additions and refurbishments have been designed by Wilkinson Eyre, the latest of which will open in spring 2010